

Chapter Four

Conclusion/Summary



COVER: Cuyahoga River from the Carter Road Bridge

Conclusion/Summary

For millennia, the Cuyahoga River Valley has been used as a transportation route, both via water and traversing its slopes and ridgelines on foot. European settlement brought a canal, railroads, and streets to the valley, but crossing the river was still accomplished on bridges at riverbank level. During the 20th century, engineering and construction advances freed the transportation network of the constraints of topography, resulting in bridges spanning the valley rim-to-rim and freeways that reshaped the landscape for the benefit of travel by automobile, truck, and bus. An ancient connection to the landscape, plants, animals, and water of the Cuyahoga River Valley slipped away.

At the turn of the 21st century, the region is rediscovering the valley, its river, and its canal. The prescient creation of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area a generation ago protected land that would have evolved very differently without that effort. The rediscovery of the canal has extended south through Akron and into the Tuscarawas River Valley, a full

100 miles from the terminus of the canal near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie. To the north of the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Cleveland Metroparks has created a reservation weaving together the stories of nature and man at work.

For its final few miles, the river valley is filled with the activity of steel mills, shipping, turn of the century neighborhoods, and an entertainment district, but without a route through which to explore and reach the city skyline that marks the endpoint of the canal, along with the Lake Erie shoreline. The Towpath Trail extension, through its educational capacity, recreational opportunity, quality of life enhancement, economic revitalization potential, and environmental improvement can be a linear connection for projects and locations forming an exciting array of resources anchoring the north end of the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor for generations to come.