BREAKING OUT

Swamp Rabbit Trail set for May debut

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The gestation period has een lengthy. Delivery is ngoing. But the due date r the Greenville Hospital ystem Swamp Rabbit rail is set for the May 7-9 eekend.

When the baby finally rrives, it will be a joyous ay, but like a real child the)-mile trail from Travel- rs Rest to the Greenville ity limits is just the begin- ing.

Nurturing this child and atching it grow is next on ie agenda.

But first, work continues n the section of the green- ay between Furman Uni- ersity and the city limits. ive former railroad bridg- s are being reconstructed nd weather delays have een the norm for the past ew months.

"When the bridges are uilt, the asphalt doesn't ake too long," said Ty ouck, Greenville county's director of Greenways, Natural and Historic Resources. "The decking and railings go up pretty fast, too. It's the bridges that are the holdup."



GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

Workers convert a railroad to a pedestrian bridge on the Swamp Rabbit Trail near State 253.

Still, Houck said the May completion date is likely. Especially because a series of special events are being planned to celebrate the occasion.

One of those events is the second annual GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail 5k. Last year's race nearly overwhelmed race organizers as nearly 2,000 runners and walkers flooded the route in Travelers Rest. Race director Chad Carlson said the general location for this year's race is the same, but the route will be different.

"We'll make sure we can handle a crowd," Carlson said. "We're still going to have it on Friday night, and it should kick off the weekend's events."

When the county's 9.2-mile section of trail from the North Greenville Hospital to the city limits opens, it will link together a total of 14 miles of trail as it will connect to the section at Linky Stone Park and through to Cleveland Park and beyond.

That section of trail ends at the Reedy River at Greenville Tech. Meanwhile, construction is complete on the southernmost two miles of the greenway at Conestee Nature Park. By August, those two miles are expected to connect to two more miles of trail to be built alongside the Reedy River and up to I-85.

At that point, the trail can be connected via low-traffic roads in the Parkins Mill area where future trai expansion is still in the planning stages. But Houck said cyclists, runners and walkers will find their way along roads from Greenville Tech to I-85 and will informally link the 18 mile section until a dedicated trail is built.

"That won't be the end," Houck said. "The idea is connect this through al the cities. Mauldin wants to connect and so do others."

The lure for cities is enormous. Already, Travelers Rest is landscaping and streetscaping its downtown to highlight the trail. Several businesses have located near the trail and Houck said others are ready to provide services such as bike rentals and restaurants to cater to trai users.

"Travelers Rest is really becoming a nice destination," he said. "I think what they've done there makes a big difference."