



Chilly 'opening day' for trail dedication

Newest section of Jones Falls Trail runs between Cylburn and Woodberry

By PAMELA WOOD

The Baltimore Sun

When the latest section of Baltimore's Jones Falls Trail was completed late in the fall, trail boosters thought it best to hold off on a dedication ceremony. Spring weather would be better, they thought.

Not exactly.

"It was probably warmer then than it is now," said Molly Gallant of the city's Department of Recreation and Parks, who was among a few dozen urban trail supporters who gathered Saturday at the Cylburn Arboretum to celebrate the new section of trail.

Bundled up against the cold, the crowd nursed cups of hot coffee and fidgeted to stay warm as they waited for the ceremonial cutting of a green ribbon stretched between two bicycles.

Saturday morning's event was billed not only as a celebration of the latest section of the 10-mile Jones Falls Trail, but also as an "opening day" to mark springtime and the best weather for bike riding on trails in Baltimore and beyond.

"We thought of Opening Day, as similar to baseball season," said Jim Brown of the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

Even with temperatures in the 30s, brisk winds and swirling snow flurries, bike riders were happy to head out on a celebratory ride on the new section of trail,



PAMELA WOOD/BALTIMORE SUN

Steve Moore takes a ride on the newest section of the Jones Falls Trail with his 2-year-old daughter, Natalie. The section runs between Cylburn Arboretum and the Woodberry neighborhood.

which runs between Cylburn Arboretum and the Woodberry neighborhood and cost \$3.1 million. With the help of Americorps volunteers, the city brought out dozens of bikes from its Ride Around bike loaner program for those who didn't have their own.

Steve Moore brought his daughter, Natalie, 2, for a ride on the trail. While Moore was bundled in multiple layers and a face mask, Natalie was snug in her baby trailer.

"It's not that cold. She has her little

greenhouse," said Moore, who works in marketing. He said he used to commute by bike from Eldersburg to Owings Mills. Now that he works from home in Towson, he goes riding on local trails almost every weekend.

Jeff La Noue is such a fan of the Jones Falls Trail that he started a Facebook page and website, jonesfallstrail.us to spread the word. He uses the trail as part of his 3-mile bike commute from Clipper Mill to his job as a sustainability planner at the University

of Baltimore.

The newer portion of the trail has unique assets, he said, including views of the Jones Falls and historic mill valley buildings, as well as access to Druid Hill Park and its often-overlooked Grove of Remembrance honoring World War I veterans.

With the newest extension complete, the Jones Falls Trail now runs from Cylburn off Northern Parkway south to the Inner Harbor.

The next section will connect from Cylburn north to the Mount Washington light rail stop. That leg will cost \$6.6 million, and will tap city, state and federal funds. That section will include a trail bridge over Northern Parkway and two 40-foot-long timber bridges over streams and wetlands.

Boosters hope the Jones Falls Trail can eventually connect with the Torrey C. Brown Trail — also known as the Northern Central Railroad Trail — in Baltimore County, which runs to the Pennsylvania state line.

On the southern side of town, there are hopes of connecting the city's trails with the BWI Trail and the Baltimore-Annapolis Trail in Anne Arundel County.

The newest section represents progress toward the goal of having that long, contiguous stretch, said Nate Evans of the advocacy group Bike Maryland. "It's one more piece of the puzzle for the entire region," he said.

Other groups attending Saturday's event included BikeMore, the Parks and People Foundation and Blue Water Baltimore, which focuses on water quality.

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