

Skate park grinds near a finish

BY BLAISE HART-SCHMIDT
Staff Reporter

The members of the Organization of Kirksville Skateboarders are stoked for a gnarly new skate park set to open this spring.

Although the skate park still is not officially open, construction on the park was completed in December.

Freshman Alex Meneely, former chairman of the Organization of Kirksville Skateboarders, raised money and organized the park's construction by Suburban Rails, a skate park construction company from Cincinnati, Ohio.

"It's not officially open yet," Meneely said. "The company [that built the park] is going to come back and do a lot of cosmetic work, making sure that everything's perfect."

The city will add a 6-foot side-

walk and fencing around the park, as well as a sign stating park rules and plaques for donors, Meneely said. The park recommends that all skaters wear protective gear, but helmets and adult supervision are mandatory for skaters 14 and under.

Meneely said that although the park has "no trespassing" signs, people already have broken the rules.

"Somebody already drove their pickup onto the half pipe and peeled out on it, and barely did anything to the half pipe," Meneely said. "That's kind of embarrassing that it barely hurt the ramp at all, but it probably hurt the car."

Meneely said the new skate park will help Kirksville's economy and attract tourists, especially during the summer when vacationers drive through Kirksville.

"Any time a new park opens, a lot of skaters from probably a 70-

radius or so come and check out the park, and if it's really good, they'll come back," Meneely said.

Now that the park is finished, Meneely said he plans to skate at the park in his free time whenever he's stressed, especially the half pipe.

"I'm hoping that maybe some day, some kid will go to the Olympics and will be like, 'Yeah I'm from Kirksville, Missouri, and there's this sweet skate park and I skated there.'" he said.

Ezekiel Sevids, owner of the skate shop Wood Pushers and current chair of OKS, said in the Sept. 11, 2008 issue of the Index that he plans to have clinics for first time skaters as well as host events like pro demonstrations at the new skate park.

Professor of French Timothy Farley joined OKS as a parent volunteer in support of his son, an 18-year-old Truman student.

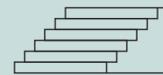
"I think it's an amazing park," Farley said. "It's a park that people are going to want to skate. It's a nice enough park that skaters are going to be willing to drive just to come skating."

Farley said the skate park might influence potential Truman students. If a student really likes to skateboard and is deciding between Truman and another school, the Kirksville skate park might be the deciding factor, he said.

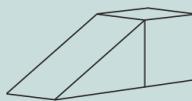
Initially, OKS planned to build the park for \$70,000. Through fundraisers like concerts, bake sales and raffles, OKS raised about \$25,000 for the park, and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources gave the project a grant for \$30,000. Tony Hawk's foundation also donated \$15,000, and the city of Kirksville donated \$50,000, bringing the total to \$120,000.

Melanie Smith, Kirksville Department of Parks and Recreation director, said a date has not been set for the opening of the park, which includes a 5-foot mini ramp complex, 4-foot platform with bank ramps, a set of stairs, a 3-foot 6-inch banked ramp and a multilevel grind box.

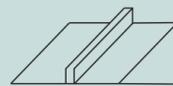
Park attractions



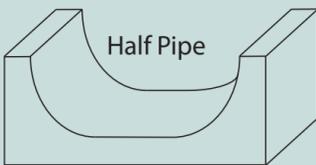
Stairs



Banked Ramp



Hubba



Half Pipe



Photo by Mayank Dhungana/Index
Design by Blaise Hart-Schmidt

Stimulus plan could bump alternate route

BY JARED YOUNG
Staff Reporter

If a proposed economic stimulus package is passed, MoDOT could finish the Highway 63 bypass sooner than originally planned.

Tammy Wallace, MoDOT communication relations manager, said an economic stimulus plan would benefit MoDOT and their planned projects. This stimulus would include the planned Highway 63 bypass, which would improve traffic conditions in and around Kirksville. Wallace said that if the project is moved to a sooner date, it probably will begin in the summer or fall of 2009.

"If the stimulus package goes through ... we are going to put a big push on 63 and try to get it in by next summer," Wallace said. "We are prepared to quickly accelerate the progress, and that could definitely benefit the 63 project. It would be a higher priority in the district."

City Councilmember Todd Kuhns said that if a stimulus package is passed, the proposed start date is July 2009.

"There may be some funds opening up for transportation in Missouri," Kuhns said. "This project is toward the top of the list. It doesn't mean we would receive extra money for the project, but money would become available sooner."

With the chance of an earlier start date, Kuhns said there will be changes to the construction process of the alternate route.

"Originally they were planning on doing the project as one big long thing, and they were going to plan it all out at the same time," Kuhns said. "Now, with this opportunity coming up, we needed to kind of revamp and have some kind of plan ready to go in July of 2009."

The plan, if the start date is moved to July, is to break the project into two parts.

"They're a bit further along with ... the northern portion of the route, as opposed to the southern portion," Kuhns said. "Upping the time plan is a little inconvenient for everyone."

MoDOT has been in contact with lo-

cal utilities and other businesses, in an attempt to get supplies moved around sooner in preparation for the possible advance of funding.

Though construction of the alternate route undoubtedly will begin within the next two years, many are still against it. However, Wallace said that according to MoDOT's records, the overall attitude toward the construction of the 63 alternate route is a positive one.

"We had two public meetings, and we had a virtual meeting online," Wallace said. "We had a great turnout ... and a lot of comments to the Web site, and it seems to be very positive. It should be a very positive project for the community."

Kirksville resident Louise Hanlin

said she agrees with Wallace, and that the 63 alternate route is a necessity for the area.

"I think that some of the small businesses may see decreases in sales. I think it could be detrimental to the community."

Jaime Kelley
Sophomore

"Early in the morning, it takes forever to get anywhere in town," Hanlin said. "We also have many big trucks go through. The 63 alternate route is a good thing."

Sophomore Jaime Kelley agrees that the 63 alternate route would benefit traffic conditions in Kirksville, but feels the project could have some long-term negative repercussions.

"I think that some of the small businesses may see decreases in sales," Kelley said. "I think it could be detrimental to the community."

Kelley is not alone in her doubts about the alternate route. Junior Aman-

da Thomas remains unconvinced that Kirksville needs the alternate route.

"Maybe I just haven't been reading the right things, but I have yet to read anything that gives me a good reason why this alternate route is needed," Thomas said. "Also, with the upcoming economic crunch, how are we going to pay for it?"

Kuhns, who has lived in Kirksville since 1996, is looking forward to the completion of the 63 alternate route.

"I think, as any long-time resident of Adair County probably knows, we've been hoping for an alternate route 63 and asking for it for at least five decades," Kuhns said. "I'm personally excited about it. I think it's going to improve safety along Baltimore. It's going to take some of that unsafe traffic ... and generally make it a lot easier for us to do business."

To learn more about the highway 63 alternate route project, or to post a comment, visit www.modot.org/northcentral.

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