

Rock Island Trail meeting Jan. 20 at Scenic Regional; 'assessment' session afterward at Owensville City Hall

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Missouri State Parks will be hosting a Jan. 20 public meeting from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Scenic Regional Library in Owensville, followed by an assessment meeting for city, county, and state officials at Owensville City Hall.

Rep. Bruce Sassmann of the 62nd District said on Tuesday that the second meeting is not meant to be open to the public.

"If people have something to offer, they won't be turned away," Sassmann said. "Missouri State Parks is interested in meeting with key individuals to discuss resources along the trail. Communities and counties could detail readiness for the future trail."

The meeting with public officials is set for 7:30 p.m., directly following the public meeting at the library.

"They want a smaller crowd of officials to do an as-

essment of what communities have to offer the state," Sassmann said.

Sassmann said the planning of the secondary meeting was partly his doing.

"We visited with the director of State Parks, and determined that they wanted to meet with officials from towns along the trail," Sassmann said. "I said 'we need an assessment meeting, visit with communities about resources available. Do it right after the public meeting, move it from the library to city hall because city officials will already be present.'"

Sassmann said there may be more persons present than he is aware. According to a letter sent out by Meramec Regional Planning Commission's Director Bonnie Prigge, the mayors of Belle, Bland, Owensville, Rosebud, and Gerald have been invited.

"Maybe spokespersons for school districts who want to apply for safe routes to schools grants (in conjunction with the cities)," Sassmann said. "Mayors may have invited

school officials for those who plan to participate."

Missouri State Parks may have advice for trail communities who want to begin developing their own sections of the trail.

"State Parks is treating the Rock Island as different sections of a trail," Sassmann said. "Eastern and western sections will be treated differently and tunnels and bridges will be their own thing."

A second assessment meeting has been scheduled to take place in Eldon in conjunction with Missouri State Parks and Rep. Willard Haley, 58th District, following the Jan. 18 Versailles public meeting.

No assessment meetings are scheduled following the Jan. 25 meeting in Freeburg, located in the central portion of the Rock Island Trail.

"State Parks would have to be engaged as a partner in an assessment meeting," Sassmann said. "We will gauge how future assessment meetings might go (after the first meeting)."