

Members of Gahanna City Council, Mayor Stinchcomb and Gahanna staff members, thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Big Walnut Trail section #5. I am a Gahanna resident since 1990 and a member of the Bicycle and Trail Advisory Committee. I use Olde Ridenour Rd and the Gahanna golf course for cycling (on the existing boardwalk trail), sledding and cross country skiing.

In the past, trail users have made concessions for the benefit of residents who own property along the Creek who are not willing to provide right-of-way for the trail through their property. We understand and respect their right to privacy and have changed the route of the trail to use existing right-of-way along roadways.

On section #5, trail users would have preferred that the trail follow Big Walnut Creek, which is the most scenic and desirable route. But we agreed with the decision to move the trail to Olde Ridenour Rd because the golf course would have required modifications to existing fairways and we knew this would not be amenable to the golfers.

As Troy stated last week, the city of Gahanna does not want to compromise safety by removing the fence, which keeps trail users safe from flying golf balls. I am pleased that he and the engineers have identified sections of the fence which are not required. The sledders will have to accept the loss of one sledding hill, but the north sledding hill will remain.

Initially, the trail was going to stay close to Olde Ridenour Rd until it reached the golf course parking lot. But we learned that the roadway does not have enough right-of-way to accommodate a 10' multi-use trail, so the route was changed to go down onto the west edge of the golf course. Although this is less desirable for golfers, it reduces the slope of the trail, which will benefit users for which a steep slope is a barrier. I am pleased that Troy plans to keep the slopes within ADA guidelines, because many residents with mobility disabilities use the Big Walnut Trail. In the past, trail users avoided the steep hill on Big Walnut Trail section #2 at Academy Park along Cherrybottom Rd until we were able to detour the trail around the hill.

Other alternatives such as going along the east side of Mill St/Johnstown Rd or on-road bicycle facilities such as bike lanes or a bike boulevard on Olde Ridenour Rd would have been more expensive or less desirable and would have required us to forfeit our grant. In addition, on-road bicycle facilities are not usable by pedestrians and other non-vehicular trail users.

Troy and his staff have worked hard to address the concerns of golfers, sledders, residents and trail users but we will all have to compromise somewhat. I believe that Troy and staff have done their due diligence to address our concerns and I trust that they will continue to keep our concerns in mind as they finalize the details for this section of the Big Walnut Trail. I look forward to the day when we are connected to the Alum Creek Trail which is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail.

I hope that Council will approve the alternative plan that Troy has proposed and that we will move forward with trail construction this year.

Patricia Kovacs
527 Haversham Dr, Gahanna