

Hike a walk into trails' future

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A Sunday morning hike, organized as part of Avondale's Billy Moore Heritage Days, could be the forerunner of a major West Valley trail system.

The Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor are offering the free 2.5-mile hike starting at Avondale's Friendship Park.

The trail is minimally improved, but the Friends want you to hike it to get a taste of a potentially 30-mile series of trails ranging south from Lake Pleasant.

Herman Orcutt, president-elect of the Friends, says the vision is to use the whole Agua Fria and New River system for recreation.

Orcutt foresees water channels graded in the riverbeds. He anticipates developed soccer fields, baseball diamonds and basketball courts on higher ground. He sees lots of uses, lots of opportunities for recreation.

"But what is really exciting is the linear trail part of it," Orcutt said. "You can go all the way from Lake Pleasant down to the Gila River."

The Avondale segment is a chance for people to experience the concept on a small scale.

Avondale employees have run a utility cart along the trail, marking it and making it easy for walking.

Volunteers have built a wooden bridge over a small stretch of open water near where the trail crosses under Interstate 10.

Avondale is seeking bids now for a 2.5-mile trail on top of the levee that will connect Friendship Park with Coldwater Park, said Dan Davis, the city's parks and recreation director and a board member of the Friends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor.

The Friendship-Coldwater trail is planned to be multipurpose, open to hikers, inline skaters and bicyclists. When it is completed, the trail in the river bottom will be converted to equestrian use, Davis said.

Sunday's hike is the first of what Orcutt plans to be a regular experience along the corridor.

"We're going to try to do this every year, take a different piece and just do a rough piece of trail," he said.

The Avondale trail is never far from civilization. I-10, with its size and noise, dominates the northern part of the hike. Electricity transmission lines also are impossible to ignore.

However, the hiker can take pleasure in seeing landscape and features that are barely a blur for those making the all-cylinders-firing transit on the freeway.

The hike offers the urban-trail sense of solitude and nature amid what seems like out-of-control haste.