

# System to help find way along canal

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Finding your way around the Ohio Canal Corridor by car, bicycle or on foot could soon get a lot easier with a new wayfinding system including signs, markers, kiosks and color schemes to provide easily identifiable routes and destinations. Proposed designs for the wayfinding system will be presented at public meetings in the Cleveland and Akron areas in the next two weeks.

One will be at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the Independ-

ence Tech Center, 6801 Brecksville Road, between Rockside and Pleasant Valley roads in Independence. The other will be held on the south side of Akron at 6 p.m. March 8 at the Coventry Oaks Pavilion, 40 Axline Ave., just off South Main Street, between its interchange with Interstate 277 and the Firestone Metropolitan Park.

Samples of the proposed signs and more information are available on the Ohio Canal Corridor's Web site at [www.ohiocanal.org](http://www.ohiocanal.org).

The need for the wayfind-

ing system was determined as the Ohio Canal Corridor expands beyond just the route of the old Ohio & Erie Canal. In fact, branches of the canal extend into areas like University Circle, Parma, Garfield Heights and Hudson, to name just a few.

Tim Donovan, director of the Ohio Canal Corridor, says the expansion follows trails and public lands that are part of the Cleveland Metroparks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park and extend as far south as New Philadelphia. With that much coverage, a wayfinding system was desired.

"It's a 110-mile district," he said. "We were already declared as the best-marked scenic byway in the nation by National Scenic Byways (of

the U.S. Department of Transportation). But we need to do better."

The Ohio Canal Corridor is a nonprofit organization that does planning and advocacy for the 110-mile Ohio & Erie Canal Byway. Donovan said he considers the byway more of a heritage route than a scenic one. While some parts are very scenic, others pass through active industrial areas.

"It's a living landscape," he said. "The byway is meant to tell a storyline surrounding the original 1825 canal. But the stories don't begin and end with the canal."

The main trail is the Towpath Trail, which follows remnants of the canal. It also parallels the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, which is seeking funding for running trains to Tower City Center in downtown Cleveland.

Completed thus far are 72 miles out of 101 planned for the Towpath Trail. Nearly half of the \$40 million is in hand to extend the trail from Harvard Road to downtown Cleveland. Along the way are numerous natural, historical and cultural sites, plus visitor centers and recreational places.