



Delaware County is planning an elevated boardwalk to connect the Kent dog park along the Darby Creek trail with Scottdale Road. PHOTOS BY KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES

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It may take some time but Delaware County wants to connect Upper Darby and Lansdowne, with an elevated boardwalk.

The project would see the extension of the Darby Creek trail by extending where it ends near the Kent dog park in Upper Darby through a 0.4-mile elevated boardwalk network that would connect with Scottdale Road.

“This project represents a significant step forward in connecting our communities and providing safe scenic and environmentally conscious recreational opportunities,” county Councilwoman Elaine Paul Schaefer said. “This new segment will connect to the southern terminus of the Darby Creek trail, which is currently at Kent Park in Upper Darby, to Scottdale Road in Lansdowne Borough and will link residents to employment centers, recreational amenities and nature in new and exciting ways.”

This boardwalk would be constructed in multiple phases along Darby Creek and construction isn't expected to start for another two years.

Schaefer shared some characteristics of the structure.

"The trail will bridge wetlands and the creek using piers and will be constructed above a commercial parking lot ensuring minimal environmental impact while preserving vital community infrastructure," she explained. "Using innovative PermaTrak boardwalk technology, the trail minimizes its footprint, protects sensitive environmental areas and offers cost-effective durable solutions for design, construction and long-term maintenance."

County council approved a contract with NV5 not to exceed \$700,000 for the engineering portion of the Darby Creek Elevated Trail Project. Funding is coming from a variety of sources, including \$226,900 from the state Department of Community and Economic Development's Greenways, Recreation and Trails grant; \$250,000 from the Community Development Block Grants; \$100,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act; and \$123,100 from the county's capital improvement program.

"With the firm NV5 leading the design process, we would expect the trail to be ready for construction in about two years," Schaefer said.

Based in Florida with offices around the country and world, NV5 includes the Camden County LINK bridge over Route 130 in Pennsauken, the NYS&W Trail bridge over the Pompton River and Starlight Park in the Bronx as some of its major trail bridge projects.

### **'Fresh look'**

"NV5 is bringing a fresh look to the structural layout of this trail, as we aim to bring Delaware County a more economical, functional, and aesthetic product that still accomplishes the goal of traversing through the privately owned shopping center," Michael Conner and Matt Ludwig of NV5 said.

Ludwig will be heading the Darby Creek trail project for the firm.

"We believe that trails are not just recreational assets," they said. "They also act as transportation corridors, first/last mile connections to transit, and boost the local economic base. We believe that this specific segment of trail can not only achieve the goal of maximizing parking lot usage, but can also be developed creatively using alternative structures and bring about a unique and aesthetic feel to the surrounding area, while reducing costs and maintenance burden on the county."

The engineers spoke about the elevated portions of the trail, highlighting that they will be safe, respect the natural habitats and flood concerns, and will be the most cost-effective for the county in both construction and long-term maintenance and will go above parking spaces in the Lidl shopping center.

### **PermaTrak proposed**

They explained that with boardwalks short spans can be used and the cost of materials, delivery and fabrication is less.

"We recommend PermaTrak boardwalks as they are a long-lasting alternative to standard wooden boardwalks," they said. "Wood deck boardwalks, even though constructed with pressure-treated

lumber, tend to need planks replaced within a few years due to warping, and it is not uncommon for an entire deck to be replaced after 10 years, especially in wetter and shadier areas.”

They said NV5 is specifying PermaTrak in two circuit trail projects, one a milelong boardwalk in Camden County, N.J., over wetlands and another on the Delaware River Trail in Philadelphia.

“We know that this project will be a fantastic opportunity for the county to further build upon its existing trail system and offer more communities access to safe means of mobility using a people-first approach,” Conner and Ludwig said.

Schaefer talked about the benefits this trail extension will reap.

“The elevated trail will not only connect Kent Park to Lansdowne Borough but it will provide residents with unparalleled access to natural areas, breath-taking views of the creek and safe pathways for recreation and for commuting,” she said. “This critical link in the Darby Creek Trail network represents our commitment to enhancing the quality of life in Delaware County while preserving and celebrating our natural environment. Please stay tuned for updates and I can’t wait to see you all enjoying this incredible asset in just a few years.”