



RIVERLIFE NEWS RELEASE

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Mon Wharf Switchback construction complete; public celebration planned for Tuesday, December 4

Switchback ramp creates bike/ped access to Monongahela riverfront and trail network

PITTSBURGH – Riverlife and the City of Pittsburgh are pleased to announce the completion and public opening of the Mon Wharf Switchback in downtown Pittsburgh. The switchback ramp fills a long-missing link in Pittsburgh’s riverfront trail network and creates easy pedestrian access to the Mon Wharf for the first time in generations.

The ramp offers cyclists and pedestrians a fully-lit, ADA-accessible, non-motorized connection to the Monongahela River at the Mon Wharf Landing, the linear park and trail that opened at the Mon Wharf in 2009. The ramp connects the upriver pedestrian walkway of the Smithfield Street Bridge to the eastern end of the Mon Wharf Landing, 40 feet below. A new kayak launch and native landscaping were also installed on the landing as part of the project.

Public officials and community members will celebrate the opening with a free public event and ribbon cutting, **“Warm Up at the Wharf,” tomorrow, Tuesday, December 4, 2018 at 11:00 am. Please see last page for media information.** Participants will gather at Station Square’s Bessemer Court fountain at 11:00 am, where **Mayor William Peduto** and **County Executive Rich Fitzgerald** will lead a walking procession across the Smithfield Street Bridge and down the new ramp to the Mon Wharf Landing for a ribbon cutting and refreshments at 11:30 am.

The switchback ramp is a public-private partnership between the City’s Department of Mobility and Infrastructure and Riverlife, the Pittsburgh-based nonprofit organization that promotes, enhances, and activates Pittsburgh’s riverfronts. The City owns and maintains the switchback structure.

“The Mon Wharf Switchback is a big win for all Pittsburghers and those who visit our city to enjoy our riverfronts,” said **Mayor Peduto**. “This project gives everyone easy access to the Mon River, whether you’re walking with your family, biking to work, jogging our trails or taking the dog for a stroll. Piece by piece, project by project, Pittsburgh continues to reconnect its people to the rivers.”

“The Mon Wharf Switchback was envisioned almost twenty years ago when Riverlife began working on a plan to make the riverfronts the heart of the community, and easy access to them



for all a priority,” said **Peg McCormick Barron, Riverlife board chair**. “We’re extremely proud of our team effort with the City that overcame many challenging site conditions and logistical tangles to restore pedestrian and bicycle access to the wharf’s riverfront for the first time in generations.”

“We are delighted to see this connection made for the region’s riverfront trails. Residents enjoy biking these trails, and will certainly welcome this long-awaited addition,” said **County Executive Fitzgerald**. “We also know that our riverfront trail network is attractive to people who are new to this region, whether living here or simply visiting. Thank you to all the partners who helped bring this investment to the riverfronts, and congratulations to all of the users who now have better access to our rivers because of the Mon Wharf Switchback.”

“This project is a smart investment in Southwestern Pennsylvania’s infrastructure - and a win for all Pennsylvanians who live in our region or come to visit,” noted **U.S. Representative Mike Doyle (D-PA-14)**. “The switchback gives commuters a safe and easy option to bike to work, which takes cars off the road, reduces auto pollution, and enhances personal health. As someone who has worked over the years with other community leaders to create a comprehensive network of outstanding trails in Southwestern Pennsylvania, I want to congratulate the City of Pittsburgh and Riverlife for completing another segment in this remarkable regional asset.”

The Mon Wharf Switchback allows riverfront trail users heading west toward Point State Park to bypass busy Fort Pitt Boulevard to continue traveling along the Monongahela riverfront on a car-free path. The upper entrance to the ramp is located on the northern end of the Smithfield Street Bridge off the bridge’s upriver pedestrian walkway. The 675-foot-long ramp is 12 feet wide and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations to provide access for wheelchairs and users with diverse accessibility and mobility needs.

“Transportation assets are part of the fabric of communities, supporting quality of life, mobility, and local economies,” **PennDOT Secretary Leslie S. Richards** said. “We are pleased to join in the community and stakeholder vision for this multimodal resource in Pittsburgh.”

A future connection on the western end of the Mon Wharf is being advanced by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which manages Point State Park. Known as the Point State Park Connector, when completed that project will create seamless riverfront access into the park and the western terminus (“mile 0”) for the Great Allegheny Passage, the 334-mile bike path linking Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. The design for the connector is 90% complete. Funding is in place for that project, and permits will be obtained as the next step toward construction.

“Trails provide connections between places. Trails provide experiences with the outdoors and history to users,” **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** said. “The Mon Wharf Switchback is a big step forward in allowing commuters, cyclists, downtown residents and the users of Great Allegheny Passage access to Point State Park in downtown Pittsburgh.”

"This link of the Great Allegheny Passage was incredibly challenging and we were happy to support it," said **Linda McKenna Boxx, Chairman of the Katherine Mabis McKenna**



Foundation which provided early funding for design of the project. "Creating a safe, clearly marked route to the Point is vital since it serves as the western terminus of the GAP. This project will allow cyclists along the riverfront for a grand start or finish to their journey."

The December 4 official opening celebration event is free and open to the public. **Members of the media are encouraged to check in at the eastern end of the Mon Wharf at 11:00 am tomorrow for prime views of the procession and ribbon cutting.** For more information on the event, please visit www.riverlifepgh.org.

Construction of the switchback ramp was completed by Clearwater Construction, with project management by CDR Maguire. Riverlife raised \$3.2 million for design and construction of the project through a mix of public and private sources, including Riverlife; Federal Highway Administration; Pennsylvania Department of Transportation; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Financing Authority; Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program; Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Through Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund; Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation; Allegheny Regional Asset District; City of Pittsburgh; Allegheny Land Trust; Urban Redevelopment Authority; and private foundations and individual donations raised by Riverlife.

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About Riverlife

Riverlife (formerly Riverlife Task Force) is a public-private partnership established in 1999 to guide and advocate for the redevelopment of Pittsburgh's riverfronts. Riverlife works to reconnect Pittsburgh with its rivers by bringing recreation, ecological restoration and economic opportunity back to our waterfronts. www.riverlifepgh.org