

Murrysville seeks to add bike lane on Wiestertown Road

By Brad Pedersen, FOR THE VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH
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Bicyclists may get some room to breathe on Wiestertown Road in Murrysville if the state approves money for a bikeway.

Murrysville Parks and Recreation Commission applied for about \$727,000 from a PennDOT initiative to fund "smart transportation" projects to add a bike lane between Hills Church and Hilty roads.

The funding is part of the \$60 million Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative, which is sponsored by PennDOT. The initiative does not require the municipality to provide matching funds.

Councilwoman and commission liaison Joan Kearns said when the municipality hosted bike races, Wiestertown Road was always a part of the course. But a lot of bikers were uncomfortable navigating the curvy road.

"It was always mentioned that it was great to bike but not safe because it is narrow and winding," Kearns said. "If we are going to redo the surface anyway, putting in the bikeway just makes sense."

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation turned over ownership of the road to Murrysville last year.

Murrysville Community Park has increased both automotive and bicycle traffic on Wiestertown Road, Kearns said. Adding the bike lane would make traveling the road safer and, she said, there is a demand for more bicycle-accessible roads.

"We've always been urged to create more bikeways as we improve our road systems," Kearns said. "This will really put it into action."

Parks and rec board member Betsy Aiken said the 4-foot lane would be on one side of the road and marked with painted lines. The bike lane would be added to a 12,000-foot-long stretch of the road.

The project has become necessary because of the higher traffic to and from Murrysville Community Park, Aiken said.

"There are additional cyclists, walkers and automotive traffic in connection with the park, especially during the summer and months with organized sports," she said.

"We see this as a way to provide safe, alternate means of transportation for people in the neighborhood. It would be a great complement to the park's development — it's exciting to watch that park grow and develop."

Aiken said she hopes the improvements improve accessibility to the park and visibility for bicycle and automotive traffic.