

Chronological History of the Recreational Trail Advocates and the Conversion of the Kellar Branch

1999

May 21, 1999 Recreational Trail Advocates (RTA) sponsors Bike to Work Day.

May 22, 1999 RTA sponsors first walk on Kellar Branch with both mayors, Bud Grieves of City of Peoria and Earl Carter of Village of Peoria Heights. The group gathered at Bishop Street to drive the golden spike. The City of Peoria would not approve the walk permit until Peoria Park District (PPD) got insurance. Grieves announced \$875,000 grant to build western connection.

June 4, 1999 Pioneer Industrial Railway (PIRY) sues RTA for libel and civil conspiracy over petition requesting conversion of the Kellar Branch into a trail.

October 15, 1999 The \$875,000 grant won't be received.

October 17, 1999 Second Kellar Branch trail walk with Mayor Carter and Mayor Grieves speaking

October 26, 1999 Peoria Railroad Commissioners vote against closing the Kellar Branch.

November 4, 1999 Mayor Grieves asks PPD to examine a rail/trail package possibility.

December 11, 1999 3.6 million dollar grant awarded to PPD for trail.

December 12, 1999 PIRY takes out full page ad in Peoria Journal Star in support of continued rail use of Kellar Branch.

2000

January 21, 2000 PIRY failed to submit signed contract proposal for service over the western connection

January 22, 2000 Third walk held on the proposed trail with rail cars of PIRY parked in section that has steep sides deliberately forcing walkers to walk around the rail cars with snow on the ground and no room to walk.

January 24, 2000 RTA incorporated with State of Illinois.

February 8, 2000 Libel case against RTA thrown out for second time with prejudice by Judge Barra which means it cannot be filed again.

February 17, 2000 State Representative David Leitch obtains \$875,000 Illinois First money for western connection.

March 1, 2000 Peoria City Council defers decision on Kellar Branch trail.

April 8, 2000 RTA counsel awarded attorney fees by the trial court.

April 30, 2000 Walk on the Rock Island Trail from Barracks Cater Inn west followed by brunch

May 30, 2000 City of Peoria requested bids on construction of the western connection to the U.P.

June 13, 2000 RTA counsel awarded \$3,075 in attorney fees.

June 15, 2000 3 rail companies offer to serve the western connection but PIRY is not one of the companies.

August 12, 2000 Union Pacific (UP) offers to sell UP spur to Peoria for \$175,000 secured by Leitch.

October 14, 2000 Fund raiser event on Rock Island Trail

October 15, 2000 PIRY announces intention to offer passenger service over Kellar Branch

October 19, 2000 Meeting in Canton of supporters of the proposed Canton-Farmington Trail.

November 15, 2000 City of Peoria gives 2 more weeks for PIRY to put in an offer to ship over western connection.

November 29, 2000 City of Peoria approves (DOT) a/k/a (Central Illinois Railroad Co.) rail contract to operate over western connection.

2001

January 8, 2001 RTA discussed uniform signage on all the trails

January 18, 2001 RTA representatives meet with Illinois Central College officials regarding construction of prototype for bike racks.

March 20, 2001 Jennifer Costa, ICC instructor, presented drawings of the proposed bike rack. Peoria City Councilman, Gary Sandburg, starts his campaign for rail parallel to trail project.

April 22, 2001 RTA has booth at Peoria Earth Day Fair in Lakeview Park.

May 14, 2001 RTA reviews Jennifer Costa's model bike racks.

June 8, 2001 RTA has booth at Second Classic Sports Festival.

June 15, 2001 Operating agreement between DOT and City of Peoria finalized; approval of construction of 2,100 foot extension of UP spur with wye tracks

June 16, 2001 Guy Brenkman resigns from railroad commission.

August 13, 2001 Appellate Court decision rejected Pioneer's appeal

September 12, 2001 RTA pays for more steel for bike rack design.

September 20, 2001 City of Peoria announced it now owns the UP spur from University Avenue to UP mainline.

October 17, 2001 "Spooks and Goblins" public event sponsored by RTA at the Kickapoo Creek picnic area.

June 11, 2001 Appellate Court awards RTA attorney fees of over \$3,000.

June 26, 2001 Peoria City Council (except Gary Sandburg) approved western connection and conversion of Kellar Branch trail

2002

January 15, 2002 RTA came up with possible location in Peoria for bike rack construction and discussed marketing them. Jennifer Costa showed drawings of a locomotive style bike rack she developed.

January 23, 2002 George Burrier made presentation to PPD regarding the two styles of bike racks. The racks were recommended for use by PPD.

February 12, 2002 Phil Lockwood reported that Peoria Convention and Visitors' Bureau wants to meet with RTA regarding bike racks and uniform signage on the trails. Earth Day bike ride was set for April 21, 2002

March 13, 2002 Parker Fabrications can produce bike racks for \$400 per unit. There would be a \$400 onetime charge for purchase of a pipe bender.

April 10, 2002 George Burrier met with PRIDE. They had no money to spend on bike racks but thought the idea was good.

May 14, 2002 Discussion regarding getting Peoria started on a master plan for Peoria linking up bike routes. Nobody volunteered to take project. Announced that Morton Bike Trail construction might begin.

August 11, 2002 David P. Jordon blogger article says the Rock Island Trail extension "will be a waste of taxpayers' money and can be better spent on economic infrastructure."

September 1, 2002 City of Peoria says it lacks funds to purchase an easement for extending the spur through Ameren-CILCO property. Paper reports that Gateway Milling has terminated shipments by rail over Kellar Branch. Fewer than 75 cars travel over the Kellar Branch from Carver Lumber and Peoria Plastics.

September 16, 2002 PPD is asked to pay CILCO \$210,000 for an additional 15 feet of right-of-way needed to extend the spur through Ameren-CILCO property. 15 feet would have been provided at no charge, but Peoria needed 30 feet requiring poles to be moved and parking spaces to be relocated.

October 7, 2002 Scott Barger points out Madison, WI has more bikes than cars and over 110 miles of bike paths for its residents and supports Peoria making it bike friendlier..

October 9, 2002 George Burrier made second presentation to PRIDE regarding bike racks.

October 19, 2002 Peoria agrees to split the \$210,000 cost of a CILCO easement with PPD. State Representative David Leitch secures a \$1.6 million dollar grant to extend spur track linking the UP main line to Carver Lumber Company. Peoria will vote on October 22, 2002 to hire attorney to help seek approval from STB for trail. Steve Van Winkle expects the rail extension to being in spring of 2003 and trail conversion to start in summer of 2003.

October 22, 2002 City of Peoria reports hiring of Thomas McFarland as Counsel to help with STB proceeding and approval of agreement with PPD for lease of bike trail over Kellar Branch for \$1.00. City council reaffirmed its commitment (9 to 1) to connect Rock Island Trail with its riverfront and provide replacement rail service to customers in Pioneer Park. Dick Carver came to town and extolled the benefits of the western connection. PPD will be responsible for removal and disposal of the old track and restoration of 26 street crossing and alleys where the track will be removed.

November 13, 2002 RTA wrote to Mayor Carter of Peoria Heights about our bike racks for use by Peoria Heights.

2003

January 2003 Powder coating of trolley type bike racks

February 4, 2003 Peoria Heights approves Earth Day trail cleanup on April 26, 2003.

April 8, 2003 City Link announces it will purchase 2 trolley design bike racks from RTA.

April 26, 2003 Kellar Branch trail cleanup from Peoria Heights Library

April 29, 2003 City of Peoria buys final easement from Illinois American Water for western rail connection.

July 6, 2003 RTA receives order for 2 trolley design bike racks.

September 9, 2003 RTA votes to give the locomotive design prototype to Lakeview Museum and the trolley design prototype to the Rock Island Trail State Park.

September 11, 2003 Canton Park District meeting regarding LaHarpe to Mapleton Trail

September 21, 2003 First Cancer Center for Healthy Living bike ride utilizing the Rock Island Trail State Park

October 5, 2003 Hikemabika event on Hennepin Canal held

November 2003 City Link installs the 2 trolley design bike racks.

2004

March 16, 2004 Hala Ahmed gave an update on the 25 mile inactive UP line from Bellvue to Middle Grove. BFI continues to pay for an option to use the line to haul garbage into Fulton County. Fulton County does not want to expand its garbage dump. Jim Martin made a presentation to Tri-County Regional Planning Commission about Fargo Run in

Growth Cells 2 and 3. The City of Peoria is proposing developers put 10 foot path on one side of all new streets and connect to the Rock Island Trail.

April 13, 2004 Jim Martin gave the same presentation to RTA members as above. STB approved Environmental Impact Study of the extension of the 1800 feet UP spur track. David Pittman is working on a connection of Sommer Park to Kinsey Park.

June 5, 2004 National Trails Day bike ride on the Rock Island Trail.

August 10, 2004 Peoria adopted ordinance calling for 10 foot wide walks in new subdivisions on one side of street in Growth Cell III.

August 23, 2004 Bid opening date for construction on the spur track extension.

October 12, 2004 Suggestions for signage was a pictogram showing a bike for all jurisdiction or calling it Heart of Illinois Trail System. \$47,000 was donated by a handful of trail advocates to the RTA when the Peoria said it was short \$175,000 for funds needed to pay for the rehabilitation of the track from Pioneer Parkway to its most northern end. The \$175,000 came as a pledge to be paid by O'Brien Steel Fabrication on condition that the trail would be completed. The \$47,000 was placed in the Friends of the Rock Island Trail, Inc. account for future trail projects. The first one was the installation of solar lighting for the tunnel under Rt. 6. and the second use was for the "Build the Kellar Branch Now" sign campaign.

2005

January, 2005 PIRY begins its campaign to block the installation of a rail switch that would allow lumber to be received by Carver Lumber Company (CLC)

January 11, 2005 2 Trek bikes donated to J. P. O'Brien and his brother O'Brien of O'Brien Steel for their company's commitment to help fund the western rail connection by Illinois Fitness and Cycle.

February 24, 2005 STB rules that PIRY's offer to buy the Kellar Branch is rejected.

March 21, 2005 Gateway Milling, a Pioneer Park rail user, files for bankruptcy.

June 14, 2005 RTA members marked the Springdale Cemetery section of the trail with painted symbols.

July 5, 2005 Friends of the Rock Island Trail, Inc. paid for the tools necessary to install the posts for the Fondulac Park District and PPD sections.

July 7, 2005 PIRY continues to prevent Metroplex from installing a rail switch into CLC and other Pioneer potential rail users and Metroplex leaves the site.

August 2005 STB ordered PIRY off the Kellar Branch after several months of a blockade by PIRY preventing a switch from being installed on the Kellar Branch.

August 2, 2005 PIRY continues to put locomotive on Kellar Branch to prevent installation of rail switch.

August 5, 2005 Friends of the Rock Island Trail, Inc. donated over \$5,000 to pay for the electrical equipment for the lighting of the tunnel under route 6 on the Rock Island Trail.

August 11, 2005 STB initially approves the removal of tracks and ties and removal of PIRY after several months of a blockade preventing a switch from being installed on the Kellar Branch. STB issued a decision allowing CIRC to discontinue service on the Kellar Branch. This should be allowed because there has been no service on this branch all summer and fall 2005. The problem is that the new spur line is not finished and no rail service is currently available to CLC.

August 17, 2005 Rail spur construction resumes. PIRY stops service to CLC.

August 23, 2005 PIRY sues City of Peoria, Village of Peoria Heights and CIRC in LaSalle County asking for \$50,000 in damages, permanent right to operate on Kellar Branch, declaration that the contract with CIRY is invalid, and injunction to prevent removal of Kellar Branch. The lawsuit was dismissed. PIRY is expected to refile in Peoria or Tazewell Counties

August 31, 2005 Illinois Department of Natural Resources awards \$200,000 grant to construct the trail portion from Glen Avenue to Knoxville Avenue.

September 20, 2005 RTA arranged for placement of a utility pole at the south entrance to the route 6 tunnel of the Rock Island Trail which will hold the solar panels for the tunnel lighting. RTA raised \$1,025 selling raffle tickets on a Trek bicycle donated by John Bousky of Illinois Fitness and Cycle.

October 29, 2005 RTA cleanup of Alta parking lot of the Rock Island Trail of debris, weeds and invasive trees.

November 2005 First phase of Kellar Branch Trail was black topped from K's Merchandise to the end of Candletree Lane.

2006

Jan 20, 2006 STB reverses itself placing a hold on removal of tracks over Kellar Branch based on complaints from Carver Lumber Company (CLC) and Pioneer Industrial Railway (PIRY)

February 27, 2006 Peoria Park District loses \$300,000 trail grant because of construction delays in completing western connection

March 2, 2006 First load of lumber delivered to CLC over western connection

March 4, 2006 PIRY offers to purchase Kellar Branch for \$565,000

April 14, 2006 Trail/rail cleanup from Pioneer Parkway to Chanute Road

April 24, 2006 STB orders the parties to file arguments in 90 days before it decides on allowing the trail to proceed.

July 14, 2006 Gary Brenkman, former owner of PIRY, opens a topless bar in Keithsburg, IL. This one and Fantasyland in Peoria makes two topless bars.

July 15, 2006 CLC has received 24 railcars without complaint.

September 20, 2006 Sharon Decker of Illinois Prairie Railroad Foundation calls for a trolley line to operate on the Kellar Branch

December 7, 2006 CIRY filed petition with STB to continue operations over the Kellar Branch between Candletree Lane and Jefferson Street. Previously CIRY requested approval to discontinue service over that part. CIRY cites new customers.

2007

January 12, 2007 STB agrees to reopen the case and gives the cities until February 12, 2007 and

PIRY and CLC until March 5, 2007 to submit additional evidence.

February 14, 2007 Alexis Khazzam stated he has spent \$15 million in Junction City and plans to spend an additional \$45 million which probably won't happen if the rail is re-activated.

February 20, 2007 Kellar bought for \$856,000 in 1984 and City of Peoria put \$350,000 in rehabilitation of track (\$1,200,000) and PIRY offers to purchase for only \$565,000.

February 21, 2007 Peoria ousts PIRY and chooses CIRY as new operator.

February 22, 2007 Peoria Heights decides it wants a trolley for Peoria Heights and asks for \$50,000 grant for trolley feasibility study from Tri County Regional Planning Commission.

April 5, 2007 Peoria Heights changes its mind and drops trolley plan.

May 3, 2007 Oil Tank cars placed on Kellar Branch by CIRY

May 19, 2007 Kellar Branch cleanup of Kellar Branch in Peoria Heights with turn out of 75 workers

June 25, 2007 STB rules that CIRY has right to operate on 1,800 foot western connection.

July 21, 2007 Peoria Heights decides to apply for Peoria-Pekin Urbanized Transportation Study (PPUATS) for a trail head.

October 12, 2007 Peoria County Boards votes unanimously in support of conversion of Kellar Branch to recreational trail

October 18, 2007 PPUATS technical committee approves \$400,000 for trailhead in Peoria Heights if trail is built.

November 8, 2007 Policy committee of PPUATS approves technical committee's recommendation of \$400,000 for Peoria Heights trailhead

November 17, 2007 Stark County Trails and Greenways Committee gets \$20,000 grant for study exploring extending Rock Island Trail State Park to Toulon and eventually to the Hennepin Canal

November 19, 2007 STB rules that PIRY and CIRY can both operate over the Kellar Branch and denies the right of Peoria to remove tracks and ties.