

A model for economic growth in Whatcom County: The Trail Town Program along the Great Allegheny Passage

A presentation on how Whatcom County could realize significant economic impact through an investment in infrastructure that complements both the environment and culture of the region.

When: 09.15.15 at 3:00PM

Where: 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 105, Bellingham, WA 98229

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) is a multi-use pedestrian path that connects Washington, DC to Pittsburgh, PA, traversing rural Pennsylvania and Maryland. It contributes \$50 million annually to rural economies. In Whatcom County, the Bay to Baker Trail has been in the planning states for decades, but little has been accomplished.

David Kahley, is President & CEO of The Progress Fund and its Trail Town Program®, which has been instrumental in the development of a rural tourism industry along the Great Allegheny Passage. Mr. Kahley moved to Washington in 1985, to start and run the Port Townsend Main Street Project. After running the Bellevue Transportation Management Association, he returned to Pennsylvania in 1995 to start The Progress Fund, utilizing what he learned in Washington to create an exciting new program.

Mr. Kahley has climbed and skied extensively in the North Cascades. According to Mr. Kahley, “The parallels between rural Pennsylvania and Whatcom County are staggering. Both economies trend strongly towards outdoor recreation and tourism, and in many ways, the rural nature and pristine environments of both is their greatest asset. The GAP Trail has fundamentally transformed the economy of our region. This has all been accomplished while maintaining its quiet, rural nature, and enhancing quality of life for residents. I am excited to return to share my experiences, and to explore the opportunities available to the area.”

Mr. Kahley will be addressing the Whatcom County Counsel on September 15, 2015, with a 45-minute presentation on how and why the GAP was such an economic success, and what we need to execute to realize those same benefits.

Mr. Kahley’s visit is sponsored by The Mt. Baker Trail Association.

Mr. David A. Kahley is co-founder and President and CEO of The Progress Fund, a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) incorporated in 1997 and based in Greensburg, PA. The Progress Fund provides small business loans in rural Pennsylvania, West Virginia, western Maryland, and southeastern Ohio. With assets over \$38 million, The Progress Fund is one of the largest CDFIs specializing in small business financing.

The Mt. Baker Trail Association is a Washington State not-for-profit whose mission is to enhance existing trails and create new trails for multi-use, non-motorized transportation that will facilitate safe, alternative transportation and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, and provide diversification of the Mt. Baker Highway Corridor’s economic base. The Mt. Baker Trail Association is based in Glacier, WA, and its board consists of area residents and business owners. Contact: mtbakerta@gmail.com.