

## Appendix E: Reports of Meetings

Several meetings with stakeholders and the public were held throughout the project. Reports from the following meetings are presented in this appendix:

- ▶ 9/21/2018 USACE Coordination Meeting
- ▶ 11/29/2018 Project Steering Committee Meeting
- ▶ 8/8/2018 Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee Meeting
- ▶ 2/28/2019 Thomaston Public Information Meeting
- ▶ 3/6/2019 Harwinton Public Information Meeting
- ▶ 3/7/2019 Litchfield Public Information Meeting
- ▶ 4/3/2019 USACE OHV Area Meeting/ Site Walk
- ▶ 8/7/2019 USACE Coordination Meeting
- ▶ 9/24/2019 Project Steering Committee Meeting



## NRG USACE Coordination Meeting – 9/21/2018

Thomaston Dam Project Office, Thomaston, CT

### Background

In March of 2018, CT Senators Blumenthal and Murphy submitted a letter to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works listing water resources priorities to be considered in the Water Resources Development Act. The letter included a request for a feasibility study for the development of the Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Trail through US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) owned land associated with Thomaston Dam, and the subsequent construction of the trail through Corps owned land. Staff at the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) followed up with the USACE New England District Planning Office, who requested more information about the NRG and asked to set a meeting so that the Corps could be better acquainted with the project and offer opinions on the appropriateness of using WRDA funds for the project.

### Attendance

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Email</u>
Mark Nielsen	NVCOG	<a href="mailto:mnielsen@nvcogct.org">mnielsen@nvcogct.org</a>
Chris Way	USACE - NRB	<a href="mailto:christopher.d.way@usace.army.mil">christopher.d.way@usace.army.mil</a>
Rista Malanca	NRG Steering Committee	<a href="mailto:Rista.Malanca@torringtonct.org">Rista.Malanca@torringtonct.org</a>
Rick Dunne	NVCOG	<a href="mailto:rdunne@nvcogct.org">rdunne@nvcogct.org</a>
Ellen Graham	Senator Blumenthal	<a href="mailto:ellen_graham@blumenthal.senate.gov">ellen_graham@blumenthal.senate.gov</a>
Steve Patchkofsky	USACE	<a href="mailto:steven.d.patchkofsky@usace.army.mil">steven.d.patchkofsky@usace.army.mil</a>
Adam Durando	USACE	<a href="mailto:adam.durando@usace.army.mil">adam.durando@usace.army.mil</a>
Kimberly Russell	USACE	<a href="mailto:kimberly.russell@usace.army.mil">kimberly.russell@usace.army.mil</a>
Jack Walsh	NRG Steering Committee	<a href="mailto:johnwalshderby@comcast.net">johnwalshderby@comcast.net</a>
Billy Taylor	Representative Esty	<a href="mailto:billy.taylor@mail.house.gov">billy.taylor@mail.house.gov</a>
John Kennelly	USACE - Planning	<a href="mailto:john.R.Kennelly@usace.army.mil">john.R.Kennelly@usace.army.mil</a>
Chris Hatfield	USACE - Planning	<a href="mailto:christopher.l.hatfield@usace.army.mil">christopher.l.hatfield@usace.army.mil</a>
Kenny Curran	Senator Murphy	<a href="mailto:kenny_curran@murphy.senate.gov">kenny_curran@murphy.senate.gov</a>
Aaron Budris	NVCOG	<a href="mailto:abudris@nvcogct.org">abudris@nvcogct.org</a>
John Haluchak	USACE	<a href="mailto:John.A.Haluchak@usace.army.mil">John.A.Haluchak@usace.army.mil</a>

## Proceeding

Chris Way, Naugatuck River Basin Manager opened the meeting at 10am, welcomed everyone, and introductions were made.

Aaron Budris, Senior Regional Planner at NVCOG gave a slide presentation about the background, progress and future of the Naugatuck River Greenway, and discussed the following highlights:

- The NRG is a state designated greenway. Greenways are defined by state statute as a corridor of open space that meets one or several criteria defined in CGS section 23-100.
- The defining feature of the NRG is the NRG Trail, a multiuse trail that will connect 11 communities following the Naugatuck River for approximately 44 miles from Torrington to Derby.
- The trail will be to the greatest extent possible:
  - Paved or compact stonedust,
  - Accessible for all non-motorized users
  - 10+ feet wide
  - Off Road/ separated from traffic
- The purpose of the trail is to:
  - Improve health and quality of life of residents
  - Provide a viable transportation option
  - Restore river access
  - Provide economic opportunities
- Trail development is being undertaken at the local level using local, state and federal funds with assistance from the NHCOG and NVCOG and guided by the NRG Steering Committee
- An economic study conducted by the CT Center for Economic Analysis at UConn found that there would be substantial economic benefits to trail buildout far above and beyond the appx. \$80m price tag of construction. In 2031, conservative estimated benefits from a completed trail would be:
  - \$42.6m in annual direct spending
  - \$34.6m in annual Consumer Surplus
  - \$259.6m in Cumulative Health Benefits
- To date, about 5 miles of trail has been built including sections in Derby, Ansonia, Seymour, Beacon Falls, Naugatuck, Waterbury and Watertown
- Within the next 2 years an additional 5 miles of trail is expected to be built in Waterbury, Thomaston, Ansonia and Torrington.
- To date there has been more than \$15.8 million spent or allocated to design and construction of the NRG Trail from federal sources.
- There is currently a comprehensive routing study in progress looking at the section of trail from Bogue Road in Torrington to Thomaston, including about 6 miles along the

Naugatuck River on property owned by the USACE. The study was funded under a state grant to NVCOG, and is being conducted by BSC Group. The intent is to identify, through stakeholder and public outreach and engagement, a preferred route from the many potential routes that have been previously identified. In response to a question asked by Adam Durando, Mark Nielsen explained that a pre-determined, preferred alignment has not been selected and that the intent of the study is to fully vet all potential routes and determine advantages and constraints of all possible routes. All potential routes are being identified and mapped and will be scored with input from stakeholders. Project phasing recommendations and construction cost estimates are part of the scope.

- Several potential general routing options were discussed, along with pros and cons of each.
- There are several examples of multiuse trails being built on USACE land and within flood risk reduction project impoundment areas including the J. Percy Priest Greenway in North Murfreesboro, TN which was funded for construction with \$4.053m under WRDA.
- It is understood that there are special concerns with a trail on Corps property including conflicting existing uses, safety, maintenance and flooding/ cleanup.

Aaron concluded the presentation by asking how NVCOG and BSC can better engage with the Corps regarding the routing study, and whether there were specific programs or funding opportunities that could be explored to help facilitate parts of the project. He also explained that since the trail is in close proximity to Corps built infrastructure, and in many cases on top of levees, there is a great opportunity for the Corps to promote its efforts and primary mission to the public along the NRG.

Jack Walsh, NRG Steering Committee Co-Chair explained that he has given tours of the NRG and City of Derby History, and found that very few people know about the Flood of '55 or the federal response to it. The City has always intended to develop interpretive signage about the Corps Levees and flood protection. He also explained that the Derby section is well used and very popular.

Steve Patchkofsky, USACE Project Manager at Thomaston Dam, explained current operations and recreation at Thomaston Dam. He discussed dam operations that routinely inundate parts of the impoundment including old Route 8 and other potential NRG routes. He also talked about the OHV (Dirt Bike) trails and users as well as the bow and upland game hunting allowed on the property. He explained that these uses are long standing, and in the case of dirt bikes, the only place in the state where riders can ride legally on public property.

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG Director of Planning, explained that the idea would not be to supplant any existing uses, but to find a way for users to co-exist safely. He said that hunting is allowed in a number of state forests and preserves that also have trails, so that should not be a reason for not locating the NRG trail in the area. He reiterated and emphasized that it is NVCOG's

intent to engage the Corps, as well as other user groups, during the planning process so that a consensus can be made on a path forward, and solutions can be found that benefit the Corps and the communities along the NRG.

Adam Durando, USACE NED Deputy Director of Operations, said that the NRG is a worthy cause and similar projects had been undertaken at Corps properties in the district. The Corps is not opposed to such projects, but it needs to be done in a way that does not impact the existing uses of the property or impact flood control operations.

John Kennelly, USACE NED Planning, explained that the meeting was set up in response to a WRDA inquiry by NVCOG. He explained that trails are not a common use of WRDA which is usually used to fund water resources projects like dredging and restoration. He said that he briefly looked at the North Murfreesboro example, and he guessed that it was funded with an earmark. He didn't think that these types of appropriations would be likely going forward.

Kenny Curran, State Director for Senator Murphy's Office, stated that development of the NRG Trail project is a high priority for the congressional delegation, as demonstrated by the attendance at the meeting of Senator Murphy's, Senator Blumenthal's and Congresswoman Esty's offices. He reiterated that his office would be investigating all potential funding options.

Chris Way asked if there would be alternate routes identified that would be used if the trail needed to be closed on Corps property. Aaron answered that the ongoing routing study would investigate that, but it would make sense to have a temporary on-road route for cyclists.

Kimberly Russell, USACE NED Operations, discussed several options for ROW access including property transfer and easements. She also talked about Corps design standards that would be required for any work done within the impoundment area. She stressed that the discussion was not to discourage the project, but to make potential issues known up front. Aaron Budris and Mark Nielsen agreed and said that is why cooperation from the Corps in the planning process is so important.

Aaron Budris asked if the Corps would be able to endorse the NRG Thomaston to Torrington Routing study report at the end of a process in which the Corps was engaged.

Kimberly Russell was unsure that the Corps would be able to endorse our study, but offered that it might be possible to request a letter from the district commander.

Adam Durando explained that the siting of trail on Corps property would be dependent on whether or not there were feasible alternatives. He stressed due diligence in looking at alternatives.

Aaron asked if there was a Corps process better suited to achieving the goal of establishing routing for the trail through Corps property.

John Kennelly answered that the planning office does not have expertise in trails so it would likely need to outsource any similar study. He explained that they would likely be following the

same steps and using the same techniques as BSC is using, and that the BSC study results should be able to be recognized by the Corps.

Aaron asked if NVCOG and BSC should be engaging with the Corps locally or at the district level, and who should be included in the discussion. Steve Patchkofsky responded that he should be the primary contact, and Chris Way asked to be copied on any discussion. Kimberly Russell said that the local contacts would elevate any discussion to the district as necessary. The congressional staff also requested to be included in any discussion.

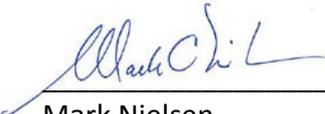
Rick Dunne, NVCOG Executive Director implored the Corps to help find a solution, stating that it doesn't look like there is anywhere else to go – that the trail will need to cross Corps property at some point. The trail will eventually connect Torrington and Derby.

Aaron Budris explained that the next steps in the routing study will be landowner engagement and trail segment scoring. BSC and NVCOG would be reaching out soon to meet with the Corps regarding specific routes that have been identified. Steve Patchkofsky said that he would facilitate that and offered assistance with field visits.

We believe the report of this meeting reasonably reflect the content and findings of the meeting. Unless notified in writing to the contrary within ten (10) days of receipt of this report, we will assume all in attendance concur with the accuracy of this transcript.

Submitted by:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Aaron Budris

Date: October 2, 2018

Approved by:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Nielsen

Date: October 2, 2018



## Record of Meeting

### **Naugatuck River Greenway Torrington to Thomaston Routing Study**

#### **Stakeholders Meeting**

**11/29/2018, 9am, NHCOG Office, Goshen, CT**

#### **Attendance:**

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG

Rick Lynn, NHCOG

Suzanne Stich, Town of Harwinton

Howard Pincus, Naugatuck Railroad

Jeremy Leifert, Town of Thomaston

Rob Newton, BSC Group

Bill Paille, BSC Group

Matthew Ciminella, BSC Group

Steve Patchkofsky, USACE

Christopher Way, USACE

Cleve Fuessenich, Town of Litchfield

Martin Connor, City of Torrington

Meeting began at 9:05am

Rick Lynn opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Aaron Budris explained the project background and work completed to date. The project is funded with a Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development grant from the CT Office of Policy and Management awarded to NVCOG. BSC Group was selected in Fall of 2017 by a selection committee consisting of representatives from the four involved municipalities. A kickoff meeting was held in January 2018 in Thomaston, and BSC has been working since to collect field data and compile all potential routes.

Bill Paille briefly explained work to date, and explained that he and Matt Ciminella would be going over the scoring matrix that BSC is using to assess trail segment feasibility, and then would go over the potential routes in detail. He also thanked the stakeholders that BSC met with separately to walk sections of corridor, saying that seeing potential routes and hearing about concerns was enlightening.

Matt Ciminella explained the trail segment scoring matrix and distributed a summary of each trail segment to be presented. The matrix is comprised of several categories including Geometry/Traffic,

Land Ownership, Accessibility/Connectivity, Aesthetic/Visual Bicycling Environment that will be scored out of 100 points for each individual segment with consideration to estimated construction cost. The matrix will also score several routes comprised of various trail segments that will be used to determine a preferred route and develop a phasing plan for funding/construction.

Matt then presented the study in detail, using an interactive web map (<https://arcg.is/1SXbeg>) to illustrate each segment. The webmap contained each line segment along with environmental data published by CT DEEP and NVCOG as well as data collected by BSC in the field. This meeting was an introduction to the route segments, and the webmap and matrix spreadsheet should be further studied by stakeholders.

Concerns and questions raised:

Howard Pincus asked about the "HAWK" crossing noted in the matrix. Bill explained that a HAWK system (High-intensity Activated Crossing Beacon) is one type of pedestrian actuated safety signal used at mid-block at grade pedestrian crossings. The signal is appropriate on higher speed/volume roads to provide for a safe pedestrian crossing by stopping traffic when someone is in the crosswalk. More information from CT DOT here:

[http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dtrafficdesign/safety/hawk\\_signals.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dtrafficdesign/safety/hawk_signals.pdf)

Cleve Fuessenich said that he thought there would be resistance to routing the trail in East Litchfield on the West side of the tracks in the vicinity of the old East Litchfield Train Station. He discussed local opposition that he is aware of, and suggested that routing on the east side of the rail might be preferred. Aaron brought up a concern that routing the trail on the east side of the rail without providing a safe crossing would invite illegal and unsafe rail crossing by residents wishing to get on the trail without going all the way to a trailhead. Howard Pincus mentioned that there had been discussions with the RMNE and residents about a new East Litchfield Station to access the Naugatuck Railroad. Bill pointed out an old Route 118 abutment that could be used to get up and over the rail south of the existing Route 118.

Howard said that the property along South Main Street/ Torrington Road immediately north of Route 118 across from the commuter lot is owned by a trucking company that uses that lot for snow storage in the winter.

The question was raised whether it was considered to cantilever a structure off of the route 118 bridge over route 8 and the river. Bill Paille answered that yes it was considered but it was unlikely ConnDOT would approve of any new modifications to an existing structure so the option was dismissed.

Mark Nielsen agreed that CT DOT would be unlikely to approve any modifications to existing structures. He also discussed bridge type and loading ratings, explaining that purely pedestrian load rated bridges are perfectly acceptable in some instances and much cheaper to design and construct. Bridges that are designed to carry an emergency vehicle are much more expensive, but may

be required depending on location or funding source. Mark also discussed some of the design requirements that he thinks are excessive.

Suzanne Stich asked if separate bike lanes or a cycle track being considered along Valley Road in Harwinton. Bill answered that both are being considered. Aaron explained that NVCOG did traffic volume counts at several locations on Valley Road last summer. Traffic volumes and speeds on the entire stretch were very low. South of the Northfield Road intersection, there were 90 and 80 average trips reported daily at two separate locations, and speeds were generally low. Between Northfield Road and Campville Road where residents from Harwinton cut through to st to Route 8, average volumes were slightly higher at just under 300 ADT, but speeds were low. Aaron explained that this is a prime location for a shared use road where motorized uses and bicyclists and pedestrians could safely share the roadway without physical separation, and would be very inexpensive. Traffic calming devices such as signage and speed bumps could be implemented to increase safety.

Steve Patchkofsky explained that part of Valley Road does get inundated when the Thomaston Dam impoundment exceeds 60 feet, which occurs once every several years. In that case, the Corps notifies the town, and the town closes the road.

Chris Way and Steve Patchkofsky reiterated the USACE recommendation that the trail avoid the west side of the River through Corps property, citing conflicting uses. Steve explained that the OHV area is busy with motorized dirt bikers throughout the summer typically from May 1 - mid-October. OHVs are allowed on the west side of the dam and river, and are allowed on the paved section of old route 8. Thomaston Dam is the only public place in CT to ride dirt bikes, and they will continue to be allowed into the future. The area is very busy especially on the weekends during the summer. Steve also discussed hunting and safety concerns during hunting season. The entire USACE property is open to hunting, and the property is stocked with game birds by DEEP. Hunting for birds and small game by shotgun is allowed from mid-October - end of February. Bow hunting for deer is allowed in the Fall and Winter as well. Most of the DEEP bird stocking takes place on the west side of the river, and that is where most of the shotgun hunting takes place.

Steve was asked if cyclists or pedestrians are allowed into the OHV area. He answered that they are, and there are a few regulars that walk their dogs or walk, but they typically avoid doing so when there are a lot of OHVs, and most do not venture past the "Pine Grove" area. He explained that there are signs posted during hunting season warning pedestrians that they should wear fluorescent orange. He said that there had been some close calls with hunters firing in close proximity to park staff. He explained that the OHV area is closed when hunting season is open to avoid OHV-Hunter conflict.

Steve also expressed concern about parking for the trail. In particular, the capacity of the Vista Picnic Area lot and the OHV and Dam parking areas, and potential of trail users to interfere with those who want to access the dam or picnic area.

Howard Pincus discussed concerns about liability and safety. There is a likelihood for increased liability insurance when the railroad has to answer “yes” that there is a trail in the rail corridor. He also discussed the increased cost to the railroad from maintenance of any required safety infrastructure installed. He emphasized that the Naugatuck Railroad runs both passenger sightseeing trips and freight on the line, and that safety is their utmost concern.

Mark Nielsen discussed research done by the Rails to Trails Conservancy (<https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/americas-rails-with-trails/>) and other organizations that demonstrated that trails actually make railroads safer by providing a safe path for those that might otherwise walk the rail to get from point a to b. By trail users providing “eyes” on the rail corridor, it also serves to dissuade trespassers / vandals / etc. Mark also explained that there is a recreational use statute in Connecticut that serves to limit liability to property owners who open their properties to public recreational use. It does not currently include railroads, but there is work being done by the CT Greenways Council, the COGs and others to change that.

Howard Pincus also suggested that a minimum of 25 foot vertical clearance be maintained from the top of the rails to the bottom of any new structure proposed over the active rail line.

Jeremy Leifert explained that there is a handshake deal with the owner of the property across Route 222 from Corps property to permit the trail to be routed through the property which stretches nearly to Railroad Annex Street. Two residential properties will need to be skirted, possibly along the Railroad ROW, and adjacent to the residential driveways to get to Railroad Annex Street. It would then be possible to continue under Route 8 to the Plume and Atwood Property, where the property owner has expressed interest in incorporating the trail into redevelopment plans.

Jeremy also said that Elm Street was the preferred on-road route for the trail adjacent to downtown since it has relatively low volume/speed traffic, and is also very close to downtown creating connections to businesses and the municipal center.

Aaron Budris discussed next steps for the project. BSC will be separating the overall corridor into sections and grouping the smaller route segments into routes to traverse each of the sections. Routes will be scored using route segment scores weighted by length. Feasible routes will be shared with stakeholders, and a short list of 2 or 3 options for each section will be presented to the public, probably in January. Aaron explained that public engagement is very important, and the scope of work with BSC included public information meetings/ workshops in each community.

Aaron asked if individual public meetings in each community is feasible/ preferable. Since Torrington has so little trail in town, Martin Connor said it might be possible to combine Torrington with Harwinton or Litchfield. Representatives from Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston agreed, however, that there should be separate meetings in those 3 towns. It was suggested that the meetings give an overview of the overall route, but focus mainly on the impacts to the town where the meeting is being held.

Aaron thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their input. He also requested that everyone look over the matrix and map and provide comments to him ([abudris@nvcogct.org](mailto:abudris@nvcogct.org)), and he will pass them on to BSC. He stressed the importance of stakeholder participation and buy-in if the final report is to be useful.

The meeting was closed at 12:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Budris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line at the end.

Aaron Budris  
NVCOG Senior Regional Planner



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Torrington • Harwinton • Litchfield • Thomaston • Watertown • Waterbury • Naugatuck • Beacon Falls • Seymour • Ansonia • Derby

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – 9am

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury

See last page for attendance and a roster of steering committee members.

Co-Chair Rista Malanca opened the meeting, and introductions were made. Rista introduced **Kendra Barat**, an intern with the National Park Service who is authoring an article about the NRG and John Monroe's role with the NPS in helping with capacity building and NRGSC development. Kendra spent several days touring open sections of NRG and discussing the NRGSC with the Co-Chairs.

William Luneski introduced himself as the new alternate to the committee from Ansonia.

Bill Paille, Matthew Ciminella and Jesse Harris of BSC Group presented progress to date in the **Torrington to Thomaston Routing Study**. You can view their presentation [HERE](#). Bill began the presentation with an overview of the project. Jesse explained that BSC Ecological Scientist Ale Echandi spent several days in the late winter and early spring conducting field walks along the entire project corridor, and recording environmental data using a tablet and GPS. Features including potential routes, wetlands, culverts, drainage features, pinch points, viewsheds, etc. were recorded and have been compiled into a GIS system along with existing data compiled by NVCOG. Jesse gave the committee a preview of the GIS system and the overwhelming amount of data that it consists of which will be used for potential routes analysis. A web based GIS application will be made available to the committee and the public shortly.

Matthew presented the potential routes that are being developed in a series of maps, walking the group through the corridor from North to South. Route sections are being numbered by section with common connection points so that route segments and connections can be evaluated separately. Bill highlighted some of the more difficult sections and presented some potential solutions. Rail separation was discussed, as some sections may warrant a "rails with trails" solution, and FHWA rail/trail separation guidelines were presented.

Howard Pincus asked for clarification about several terms used by the BSC team, and expressed concern about safety, especially with planned increases in both sightseeing passenger and freight service in the future. HE also explained that there is an active siding in East Litchfield that needs to be kept active. Howard asked if the railroad would be consulted, and stated that they had not yet had opportunity to provide input. There will be stakeholder outreach and consultation once all potential routes have been identified and mapped.

Howard also brought up the issue of liability, explaining that the railroad's insurance provider asks about the existence of trails within the ROW. He explained that if a trail was built, that he would assume that the railroad's rates would increase. Rista explained that the CT Greenways Council (CGC) has been discussing this issue. There was recreation liability legislation passed a few years ago that applies to municipalities and utility companies that limits liability when property is made available for recreation free of charge. As written, the legislation does not apply to railroads, but there is an effort by the CGC amend the legislation to include them.

*"The Naugatuck River from Torrington to Derby is rich with history, stunning scenery and wildlife. Just as the river built and shaped our towns and cities, the Naugatuck River Greenway will be a driving force for the next century and beyond.*

*Our mission is to harness the vitality and protect the health of the river for economic development and quality of life for all."*

Cleve Fuessenich expressed concerns about routes in East Litchfield, explaining that he thinks there will be pushback from residents to any routes in the community. Bill explained that there will be opportunity for public input, and ultimately, routes will not be recommended that do not have public support. Aaron explained that it was understood that there were some concerns about the greenway, and the contracted scope of work for the routing study includes several rounds of public outreach. Once all prospective routes have been determined and the matrix has been formulated, the project team will be visiting Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston to present the study to residents and ask for public input. Another round of outreach will be planned when routing has been further refined.

Rista offered assistance in reaching out to O&G who owns significant property on the east bank of the river in Harwinton associated with their materials processing plant.

Jeremy Leifert mentioned that between Hill Road and Route 6, the two main property owners are receptive to routing through their properties between the River and Rail. There are two residential properties that might be an obstacle, however.

The next steps for the study will be continued route evaluation and route evaluation based on a matrix in development. The first round of public outreach will be planned for early fall. The project team will also be reaching out to stakeholders including the Naugatuck Railroad, the USACE, ConnDOT, municipal officials and key property owners along the route.

Aaron discussed progress and news regarding the **NRG Signage Procurement Project** that is being funded with a DEEP Rec Trails grant. A [draft interpretive sign](#) was presented, and a full size mock-up was passed around. This “NRG vision” sign with base will be purchased for open sections of trail, and it is designed to give some background on the Naugatuck River and to introduce trail users to the idea of a connected 44-mile NRG Trail. The signs will be purchased this fall for installation in the spring.

The Signage Procurement project was also intended to purchase trailhead wayfinding signage to direct potential trail users to trailheads, and to help promote the NRG. Aaron explained that he has been working since the grant was received to get confirmation from CT DOT that the designs meet DOT standards and would be allowed along state routes. Sign designs were submitted for review, originally to the DOT district office with no response, then to DOT headquarters. The intent was to ensure that designs would be acceptable to DOT for placement within state ROW on state roads. Town public works would be responsible for installing the signs, and would need an encroachment permit to install signs along state roads, and NVCOG wanted to make sure that that process would go smoothly. Aaron finally received a response in May. The CTDOT traffic division discussed the issue and ruled that wayfinding signage for linear trails will not be permitted within state ROW along state roads. They further stated that linear trails would likely not be considered for the Tourism Signage Program. Aaron explained that most of the sign locations that had been identified on the [NRG sign siting map](#) were on state roads, and without those directional signs, wayfinding to trailheads would not work.

There was discussion about whether or not there was already directional signage installed for trails on state routes, and it was suggested that there might be for the Larkin Trail and for the Hop River trail in Vernon. There were also questions about the importance of being a state designated greenway if state agencies would not recognize the designation.

Aaron explained that NVCOG has until May to expend the grant money. If wayfinding signage was ruled out at this point, an alternate use of the funds should be suggested and run by DEEP. He suggested the possibility of

purchasing trailhead entrance signage instead, and presented a variant of the 12x48" sign that could be used for that purpose.

The general sentiment of the group was that they were not ready to give up on the wayfinding signage, and suggested that NVCOG push back against the DOT ruling. Rista said that the Greenways Council should discuss the issue at the next CGC meeting. Aaron said he would look into other ways forward.

Rista explained that the outreach for the **NRG Economic Study** is ongoing. NVCOG staff and Co-Chairs have met with CEOs or presented the study with committees or boards in Torrington, Harwinton, Litchfield, Thomaston, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, Ansonia and Derby. A meeting in Seymour was cancelled due to the severe storms in May, but will be rescheduled. Rista also explained that there has been some discussion about hosting a legislative outreach event in May at a location along the trail. The purpose would be to promote the NRG as a regional priority to state decision makers. Assistance will be needed to help plan for such an event, and NVCOG is looking for funding.

The **Watertown Thomaston Recreational Trails** project is underway, and Mark Nielsen gave a project update. The project scope includes design of critical elements in Watertown, and design and construction of a section in Thomaston connecting a trailhead on Old Waterbury Road near the dog pound to the future crossing of Branch Brook. VHB has submitted Draft design plans to the towns and NVCOG. The plan includes two parking areas along York (Old Waterbury) road to accommodate 13 vehicles with additional parking available along the road shoulders. A 10 foot wide stone dust trail will extend 1100 feet from the parking area following along the northern edge of the WPC facility property, turning south parallel to Branch Brook, then turning toward the river at the preferred crossing location. VHB is investigating bridge types and costs, and NVCOG is exploring funding options (the bridge will not be covered by the Rec Trails grant).

A Public information meeting was held on June 21<sup>st</sup>, and around a dozen residents attended. There was no opposition or negative comments expressed about the plans. Mark explained that NVCOG is exploring some funding options that could allow the trail and a bridge to be constructed simultaneously. NVCOG's contract with DEEP ends August 31<sup>st</sup> and an extension has been filed to allow for construction in spring 2019. VHB is continuing to design critical features in Watertown.

Rista discussed potential upcoming ribbon cuttings or promotional events. Ansonia had scheduled a last minute event for Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, but rain postponed it, and Ansonia rescheduled it at 10am on the 8<sup>th</sup>, simultaneous with the NRGSC meeting. DOT has not yet handed over the trail next to the new bus maintenance facility in Watertown to the town, so there is no ribbon cutting scheduled right now. There was no one present to report on Seymour's grand opening of their newly completed trail section.

DEEP has announced a new round of grant funding through the Recreational Trails program, and a request for applications has been sent out with a deadline of October 31<sup>st</sup>. \$3 million will be awarded in what will surely be a very competitive process. More information is available on the DEEP Rec Trails page [HERE](#). Rista suggested that the NRGSC meet early or hold a special meeting to discuss and review applications related to the NRG, and a date will be proposed shortly.

### **Roundtable**

**Torrington** – Rista reported that revisions have been made to trail plans on top of levees to address initial USACE concerns, and they have been re-submitted. The City is awaiting approvals, and hope to construct sections next summer.

**Thomaston** - Jeremy Leifert reported that the town may submit a rec trails application for trail and access improvements on their Dug Road open space property. There are several unmarked and partially overgrown trails on the property that were built sometime in the 1970s.

**Watertown** - Roy Cavanaugh reported that the new Steele Brook Greenway Bridge is open just off Route 73 in Oakville. The town is looking at extending the SBG through Unico Field to French Street, but needs to work through some private property in order to do so. They are currently working on an appraisal.

**Waterbury** - The City is still expecting to begin construction in 2019 on Phase I from Platts Mill to Eagle Street.

**Ansonia** – The new bridge connecting the NRG/ Ansonia Riverwalk to Pershing Drive is open and seeing increased traffic. The City is working on a \$900,000 Transportation Alternatives Block Grant to complete segments 3 and 4 of their [Riverwalk Design Plan](#), and they are currently out to bid for construction.

**Derby** – Jack Walsh reported that he gave Kendra Barat of NPS a tour of the Derby section of Greenway and posted a photo to Facebook, prompting some public interest. Jack said he is considering a formal public tour of the greenway.

The meeting was adjourned, and a tour of the newly reconstructed Freight Street, including “complete streets” treatments followed. Thank you to Sal Porzio and Judy Mancini from the City for leading the tour! Photos have been posted [HERE](#).

**Special Meeting: October 10<sup>th</sup> at 9am, NVCOG**

**Next Regular Meeting: November at 9 am**  
**Location – TBD**

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

\*Indicates Co-Chair - Present in **BOLD**

## **Municipal Representatives**

<b>Torrington</b>	<b>Rista Malanca*</b>
<b>Litchfield</b>	<b>Cleve Fuessenich</b>
<b>Harwinton</b>	Suzanne Stitch <b>Joan Kirchner</b>
<b>Thomaston</b>	<b>Jeremy Leifert</b>
<b>Watertown</b>	<b>Roy Cavanaugh</b>
Waterbury	Kenny Curran Sal Porzio
Naugatuck	Jim Stewart
Beacon Falls	Liz Falzone Josh Carey
Seymour	Rory Burke
<b>Ansonia</b>	Sheila O'Malley <b>Bill Luneski</b>
<b>Derby</b>	<b>Jack Walsh*</b>

## **Stakeholder Representatives**

**Aaron Budris – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Bill Purcell – Valley Chamber

Bob Gregorski - Naugatuck River Watershed Association & Trout Unlimited

Christopher Way - US Army Corps of Engineers

Chuck Berger – Retired Watertown Town Engineer

Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway

**Courteny Morehouse – Housatonic Valley Association**

Dave Faber – Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club

Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom

Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y

Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation

Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

**Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT

**Rick Lynn – Northwest Hills Council of Governments**

**Steve Casey – Railroad Museum of New England**

**Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Program**

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

## **Also Present:**

**Kendra Barat, National Park Service**

**Bill Paille, BSC Services**

**Matthew Ciminella, BSC Services**

**Jesse Harris, BSC Group**

**Howard Pincus, Naugatuck Railroad**

**Paul Grimmer, Shelton Economic Development Corporation**

# Public Information Meetings



## Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Thomaston to Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study

**February 28<sup>th</sup>**

Thomaston  
Town Hall  
Meeting Room 1

**March 6<sup>th</sup>**

Harwinton  
Town Hall  
Assembly Room

**March 7<sup>th</sup>**

Litchfield  
Community  
Center

Join us to discuss the NRG Trail route between Bogue Road in Torrington and Old Waterbury Road in Thomaston.

Maps will be available for review beginning at 5:30 pm  
A project presentation will begin at 6:00 pm

More Information: [www.nvcogct.org](http://www.nvcogct.org)



# Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Thomaston to Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study

Public Information Meeting

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Center School, 1 Thomas Avenue, Thomaston CT

## Agenda

5:30 pm Maps and Discussion

6:00 pm Presentation

- Introduction – Ed Mone, First Selectman, Town of Thomaston
- Meeting Overview – Rick Dunne, Executive Director, NVCOG
- NRG Overview/ Previous Studies – Aaron Budris, Senior Regional Planner, NVCOG
- Project Methods/ Route Options – Bill Paille, Matt Ciminella and Rob Newton, BSC Group
- Q&A – All Hands – Moderated by Rick Dunne

## Project Overview

The Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) is an officially designated Connecticut State Greenway consisting of the open and green spaces along the Naugatuck River. The **NRG Trail**, a non-motorized multi-use trail is being developed that will follow the river for 44 miles through 11 communities from Torrington to Derby, connecting those green spaces. It will provide a non-motorized transportation option, support tourism and economic development, and improve the health and quality of life of residents.

Open sections of the NRG Trail are already providing a high quality and attractive corridor accessible to users of all abilities, once again harnessing the vitality of the river for the benefit of the region's residents. Work to connect existing sections is underway with parks, waterfront promenades, overlooks, and river access all figuring into plans.

So, where should the Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Trail be built between Torrington and Thomaston?

The NRG Trail Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study is underway to answer that question. Study partners are looking at all potential trail route options and environmental conditions in the corridor, and talking to stakeholders and the public to help determine a preferred route. The goal of the study is to identify a single preferred route for the NRG Trail through field investigation and public and stakeholder engagement, and to develop project phasing with cost estimates in preparation for future funding opportunities.

The study is being conducted by the BSC Group in partnership with NVCOG, The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG), the City of Torrington and the Towns of Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston. The study is being funded by a Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development grant from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

## Additional Information and Comments

You can find additional project information including maps, route, and scoring matrix at the project webpage: <https://nvcogct.org/content/nrg-thomaston-torrington-routing-study>

We welcome all constructive comments regarding routing option preferences. Please submit all comments using the COMMENT button on the project webpage and completing the linked survey.

## **Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Routing Study Public Information Meeting**

Location: Center School  
1 Thomas Avenue  
Thomaston, CT 06787  
Date: 2/28/2019  
Time: 6-9PM

### **Presenters:**

Edward Mone, First Selectman  
Rick Dunne, NVCOG  
Aaron Budris, NVCOG  
Bill Paille, BSC Group  
Matthew Ciminella, BSC Group  
Steven Patchkofsky, Project Manager, Thomaston Dam, (USACE Representative)

Purpose: The Public information meeting was held to provide the public with the Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Routing Study findings to be published in a report by NVCOG.

The meeting proceeded as follows:

Edward Mone, First Selectman of Thomaston began the meeting with an opening statement requesting attendees select a representative to express viewpoint on the NRG Routing Study. He reiterated this was a public information meeting not a hearing.

Rick Dunne, Executive Director of NVCOG, explained the format of the public information meeting. There would be mini presentations on sections of the proposed trail, followed by a 15-minute comment period where views could be shared on the various routes presented.

Aaron Budris, NVCOG, presented on the Greenway, economic impacts of the greenway and the various studies published prior to this study.

Bill Paille, BSC Group, provided an overview of the planning and engineering involved in determining viable route options. He explained design guidance, the trail evaluation matrix score. He also explained various materials available for use on bike paths, the possibilities of rails to trails and active rails and trails, pedestrian bridges, at grade crossings, enhancement options.

Matthew Ciminella, BSC Group, presented on the segments of route options within Thomaston as follows:

### **Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam**

Route Option 13 and 14 are on the west side of the Naugatuck River- along USACE property /OHV trails. Route Option 15 and 16 are on the east side of the Naugatuck River-pass through a few private properties.

*Public Responses to Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam Options:*

1. Tony Gasper - President of New England Trail Rider Association
  - Not opposed to greenway trails.
  - Opposed to trail options 13 and 14 through the USACE property because not safe or practical for the OHV riders to have to share with pedestrian and bicyclists.
  - Argued that the current off-road trails are the only legal public riding space in CT for dirt bikes, part of a system that runs clockwise and any interruptions to this system would cause issues.
  - 26,000 off road registered vehicles in CT.
2. Representative of the Pathfinders Motorcycle Club
  - Opposed to trail options 13 and 14 through the USACE property.
  - Detailed the services that Pathfinders provide the USACE -garbage clean up, flooding clean up.
  - Dirt bike riders are avid supporters of the Town of Thomaston's local businesses.

*NVCOG's Response:*

- USACE will determine what gets built or not on their land, NVCOG has no jurisdiction over their land.
  - East side options are more expensive and require easements or takings on several privately owned residential properties.
  - Trails on USACE property are currently open to pedestrians and bicyclists.
3. Steve Salisbury, American Motorcycles Association
    - Opposed to trail options 13 and 14 on the west side of the Naugatuck River.
    - Economic benefit of dirt bike users was ignored in study.
  4. Barb -Town of Plymouth Resident
    - Pro Farmington trail.
    - Supportive of the benefits of installing a trail system through Thomaston for health and families-did not specify preference for any trail options.
  5. Unknown
    - Questioned health benefits of the proposed trails vs. the health benefits of the off-trail riding.
  6. Matthew House President of Connecticut Off-Road Enthusiasts Coalition
    - Opposed to the west side options 13 and 14.
    - Concerned that the off-road advocates were not invited as stakeholders in the process.
    - Also, concerned with funding of project.
  7. Chris Knox-Town of Winsted Resident
    - Coexistence of greenway and dirt bike trails on west side options is not possible.
  8. Max Cicolo - Seven-year-old dirt bike rider
    - Does not want west side trails to be closed to dirt bike riders like him and his dad.
  9. Name unknown - Town of Barkhamsted Resident

- Believes multimodal trails are great and should expand but not on west side of river.

### **Thomaston Dam to Route 222**

Route Option 17 and 18 follow the east side of river.

*Public Responses to Thomaston Dam to Route 222:*

10. Mia Kelly- Town of Thomaston Resident

- Concerned about losing property on Route Option 19.

11. Thomas Blade-Town of Plymouth Resident

- Concerned over easements and acquisitions of properties along previously built section of trails.

*NVCOG Response:*

- Taking of property is always avoided where possible. Easements or purchase of property would be negotiated with property owners. There have been cases where trail projects required easements or acquisition. Derby -acquired 30 feet for trail, Waterbury easements on commercial properties on South Main Street

12. Alice Ross – Town unknown

- Concerned about increase in traffic questioned if this study did any traffic impact research.
- Concerned with CT-222 intersection.

13. Mike Hayley Town of Bristol Resident

- Concerned about parking issues for potential trail users if NRG built.

14. Joe – Town of Thomaston Resident

- Concerned if the USACE decides on route if the public will have chance to voice opinion.

15. USACE Representative

- USACE is developing a master plan for Thomaston Dam.
- Towns and the public can provide input
- East side trail is preferred to avoid conflict.
- USACE will start using Everbridge System to alert subscribers to date of hearing on their trail proposal-in addition to other social media and traditional media outlets.

16. Ed Tantoro - Town of Thomaston Resident

- Discussed the involvement of Senators and USACE on the decision process.

17. Rob – Town of Harwinton Resident

- Questioned why greenway trail not proposed along current rail.

### **Route 222 to East Main Street**

Route Options 19, 20 and 21

*Public Responses to Route 222 to East Main Street:*

18. Mia Kelly – Town of Thomaston Resident

- Concerned about losing property on Route Option 19.

### **East Main Street to Clock Factory**

*Public Responses to East Main Street to Clock Factory –*

- No comment.

### **Clock Factory to Thomaston Plaza**

*Public Responses to Clock Factory to Thomaston Plaza*

- No comment.

*General Comments:*

19. Rick Marin- Town of Fairfield Resident

- General comment inquiring if public input has any relevance in deciding routes.

20. Rista Malanca - City of Torrington Resident/NRG Steering committee

- Advocate of compromise between dirt bike users and future of NRG.

21. Thomas Blade -Town of Plymouth Resident

- Reiterated keeping the Thomaston Dam area as a dirt bike trail system.
- Opposed to any multimodal trails being installed through the west side of the river through the dirt bike trails.

22. Name Unknown -Town of Wallingford Resident

- Include more positive images of dirt bike riders in NRG Study Report.

23. Roy Cavanaugh - Watertown DPW/NRG member

- Defended NRG as a way to expand opportunities for all users.
- Stated dirt bike trail riders should exert more pressure on DEP to expand land access for use.

# Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Thomaston to Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study

Public Information Meeting

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Town Hall, 100 Bentley Drive, Harwinton, CT

## Agenda

5:30 pm Maps and Discussion

6:00 pm Presentation

- Introduction – Michael Criss, First Selectman, Town of Harwinton
- Meeting Overview – Mark Nielsen, Director of Planning/ Assistant Director, NVCOG
- NRG Overview/ Previous Studies – Aaron Budris, Senior Regional Planner, NVCOG
- Project Methods/ Route Options – Bill Paille, Matt Ciminella and Rob Newton, BSC Group
- Q&A – All Hands

## Project Overview

The Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) is an officially designated Connecticut State Greenway consisting of the open and green spaces along the Naugatuck River. The **NRG Trail**, a non-motorized multi-use trail is being developed that will follow the river for 44 miles through 11 communities from Torrington to Derby, connecting those green spaces. It will provide a non-motorized transportation option, support tourism and economic development, and improve the health and quality of life of residents.

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So, where should the Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Trail be built between Torrington and Thomaston?

The NRG Trail Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study is underway to provide information to help answer that question. Study partners are looking at all potential trail route options and environmental conditions in the corridor, and talking to stakeholders and the public to help determine a preferred route. The goal of the study is to identify a single preferred route for the NRG Trail through field investigation and public and stakeholder engagement, to provide valuable information for decision-makers and to develop future project phasing with cost estimates.

The study is being conducted by the BSC Group in partnership with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG), The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG), the City of Torrington and the Towns of Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston. The study is being funded by a Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development grant from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

## Additional Information and Comments

You can find additional project information including maps, route, and scoring matrix on the project webpage at [www.nvcogct.org](http://www.nvcogct.org)

We welcome all constructive comments regarding routing option preferences. Please submit all comments using the COMMENT button on the project webpage and completing the linked survey.

## **Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Routing Study Public Information Meeting**

Location: Harwinton Town Hall  
100 Bentley Drive  
Harwinton, CT 06791

Date: 3/06/2019

Time: 5:30-8:00 PM

### Presenters:

Michael Criss, Harwinton First Selectman

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

Bill Paille, BSC Group

Matthew Ciminella, BSC Group

Michael Criss began the meeting with an opening statement. Emphasized best all-inclusive plan is the goal of the study.

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG, explained the development of the routing study, the involvement of NHCOG, NVCOG, the steering committee. He then introduced the member of the study team and the website where the public could submit comments,

Aaron Budris, NVCOG, presented on the Greenway, NRG Trail overview, economic and health impacts of the greenway and the various studies published prior to this study.

Bill Paille, BSC Group provided an overview of the planning and engineering involved in determining viable route options. He explained design guidance, the trail evaluation matrix score. He also explained various materials available for use on bike paths, the possibilities of rails to trails and active rails and trails, pedestrian bridges, at grade crossings, enhancement options.

Matthew Ciminella presented on the various segments of route options within Harwinton as follows:

### **Bogue Road to Park and Ride**

Route Option 1 follows the west side of Thomaston Road, Route Option 2 follows a wooded area between O&G and Route 8, and Route Option 3 follows berm along east side of river, next to O&G.

#### *Public Responses to Bogue Road to Park and Ride*

1. Rick Foote Town of Harwinton Resident
  - Questioned Route option 1
  - High speeds, high traffic, and not scenic
  - Endorsed using the public railroad

*NVCOG Response: Naugatuck Rail Road owns and operates trains-active line, It was determined through site visit that there were too many pinch points due to buildings built up to tracks.*

2. Colin Town of Colebrook Resident
  - Did anyone investigate Thomaston Road on the east side as a route option?

*NVCOG Response: East side of Thomaston Road evaluated-eliminated as option due to steep slopes and pinch points along roadway.*

3. John Allen Town of Milford Resident

- Is the score from the evaluation matrix the determiner in the route selection?

*NVCOG Response: Matrix score is a tool and is not the final say in the route selection*

4. Rob Town of Harwinton Resident

- Does the study include the factor that the railroad might downsize?

*NVCOG Response: The railroad intends to expand freight and scenic passenger service -rail property is extremely valuable and owners reluctant to give up land.*

5. Eddy Town of Stratford Resident

- Thinks the cheaper route should be selected, opposes trails through wooded areas-due to medical response barriers, and questioned how the 100-year flood would impact trails.
- He wondered about the costs of the various route's options.

*NVCOG Response: Planning is not the phase of the study to include definite costs because accurate predictions are during the design phase.*

6. Fred Stone Town Unknown

- Do private property acquisitions affect the trail options?

*NVCOG Response: That phase of the project is at a later date-easements or property acquisition, eminent domain is very rare.*

7. Kyle Town of Winsted Resident

- How did O&G react to trail possibility?
- He thinks that O&G would endorse trail for sustainability.
- Endorses Option 3.

*NVCOG Response: Initially worried about liability and opposed, but were at least open to the use of the berm with the barrier separating trail from their property.*

8. Dave City of Torrington Resident

- Have the studied routes been approved by all stakeholders?

*NVCOG Response: Not all stakeholders, communication with some property holders*

**Park and Ride to X-1**

Route Option 4 is on the west side of Thomaston Road, along rail line on west side of river-back to east side, Route Option 5 follows west side along river and meets up with Option 4, and Route Option 6 stays along east bank of river the whole way.

*Public Responses to Park and Ride to X-1*

9. Colin Town of Colebrook Resident

- How long is the crossing over the river?

*NVCOG Response: 150 - 200 feet.*

10. Rick Foote Town of Harwinton Resident

- Routes are too close to river-dangerous.
- There are other multimodal trails available if users want to use.

*NVCOG Response: Engineers only design and sign off on safe design.*

11. Kiernan Town of New Hartford Resident

- If Railroad expanded how would this affect the trails?

*NVCOG Response: All design under purview of CT DOT who has strict standards for separation between trail and railroad-barriers will be required based on speeds and frequencies of trains.*

12. Wade Town of Shelton Resident

- Do businesses think trail will generate business?
- His friends don't spend money when using trail in Derby.

*NVCOG Response: Trails usually benefit smaller retail and restaurants.*

### **X-1 to Spruce Brook**

Route Option 7 follows the East side of the river along old route 9, crosses to west side through OHV trails and Route option 8 follows east side to the river the whole way.

#### *Public Responses to X-1 to Spruce Brook*

13. Victor Town of Harwinton Resident

- Did study look at Lead Mine Road?

*NVCOG Response: that section of trail is further south to be discussed.*

14. Chris Way, Naugatuck Basin Manager, USACE Representative

- Any route must proceed along the east side of the Naugatuck River. The USACE has no intent of altering OHV trails, currently they are expanding parking to accommodate OHV users.

*NVCOG Response: It's not NVCOG's intent to eliminate OHV Trails – any routing and feasibility study needs to consider all options.*

15. Tony Gasper Town of East Hampton Resident

- Support USACE statement.
- When are the routes going to be eliminated on the NVCOG maps?
- Does public comment get included in the report?

*NVCOG Response: One more public information meeting. Preferred route will be decided by project stakeholders. There will be a narrative with public comments in report, including the online survey comments.*

16. Chris Town of Winsted Resident

- Currently the OHV trail users and other users are mutually respectful, but he does not think that will extend to greenway users.
- What about liability and maintenance?

*NVCOG Response: Trail is built locally, municipality assumes liability and maintenance (Public Works). With proper design liability is non-issue.*

17. Keith Town of Harwinton Resident

- Who owns the trail on USACE property?
- Doesn't believe the trail will ever get built

*NVCOG Response: USACE is federally owned, trail projects are a long process.*

18. Jack Walsh Town of Derby Resident

- Derby section of trail had same issues as the Thomaston to Torrington segment-except the OHV trails.
- There was doubt in Derby and push back-now very successful.
- Naugatuck River Trail through Derby has helped river clean up.
- Each town has to do cost/benefit analysis to determine if trail is beneficial.

**Spruce Brook to Castle Bridge**

Route Option 9 follows the rail bed on USACE property on the west side of the river, Route Option 10 starts on the west side like Option 9 then crosses to the east side along Valley Road, Route Option 11 follows the east side joining up to Valley Road, and Route Option 12 follows the east side and crosses to the west side on USACE property.

19. Bill from Huntington Station (Long Island)

- He rides OHV trails -comes from out of state.
- Endorsed any route options on the east side of river – said team should just eliminate the options on the west side through USACE / OHV trails.

**Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam**

Route Option 13 follows the west side along old route 8 on USACE property, Route Option 14 follows abandoned rail bed and then joins route 13 old route 8, Route Option 15 follows the east side of the river onto abandoned rail bed, access roads and spillway, and Route Option 16 follows the east side of the river like 15, but each has a different end trail route.

*Public Responses to Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam Routes*

20. Joe Scheilick City of Danbury Resident

- The west side of river along USACE property is only place for dirt bike riders.

21. Rick Town of Harwinton Resident

- Would multimodal trail be closed if there was flooding?

*NVCOG Response: USACE rules apply.*

22. EJ Bowman City of Torrington Resident

- When will the study be published with one preferred route?

*NVCOG Response: June or July 2019.*

23. Tony Gasper-President of New England Trail Rider Association

- General thanks to NVCOG for accommodating everyone.
- OHV users will remain steadfast and active until the west side route options through the OHV trails are eliminated from study.

# Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Thomaston to Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study

Public Information Meeting

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Litchfield Community Center, 421 Bantam Road, Litchfield, CT

## Agenda

5:30 pm Maps and Discussion

6:00 pm Presentation

- Introduction – Leo Paul, First Selectman, Town of Litchfield
- Meeting Overview – Mark Nielsen, Director of Planning/ Assistant Director, NVCOG
- NRG Overview/ Previous Studies – Aaron Budris, Senior Regional Planner, NVCOG
- Project Methods/ Route Options – Bill Paille, Matt Ciminella and Rob Newton, BSC Group
- Q&A – All Hands

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The study is being conducted by the BSC Group in partnership with the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG), The Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG), the City of Torrington and the Towns of Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston. The study is being funded by a Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development grant from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

## Additional Information and Comments

You can find additional project information including maps, route details, meeting records, the scoring matrix and project methods on the project webpage at [www.nvcogct.org](http://www.nvcogct.org)

We welcome all constructive comments regarding routing option preferences. Please submit all comments using the COMMENT button on the project webpage and completing the linked survey.

## **Naugatuck River Greenway Trail Routing Study Public Information Meeting**

Location: Litchfield Community Center  
421 Bantam Road  
Litchfield, CT 06759

Date: 03/07/2019

Time: 5:30-8:00 PM

Presenters:

Leo Paul, First Selectman, Town of Litchfield

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

Bill Paille, BSC Group

Matthew Ciminella, BSC Group

Leo Paul began the meeting with an opening statement. Mentioned that this is just the beginning and there is a long road ahead for these potential projects. These public meetings are to discuss the trail options and he encouraged the public comments.

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG, explained the development of the routing study, the involvement of NHCOC, NVCOG, the steering committee. He then introduced the member of the study team and the website where the public could submit comments,

Aaron Budris, NVCOG, presented on the Greenway, NRG Trail overview, economic and health impacts of the greenway and the various studies published prior to this study. This study is expected to be completed this summer.

Bill Paille, BSC Group provided an overview of the planning and engineering involved in determining viable route options. He explained design guidance, the trail evaluation matrix score. He also explained various materials available for use on bike paths, the possibilities of rails to trails and active rails and trails, pedestrian bridges, at grade crossings, enhancement options.

Matthew Ciminella presented on the various segments of route options within Harwinton as follows:

### **Bogue Road to Park and Ride**

Route Option 1 follows the west side of Thomaston Road, Route Option 2 follows a wooded area between O&G and Route 8, and Route Option 3 follows berm along east side of river, next to O&G.

#### *Public Responses to Bogue Road to Park and Ride*

1. Unknown Name
  - Concerned with Thomaston Road section. High traffic and impact to businesses
  - Encourage the potential of O&G as a group to work with on Option 2.
  - Who maintains the trails.

*NVCOG Response: The towns or the USACE would maintain the trails within their towns/land.*

### **Park and Ride to X-1**

Route Option 4 is on the west side of Thomaston Road, along rail line on west side of river-back to east side, Route Option 5 follows west side along river and meets up with Option 4, and Route Option 6 stays along east bank of river the whole way.

*Public Responses to Park and Ride to X-1*

2. Clifford Town of Litchfield Resident
  - Prefers to keep trail entirely on the East side of the river.
  
3. Nick Town of New Hartford Resident
  - Has there been input from the railroad about putting a trail close to the tracks.
  - Prefers to keep trail on East Side.

*NVCOG Response: The railroad leases the tracks from CTDOT. There has been initial discussion with the CTDOT Dept. of Rails and the Railroad. They do have safety concerns and proper separation is important.*

**X-1 to Spruce Brook**

Route Option 7 follows the East side of the river along old route 8, crosses to west side through OHV trails and Route option 8 follows east side to the river the whole way.

*Public Responses to X-1 to Spruce Brook*

4. Chris Town of Winsted Resident
  - Prefers to keep the trail on the East side of the river.
  
5. Nick Town of New Hartford Resident
  - How much does a bridge cost?

*NVCOG Response: Depending on the length they could range between \$0.5M to \$2M.*

6. Curran Town of New Hartford Resident
  - How do you get the bridges to these locations?

*NVCOG Response: Constructability issues are a concern with some of the more remote locations. This issue would have to be looked at during design.*

**Spruce Brook to Castle Bridge**

Route Option 9 follows the rail bed on USACE property on the west side of the river, Route Option 10 starts on the west side like Option 9 then crosses to the east side along Valley Road, Route Option 11 follows the east side joining up to Valley Road, and Route Option 12 follows the east side and crosses to the west side on USACE property.

7. Nick Town of New Hartford Resident
  - What would the separation between the OHV trails and the greenway trail look like?

*NVCOG Response: The concept for the separation has not been designed yet, but safety for both users is key to these options work.*

**Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam**

Route Option 13 follows the west side along old route 8 on USACE property, Route Option 14 follows abandoned rail bed and then joins route 13 old route 8, Route Option 15 follows the east side of the river onto abandoned rail bed, access roads and spillway, and Route Option 16 follows the east side of the river like 15, but each has a different end trail route.

*Public Responses to Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam Routes*

8. Jim City of Bristol Resident

- On the sections that have already been built, what percentage of the users are walkers versus bicyclists?

*NVCOG Response: The existing segments are predominately walkers probably due to their shorter lengths. The Farmington Canal has more bicyclists and a much longer length.*

9. Cleve Fuessenich Town of Litchfield Resident

- What happens if there is a medical emergency on the trail?

*NVCOG Response: Access points have to be designed into the trail system. It is also possible to include emergency call boxes.*

10. Fred Town of Northford Resident.

- Would the trail Options 13 and 14 be eliminated from the study?

*NVCOG Response: Those decisions would be up to the Steering Committee.*

11. Greg Town of Goshen Resident.

- Greg recently moved to Goshen from Georgia. His experience in Georgia is that the trails have increase crime activity associated with them.



## Record of Meeting

Thomaston Dam OHV Area Site Walk

4/3/2019, 10am, Thomaston Dam

Present:

Jim Blais, New England Trail Rider Association (NETRA)

Matt House, Connecticut Off Road Enthusiasts Coalition (COREC)

Steve Patchkofsky, USACE

Rista Malanca, NRG Steering Committee, City of Torrington

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

Bill Paille, BSC Group

The meeting took place as part of the larger Naugatuck River Greenway Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study. The meeting was set up to give project staff a more complete understanding of OHV use and the areas of riding at Thomaston Dam, and more specifically, hear from OHV users and USACE managers about OHV use patterns. The group met at the Thomaston Dam project office and reviewed maps first.

Jim Blais gave a general overview of the trail network and how it is used. He explained that there is a clockwise pattern of use with riders riding north to the west of Old Route 8 and south to the east of Old Route 8. There are more technical areas to the west closer to the active rail line, and flatter terrain with generally easier riding to the east of Old Route 8 closer to the river. Old Route 8 is crossed at several locations to access areas on either side of the paved road. It is also used to circumvent more technical areas, for emergency returns to the parking area, and for novice riders just learning basics. The abandoned rail bed is more of a through trail, and is used for two-way traffic in some locations north of Castle Bridge.

Aaron Budris asked about how trails are established and managed. Steve Patchkofsky responded that trails can only officially be added with permission from the Corps, and an environmental assessment needs to be conducted first. No new trails have been added recently, and he could not find any record of how or when specific trails were originally established. Some trail sections may have been added in the 1980s. The Corps does close trail sections when hazards or erosion become an issue and have begun closing trail sections adjacent to the river with cooperation from the OHV users.

Rista Malanca explained that the purpose of this study is to look at all options and all factors behind the feasibility of developing a greenway route. That must include thorough vetting of options on both sides of the river. If a report is published that put forward a trail on the east side of the river without a thorough assessment of the west side, it would be rejected by future funders, and the issue will just be revisited in the future. She explained that the project team wants to include all concerns and viewpoints to be able

to point to this study as evidence that one option or another is the best, most feasible and responsible option. Simply saying that the trail can only go on the east side of the river is not a valid argument. Rista also stated that she agreed that a shared use path may not likely be the best option, but would like to explore all options with both the OHV trails and the NRG sharing the same side of the River.

Bill Paille explained that as an engineer, he is concerned with finding out if a proposed route option can safely work, and how. That means that he needs to have as much information about how the OHV area is used, and if or how that current use can be maintained with increased pedestrian and bicycle use. The goal is to not negatively impact OHV use, but still safely share uses.

The group then proceeded to drive into the reservoir area on Old Route 8, stopping to discuss critical areas. Two vehicles were used to access and traverse the OHV corridor and the site walk was strictly focused on the paved section of Old Route 8 from the Dam to Castle Bridge. Steve P. (Corps) drove one vehicle with Mark N., Jim B. and Bill P.; Matt H. drove his own vehicle with Rista M. and Aaron B.

The group stopped at the location where the log boom crosses Old Route 8. Jim explained that there is a lot of two way traffic on Old Route 8 in that location with riders coming from and going to the the parking lot, and with riders accessing the track area just above the Dam to the east of Old Route 8. Riders are not allowed to access the log boom area itself, although there are designated locations to cross the log boom. He also explained that OHV riders prefer narrow, single track trails, say three-to-five feet wide at most. Bill and Mark described the width needed for a multi-use trail. Preferably, a multi-use trail should be 10 feet wide with two-foot shoulders or clear space on each side. Multi-use trails can be reduced to eight feet where necessary due to constrictions or obstacles. There was discussion about moving some of the OHV trails to other areas, even possibly the east side of the river since the OHV riders prefer a narrow, steeper, trail than the Greenway in order to allow the NRG use of a small portion of the west side of the river.

The group stopped at the “pine grove” area. Jim explained that this area is a popular family area. The grove area is popular with beginners and there is a place for parents to sit and watch children. Novice riders often ride up Old Route 8 to get to this area. Jim also pointed out several areas where sections of OHV trails run parallel and fairly close to Old Route 8. In some areas, the OHV trail was only about 20 feet from Old Route 8.

The group stopped at several other locations. Jim pointed out several “bail out” locations that less experienced riders use to get back to Old Route 8 in order to circumvent intermediate or difficult trails. He also emphasized the need for Old Route 8 to be used for emergency access, and for damaged or broken down motorcycles to be brought back to the parking area.

The group stopped just south of the location of the demolished Castle Bridge.

Matt House explained that illegal riding can only be addressed by providing more legal riding opportunities. He expressed disappointment with not having additional places to ride in Connecticut. He

discussed his apprehension of ceding any riding area, noting the historic precedent of losses to riding area not being regained.

Aaron explained that there is no reason why there would be any loss of OHV riding area if a multi-use trail were constructed. Mark explained that, as stated often at the public information meetings, there is no intent or goal by NVCOG to prohibit OHV use at Thomaston Dam or reduce access to areas currently in use. He further stated, if a multi-use trail were to be developed on the west side of the river, it would be developed to safely accommodate conflicting uses. In response to a question by Mark, Steve said that people are allowed to walk and ride a bicycle in the area today. Today, there are not many conflicts because there are not many people using the area during OHV season. Matt expressed concern that if a multi-use trail were built, it would increase non-OHV use substantially and create more conflicts. Mark stated that developing and branding a trail through the Thomaston Dam area would likely increase non-motorized use but not to unmanageable level. Because of its remoteness, usage would likely be in the range of 100-to-200 users per day.

Aaron stated that if negative impacts were created by constructing a multi-use trail on the west side of the river, those impacts would need to be mitigated and mitigation plans would be negotiated with riders. Dirt bike riders should be thinking about what types of action or improvements would be desired that might improve their riding experience. Possible mitigation actions include improving trails, opening new areas or trails, implementing new amenities, etc. The project team wants to hear ideas about what would make sharing of space acceptable and safe. There is an opportunity here to improve the riding experience for all users.

Rista suggested that some context about the options might help. Aaron explained that the west side is still being considered because of the difficulty of building a trail on the east side. In Thomaston on Corps property there are existing roads that could be used, but there are some issues with steep grades that would likely require switchbacks, retaining walls, and bridges, resulting in impacts to environmental resources. North of the Thomaston/Harwinton border, there are no existing roads to utilize so the trail would have to be built through forested areas and along steep and varying terrain - all while keeping to a 5% grade to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. The property along the east side is privately owned, and negotiating easements or purchase of private property complicates development of a multi-use trail. It was reiterated and emphasized by the team that a decision regarding on which side of the river the trail should be built has not been made; the purpose of the study is to identify and enumerate the strengths, opportunities and difficulties of all possible route alignments. Just as user conflicts on the west side of the river is a critical factor, the expense and difficulty of building on the east side is also a critical factor that must be considered.

Bill explained that BSC is looking at specific trail sections and estimating cost and constructability of all sections. These factors will be presented for all trail options. Bill also made it clear that if a municipality intends to apply for state or federal funding, the municipality will be required to 'value engineer' each trail to demonstrate to the agency funding the project the location of a particular trail is the best location with respect to impact to surrounding land, historic, cultural, public shade trees, right-of-way and cost.

Meaning, a particular project may never be built due to the fact a state or federal agency will not fund a project if it believes the best location for a non-motorized trail is on the west side where there is already an established corridor that will accommodate both motorized and non-motorized users. Bill also stated that as an Engineer he is obligated to consider all options regardless of which side of the river they are proposed and determine their feasibility with regard to geometry, safety, impact to the environment and right-of-way.

Jim Blais discussed the larger reduction of riding areas nationally as a reason to be wary of promises. Similar things have been suggested elsewhere, and a reduction or elimination of riding areas is the norm.

Mark said that this isn't somewhere else. This project team is working with the Corps and riding groups in good faith, with the goal of objectively vetting and providing comprehensive information about the pros and cons of each trail route option to decision makers. The team has been transparent and plans to keep the riders engaged in the process as a stakeholder group. He explained that he is not sure where the rider community got the idea that this study was looking at eliminating OHV use at the dam, but that was never even a consideration. Mark asked that this be conveyed to the rider community, and that rhetoric be toned down. Continuing to mischaracterize the intent of the study is not helping, and comments from the OHV community speaking out against rumors of NVCOG wanting to reduce or eliminate OHV use or demanding to construct the trail on the east side of the river due to inconvenience, unfairly diminishes the intent of the study. Recommendations of the study will not be decided by a popular vote, but rather by careful consideration of facts, standard practice, current safety and ADA standards, public input and support from municipalities and their respective communities. The riders are one stakeholder, and their concerns will be considered just as concerns of other stakeholders will be considered.

Mark also said that this is not a one-off thing. NVCOG should be considered a resource for future OHV recreation inquiries and efforts. This could be an opportunity for all users (OHV users and non-motorized) to expand their network and improve their overall experience.

Matt House explained that there will always be people not following rules and creating an unsafe situation. He said the OHV riders are pretty good at policing themselves and letting riders that are not following the rules know that they are not riding properly.

Mark Nielsen discussed security on trails, and how safety would need to be addressed with frequent patrols to ensure compliance. It is an issue on virtually all trails, although increased "proper" use usually leads to decrease in "improper" use.

A concern was raised by Matt about noise and separation. Complaints by greenway users about OHV noise or perceived safety could eventually lead to the elimination of the OHV users.

Mark discussed that if the area was shared, signage and messaging would be important to relay the nature of the greenway in that area. Being explicit that greenway users will likely encounter OHVs and what that might mean, and that OHVs have every right to use the property would help limit those types of issues.

Rista suggested getting more information from Jim about riding patterns, and specifically critical Old Route 8 crossings. Aaron said that he could set up a way for a web map to be annotated remotely, and he said that he would set something up and send it to Jim.

At this point of the site walk everyone entered their respective vehicles and drove back to the Thomaston Dam project office parking lot and the meeting ended.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Budris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Aaron Budris  
NVCOG Senior Regional Planner



## Record of Meeting

Meeting with the USACE regarding the Naugatuck River Greenway Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study.

August 7, 2019

Northwest Hills Council of Governments, Goshen, CT

### Attending

Rick Lynn, NHCOG

Steve Patchkofsky, USACE

Chris Way, USACE

Tony Gasper, New England Trail Riders Association (NETRA)

Ellen Graham, Senator Blumenthal's Office

Bill Paille, BSC Group

Rob Newton, BSC Group

Matt Ciminella, BSC Group

Rick Dunne, NVCOG

Mark Nielsen, NVCOG

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

The meeting began at 10:05 with a round of introductions.

Aaron Budris began a presentation with a brief overview of the NRG Trail, a multi-use trail that is being planned and constructed along the Naugatuck River from Torrington to Derby. The NRG Trail is being designed and constructed by the communities through which it passes and is being funded through various federal, state and local sources. As envisioned by the NRG Steering Committee, the Trail will provide an accessible trail, located as close to the river as possible for non-motorized users. It is anticipated to be built with a hard surface, either paved or with compacted stone dust.

Mark Nielsen explained that the reason for a separate meeting with the USACE and the OHV representative was to give these OHV representatives a preview of what the project team is planning to present to the project steering committee and to give everyone a chance to discuss and correct assumptions. Because the path through the USACE property at Thomaston Dam is a critical section, extending about six miles, and there are many critical issues to resolve, the Study Team wanted to afford the USACE and OHV representatives ample opportunity to understand and discuss the proposed alignment.

Rick Dunne said that the USACE will have to go through its own planning process before developing the NRG trail on federal land. They may choose to follow the recommendations or proposals of this study or decide to conduct a separate assessment; it is their decision. The purpose of this study is to provide information to stakeholders, including the USACE, regarding the physical conditions, constraints and opportunities for developing the NRG Trail between Thomaston and Torrington. The study will make recommendations about the preferred alignment of the trail based on a number of factors, including constructability, impacts, and costs. Because the communities on either side of federal land will need to know where to build the trail to connect with the section through federal land, it would preferable to

understand which alignment through federal land the USACE would support. Rick emphasized that the USACE will be responsible for deciding where, how and if the NRG Trail would be built on federal land.

Aaron provided a brief background on the study and stated that the NVCOG, in partnership with the NHCOG, had received a CT OPM Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development grant in 2016 to study a 10 mile corridor between Torrington and a section of trail being developed in Thomaston. NVCOG hired BSC Group to conduct the planning and engineering work in support of the project. The study kicked off in January of 2018, and is being overseen by a project steering committee consisting of representatives from the four municipalities in the corridor (Torrington, Harwinton, Litchfield and Thomaston), NHCOG, NVCOG, USACE, and Naugatuck Railroad. The goals of the project are to catalogue existing conditions and all potential NRG Trail routes, and assess route options for safety, suitability, feasibility, conflicts and costs. Route options are being vetted through extensive stakeholder and public engagement, with the ultimate goal of developing a single preferred alignment through the corridor. The project is expected to wrap up by the end of 2019.

Aaron summarized the work completed on the project to date. The Study Team has collected all relevant GIS data available for the corridor, developed a digital basemap, and conducted field assessments of the entire corridor collecting relevant data. Potential routes were identified and mapped, then vetted using existing data, discussions with stakeholders, and additional field visits.

Bill Paille explained the safety and suitability matrix that was used to score route segments. Route segments were assessed for safety by calculating the percentage of the segment that would be on or off road, if it would require crossing of roads or driveways, proximity to active rail, etc. Segments were further assessed for suitability by looking at access, aesthetics, potential environmental impacts and proximity to the river.

Rick Dunne asked if the route segments that would theoretically share space with OHV riders, or cross OHV trails were assessed the same as being on-road, since there would be a similar motorized/ non motorized conflict potential. Bill said that they were not. Segments were considered on road when there would be a shared facility on a public road, and crossings were considered where the trail crossed a public road or driveway. Rick asked if that was fair. Bill explained that that was one small part of the overall score. Aaron added that the trails within the OHV area generally scored lower than alternatives in the matrix since alternatives were generally closer to the river, so he was not sure that it had any impact overall. Bill explained that segments were also assessed for construction costs and land ownership or Rights of Way Impact, but those factors were assessed separately and not included in the safety and suitability scores.

Matt Ciminella explained that the corridor was split into 10 sections with common beginning and end points, and segments were combined into 45 different route options.

Aaron said that those options were presented to the public at three public information meetings and posted on the project website and storymap. Comments were collected at the meetings and through an online survey. Comments were used in part to refine assumptions and assess the possible impacts of proposed route segments. All comments will be made a part of the project record and summaries of the comments will be included in the final report.

Bill discussed how BSC then developed detailed construction cost estimates for each segment and route option. These estimates represent order of magnitude costs and reflect unit prices established by the CTDOT. Design costs were added based on a percent of the construction cost. The cost to acquire private property was not estimated. Instead, rights-of-way costs were listed as low, medium and high.

The next step in the study will be to present findings of all route options to the project steering committee. The presentation will include staff recommendations for preferred options . The committee will review the strengths, constraints, and opportunities of each option and select the preferred alternative or alternatives. These will be incorporated into the final draft report and will be made available to the public for comment. Comments will be addressed, and a final report is expected to be released sometime in the fall.

Matt Ciminella then presented all of the 12 route options that either pass through federal land or may impact USACE property. He showed detailed route option sheets that will be included in the report. Bill provided some commentary on the benefits and challenges of each, and attendees were afforded opportunity to discuss each option, ask questions and offer comments.

Aaron explained that the Study Team evaluated all data and reviewed feedback that was received. The evaluation of all factors and feedback were used to develop an alignment that will be presented to the project steering and recommended as the preferred route. He explained that the goal was to come up with an alignment that respects current users of the corridor and their concerns while plotting a route that will be constructible and safe. This route will be proposed to the steering committee at an upcoming meeting in September.

Tony Gasper, the OHV representative, asked who was on the steering committee. Aaron explained that the steering committee is comprised of representatives from the NVCOG, NHCOG, a representative from each of the four municipalities involved (Torrington, Litchfield, Harwinton and Thomaston), the USACE, the Naugatuck Railroad, and the NRG Steering Committee. It had been agreed to at the public information meetings that an OHV representative would be invited to the project steering committee meetings, as well.

Aaron described the alignment that will be presented to the steering committee as the staff recommended alignment:

- North of Spruce Brook, the proposed alignment follows Route Option 7. This alignment follows the east bank of the river between the river and Route 8. There is sufficient land to locate the trail, and this alignment would use a section of the old Route 8 roadbed that was identified on site walks. In order to avoid the very steep slope in the southern part of the corridor section, the trail would cross over the river on a new structure to meet the abandoned rail bed at the northern extent of USACE owned land. The trail would then follow that abandoned railbed south to Spruce Brook. It was noted that the OHV use area does not extend north beyond Spruce Brook, therefore this section does not impact the OHV activities.
- South of Spruce Brook, a new crossing (identified as X-3) would be built over the Naugatuck River to the east bank to avoid impact to the northern part of the OHV area. An initial assessment suggested that the span would be approximately 210 feet long and cost approximately \$775,000 to design and construct.
- From there, the preferred alignment would follow Route Option 11. This alignment follows the east side of the river to the Route 8 bridge over the Naugatuck River. It would be located on either USACE property or CTDOT right of way. The proposed trail would pass under the Route 8 overpass either stepped into the slope or on a structure. This route would take advantage of the section of the old Route 8 roadbed on USACE property north of Campville Hill Road. The trail would then follow Valley Road as an on-road, shared use facility. Traffic counts on Valley Road are very low and vehicle speeds are also low, suggesting that a shared-use alignment would be feasible. At the southern end of Valley Road, the trail would reenter federal land

following the old Route 8 roadbed to the former Castle Bridge abutments, where Route 8 once crossed the Naugatuck River.

- At Castle Bridge, the proposal recommends reusing the existing abutments to support a new pedestrian bridge to carry the trail over the river to the west side. The assessment of the option on the east of the river south of Castle Bridge concluded that it would be very difficult and expensive to construct, requiring extensive retaining walls and acquisition of several private properties. To evaluate the feasibility of reusing the Castle Bridge abutments, a BSC Structural Engineer conducted a preliminary evaluation of the existing piers and abutments, and determined them to be in good condition and capable of being reused to carry a pedestrian span. The new bridge would require three spans with a total crossing distance of about 350 feet. The design and construction cost estimate for new bridge is \$1,325,000.
- From Castle Bridge, the trail would access Route Option 13, which follows the paved roadbed of old Route 8 south to crossing of Thomaston Dam. The route continues to the Vista Picnic Area. While this route option does propose sharing the Old Route 8 corridor within the OHV activity area, it would avoid the high cost of locating the trail east bank. The principal advantage of Route Option 13 is that it would take advantage of the 25-foot width of the old Route 8 roadbed and provide sufficient width to safely separate motorized and non-motorized users.

Aaron said that the Study Team understands that this Route Option 13 presents a potential for conflict with the OHV activity area and would be controversial. However, the Study Team was cognizant of these conflicts and committed to understanding how OHVs use the old Route 8 roadbed and where crossing points are located. The intent of this effort is to develop concepts for the safe separation of non-motorized and motorized users and to control movement at crossing/conflict points.

Mark asked Chris Way (USACE) what are the policies regarding access and use of the Thomaston Dam property. Chris explained that there are no use restrictions; walkers, bicyclists and others can access the trails within the area. Because of this access, various different users are allowed to share the area. Steve Patchkofsky said that there were some people that walk old Route 8, but there are not many and they typically only walk a short way into the Pine Grove area during OHV Season. Chris and Tony Gasper said that use by others is very minimal and, because of the limited use by non-motorized users, there are few conflicts currently.

To address these concerns, Aaron explained that there are numerous options to separate users from installing physical barriers to roadway striping. Various options were evaluated. He explained that installing physical barriers like a guardrail, fence or other barrier might be problematic because they would be prone to collecting and trapping debris during flooding and reduce the effectiveness of the flood control facility. In addition, it was noted that USACE plows the roadbed during the winter to maintain access and a physical barrier would impede plowing. Separating users by striping and a buffer would reduce the concern of trapping debris but would not physically prevent users from straying across painted centerlines.

A rendering was presented that showed the roadbed divided into separate ten foot motorized and non-motorized sections separated by a five foot buffer. Aaron explained that this was an illustrative example and that there were various other separation methods including vegetation, surface treatment and material, curb, or removable flexible delineators. The intent of the rendering was to show that separating motorized and non-motorized users is feasible.

Tony Gasper said that he appreciated all of the work that has gone into the development of these options, and said that he was appreciative that the project team had taken the time to understand how the OHV area operates. He also said that he appreciated the Team's recommendation to route the trail

north of Castle Bridge on the east side of the river to avoid the rail bed, which he said was critical to the OHV users. He agreed that there is more potential to share the old Route 8 roadbed than sharing the abandoned rail bed. Tony explained that the old railbed is the only way OHV riders can reach the Spruce Brook and sharing the railbed would be much more detrimental to the OHV users. He said that he is a rider with decades of experience, but the rendering of the roadbed separated by just a painted buffer made him “nervous” and that even as a skilled rider, the lack of a more physical separation seemed unsafe to him. It would only take a rider falling across the buffer, or a wandering dog to create a dangerous situation. And since less skilled users are likely to use the road bed, there should be greater separation.

Aaron went on to discuss the potential for conflicts where OHV single track trails cross or meet old Route 8. He explained that there were over 40 mapped locations where an OHV single track trail crosses over or meets the old Route 8 road bed. Because the OHV trails were developed over the time since OHV use was first permitted at Thomaston Dam, there are many seemingly redundant intersections. The number of crossings could be reduced by creating parallel trails that would be used to combine crossing and access points and direct OHV users to designated crossings. Aaron explained that this could improve OHV flow while minimizing conflicts and provide better and safer separation with non-motorized users. He proposed further improving safety by making all of intersections all way stops where motorized and non-motorized users would be required to stop before proceeding.

Mark Nielsen asked Tony how intersections are currently approached by OHV riders. With the potential for pedestrians or maintenance vehicles being encountered, do riders typically stop when reaching the roadbed? Tony said that most users approach the roadbed slowly and safely, but there are certainly exceptions to that. He explained that a large part of the opposition to the sharing of the OHV area is that pedestrians and bicyclists are extremely rare on the property during OHV season. He said that the property is not promoted for non-motorized uses, even though they are allowed, and he is worried that by promoting the area for NRG trail use, there would be more non-motorized users, increasing the chance for conflict. The concern is that a formal designation of the NRG Trail within the Thomaston Dam property could increase use and thereby increase the number of conflicts.

Tony referred back to the slide that showed the rendering of a buffer separated route 8. He said again that the limited separation still made him nervous.

A discussion about the best separation measures to minimize impact to the OHV system followed.

Aaron suggested that half of the road bed could be paved with the other half reverting to a natural surface. This would allow for the OHV riders to ride on a natural surface which he assumed that they would prefer, and create a more physical separation.

Rob Newton, BSC, suggested that OHV and multi-use trail could potentially be vertically separated by a few feet, and that could offer a more physical separation.

Tony explained that he has always said that “slow trails are safe trails.” Part of the danger of old Route 8 is that it is straight and paved. These features make it conducive to riding fast and it is occasionally used for racing, even though it is not allowed. He said that narrower winding trails force riders to slow down, and are safer and more enjoyable. He thought that the best option for separation of motorized and non-motorized users would be to develop meandering one-way trails on each side of the road bed. He suggested that the trails should follow the current riding direction which is clockwise. This would create a trail designated for northbound riding west of the road bed and a complimentary trail for

southbound riding east of the road bed. He also recommended that these trails should be designed to keep speeds down: narrow, about five feet wide, windy and with a rough surface.

Aaron explained that there is room on either side of the roadbed for much of the corridor to install these parallel OHV only trails, but there are some tight sections with rock cuts or drop-offs or where the roadway crosses streams. In these constrained areas, alternatives would have to be developed. Aaron asked what the minimum width of pavement along the old Route would be needed and acceptable for USACE safety and access. Chris Way said he would have to check with operations.

Referring to the diagram of an all stop intersection, Tony explained that it would be preferable to avoid 90 degree intersections, and instead have a chicane or curve on the OHV trail approach to an intersection to help slow riders down. Bill explained that this technique is often used on multi-use trails as well.

Aaron asked Chris Way if the USACE would be supportive of this approach and approve the installation of new parallel OHV trails developed along each side of the roadbed and maintaining the paved surface along old Route 8 for non-motorized users and emergency and maintenance access.

Chris explained that the USACE concern from the beginning was impact to the OHV area and impact to the riding experience. If there is no reduction in trails or negative impact to OHV riding, he said that the USACE could support this concept as a good compromise.

Tony said that while he could not speak for all OHV riders, he said that he understood the difficulty in completely avoiding the OHV area, if the NRG Trail were built through the Thomaston Dam area and thought that safe separation could be accomplished as discussed without negatively impacting the OHV riding experience. However, Tony reiterated that the status quo would be the preference.

Aaron said that disrespect among the different users (motorized and non-motorized) was brought up at the public meetings and in comments. He said that education, rules and signage could help counter those problems. Knowing that the other user is allowed to be there, and knowing where the different users should be, could help avoid negative feelings across user groups.

Mark Nielsen asked if there are ever conflicts with pedestrians or bicyclists on the single track trails. Tony said it is very rare. Mark suggested that if more pedestrians and bicyclists were invited into the area, single track OHV trails should be signed as such to minimize the chance of user conflict on those trails.

Rick Dunne asked how development of the NRG could proceed on USACE land. Chris Way explained that anything that takes place on federal land must be in the project's master plan. It also has to be funded and budgeted. Chris said that the cost of constructing some of the sections of the proposed trail is high, and explained that there are seven dam projects and a hurricane barrier that his office oversees with a modest budget. There is little room for additional projects, and the scope of projects they can find funding for are typically small.

Rick Dunne asked how often the master plan gets updated, and Chris replied that it is supposed to be updated annually and go through a public process.

Rick Dunne discussed some funding potential on sections of trail on CTDOT ROW north of USACE land.

Aaron covered the one additional section south of Vista Picnic area, explaining that the two options had a comparable cost. Route Option 17 offered a better user experience by avoiding the roadside. It begins at the Vista Picnic area, travelling through the woods to the southwest, crossing the active rail line on a new structure, where there is a tall rock cut, then connecting to a USACE access road, then paralleling Route 222 to a safe crossing point. Aaron asked if the USACE had any objections to this option.

Steve Patchkofsky said he was concerned about the Vista Picnic area parking lot becoming overwhelmed with NRG Trail users. Aaron said that this would be a concern in either routing option. Aaron said that there could be some potential for an alternate trailhead parking area along Route 222, possibly on USACE land. A dedicated trailhead parking area would provide additional capacity and help intercept NRG Trail users before entering the Vista Picnic area. These types of amenities or trail features will be discussed in the report narrative.

The meeting concluded at approximately 12:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Budris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Aaron Budris  
NVCOG Senior Regional Planner



## Record of Meeting

Naugatuck River Greenway Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study Project Steering Committee

September 24, 2019, 1:00-3:30pm

Northwest Hills Council of Governments, Goshen, CT

### Attending

Rick Lynn, NHCOG

Tony Gasper, New England Trail Riders Association (NETRA)

Ed Mone, First Selectman, Town of Thomaston

Michael Criss, First Selectman Town of Harwinton

Suzanne Stitch, Director of Parks and Recreation, Town of Harwinton

Cleve Fuessenich, Town of Litchfield Representative to the NRG Steering Committee

Rista Malanca, City of Torrington, Co-Chair NRG Steering Committee

Jack Walsh, Co-Chair, NRG Steering Committee

Bud Wilkinson, RIDE-CT

Bill Paille, BSC Group

Rob Newton, BSC Group

Matt Ciminella, BSC Group

Rick Dunne, NVCOG

Aaron Budris, NVCOG

The meeting began with introductions followed by a presentation by NVCOG & BSC Group using PowerPoint.

Aaron Budris began with a brief overview of the Naugatuck River Greenway system, a brief history and a description of the study corridor and the general approach that was utilized to collect data and evaluate the various segments and routes that were developed as part of the study.

Matt Ciminella then presented the various routes developed for the 10 separate sections of the study corridor with a focus on the recommended Route(s). For each of the sections, existing conditions and challenges were described and an overall understanding of the study corridor was explained. Reasons for recommendation of a particular Route was selected over another were explained. After each section was presented to the Committee, the group engaged in a discussion of pros/cons, other considerations, cost factors, impacts and Route preference.

**Section 1 - Bogue Road to Park and Ride Lot** - Route option 3 was presented as the staff recommendation, following the raised berm between the river and O&G Harwinton material processing facility. A rendering and typical section of the recommended route were presented. Option 3 provides for the best user experience since it is close to the river and away from vehicular traffic, but will rely heavily on cooperation from O&G. Discussion followed. Aaron explained that while the studied route along Thomaston Road/ South Main Street would need to cross that road twice and contend with several business driveways, it would have the benefit of direct business access from the trail. Cleve Fuessenich preferred Thomaston Road simply because it provides direct access to businesses in Litchfield, and may present future business opportunities but did not object to this option. Alternatives

to the preferred route will be presented in the report. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 3 be the preferred route.**

**Section 2 - Park and Ride Lot to South of East Litchfield.** Route Option 5 was presented as the staff recommendation, beginning at the Park and Ride Lot, then following along the West bank of the river under Route 118, and following along the active rail line as a “rails with trails” trail to a pinch point where the rail and river converge, where the trail would cross the river on a new span, x-1. It was explained that this route has the benefit of avoiding the steep slope between the river and Route 8 on the east bank, and also presents an opportunity to access a future sightseeing train stop in East Litchfield. Discussion followed. Cleve Fuessenich cited opposition to the trail in East Litchfield as a reason to be concerned about the trail following the west bank of the River. It was explained that there will be fencing or some other hard separation between the trail and rail, so trail users would not be able to access residential sections of East Litchfield unless a crossing of the rail line was developed. Safety was discussed along the rail. Michael Criss brought up the possibility of future passenger service from Waterbury. Ed Mone commented the reality of passenger service along the active NRR from Thomaston north highly unlikely in the short-term but a possibility in the very long-term. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 5 be the preferred route.**

It was explained that in order to access Route Option 5 from Route Option 3, a new span over the river (x-0) would be required. This pedestrian bridge would also provide access to the Park and Ride Lot.

**Section 3 - South of East Litchfield to Spruce Brook.** Route Option 7 was presented as the staff recommendation. This option would begin on the east bank of the river at the new pedestrian span x-1, and follow an abandoned section of Old Route 8 following between the river and current Route 8 to a pinch point, then crossing on a new pedestrian span (X-2) to join an abandoned section of rail bed that runs south to Spruce Brook. This option avoids steep and tight conditions between the river and highway by crossing to take advantage of the abandoned rail bed. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 7 be the preferred route.**

**Section 4 - Spruce Brook to Castle Bridge -** Route Option 11 was presented as the staff recommendation. This option avoids the OHV area south of Spruce Brook by crossing over the river to the east bank, traversing between the river and Route 8, and passing under the route 8 Naugatuck River overpass. This would require either a new structure or retaining walls. The trail would then follow an abandoned section of Old Route 8 on USACE land, then follows Valley Road (formerly Old Route 8) as a shared use facility to the former location of the route 8 bridge over the river (Castle Bridge). Aaron said that this is not the apparent best route on paper, with an abandoned railbed on USACE property on the west bank clearly the more attractive option at first glance. He explained, however, that the railbed is the main, and in some cases only route used by dirt bikes in the northern part of the OHV area at Thomaston Dam. Unlike in the southern part of the OHV area where old route 8 offers a wide corridor with numerous possibilities to separate motorized and non-motorized uses, the rail bed is much more narrow and separation of uses would be difficult. Option 11 is presented as a compromise to entirely avoid the northern OHV area. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 11 be the preferred route.**

It was explained that connecting to Route Option 11 from Route Option 7 would require a new pedestrian span (x-3).

**Section 5 - Castle Bridge to Thomaston Dam Vista Picnic Area.** Route Option 13 was presented as the staff recommendation. This option would take advantage of the wide paved Old Route 8 corridor on

USACE land to separate motorized (OHV) and non motorized uses. This would be accomplished by developing new OHV trails parallel to the Old Route 8 roadbed, away from the roadbed where possible, and sharing the roadbed with guardrails where necessary. The trail would then cross Thomaston Dam as a shared use facility, and follow west of Route 222 as a separate bi-directional trail to the Vista Picnic Area. The alternatives on the east bank of the river would need to traverse several private properties, and the terrain would require a lot of engineering, translating to very high design and construction costs.

This route was presented at a meeting with the USACE and NETRA representative Tony Gasper on August 7th, and consensus was reached that Route Option 11 to Route Option 13 was a good compromise. The separation strategies presented were developed based on discussion at that meeting. Tony Gasper explained that that slow trails are safe trails, and the separate parallel OHV trails would be the safest way to separate the uses. He thanked the project team for listening to the concerns of the riders, and for coming up with a compromise that would minimize impact. That said, he explained that the preference of the OHV community is still status quo - no impact at all. He said that there will still likely be push-back from OHV riders to any sharing of the OHV area.

Rick Dunne explained that the USACE will develop whatever they decide to on federal land, and this routing study report will just be a recommendation. Aaron said that the USACE property is currently a multi-use facility, and it is open to hikers, cyclists, fishermen and walkers in addition to OHV users. The USACE has stated that this is planned to remain the same into the future. The safe separation of uses along old Route 8 would be done by the USACE, presumably in consultation with the OHV groups. Rista Malanca suggested the final report include a discussion of signs/warning needed along the OHV section through USACE property as both non-motorized and motorized users have a right to be there. It was also suggested that the report include a discussion that all users will be required to abide by the same rules and protocols established by the USACE, and that all users of the Old Route 8 area have a right to be there. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 13 be the preferred route.**

It was explained that to connect to Option 13 from Option 11, a new pedestrian span would be required to cross the Naugatuck River. BSC conducted a preliminary review of the remaining Castle Bridge abutments and piers, and suggested that they would likely be able to be reused to carry a new pedestrian bridge.

**Section 6 - Vista Picnic Area to Route 222.** Route Option 17 was presented as the staff recommendation. This option would begin at the Vista Picnic Area, travel through the wooded area to a rock cut for the active rail line, crossing the rail on a new pedestrian span, traversing through the forested area on USACE land to an at-grade crossing location on Route 222. This option would provide a better user experience at a similar cost to following route 222 with a separate bidirectional trail. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 17 be the preferred route.**

**Section 7 - Route 222 to East Main Street.** Route Option 22 was presented as the staff recommendation. From a crossing location on Route 222, this option would skirt wetlands then follow along the toe of the slope for the rail bed. The trail would pass between the two residential properties and the railroad taking advantage of RR ROW and an existing culvert to cross a stream. The trail would follow Railroad Annex south under Route 8 to the Plume and Atwood property, following as close to the river as possible. Crosses the river on the existing East Main Street Bridge. A discussion ensued regarding the most efficient and economical way to cross the River at the existing East Main Street bridge. It was suggested (and agreed) the preferred option should cross using the south side of the bridge to avoid the need to cross East Main Street and in lieu of a separate pedestrian bridge south of

and parallel to the East Main Street bridge. There is currently a very narrow sidewalk on the eastbound ramp, and this would need to be altered and the ramp widened to allow for a bidirectional travel. Lanes could be shifted on the bridge and the wide shoulders would provide room to accommodate a bidirectional trail on the existing bridge roadway width. This would require modification of the existing pavement markings/sidewalk on the bridge to accommodate increased bike/pedestrian traffic on the south side. It is also suggested a rendering be developed, showing the potential path along the toe of slope of the NRR, adjacent to the private properties at Railroad Annex Street. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 21 be the preferred route with the modification discussed above.**

**Section 8 - East Main Street to Maple Street/ Clock Factory.** Route Option 26 and Route Option 33 were recommended by the staff. Route option 26 begins at the intersection of East Main Street and Elm Street, travels along Elm Street either as a shared-use or path or separate bike lane to Maple Street, with pedestrians traversing existing sidewalks. Turns south along Maple Street or within parking lot of Seth Thomas property to the top of the bank of the Naugatuck River as a separated bidirectional path. Route option 33 begins at the west bank of the Naugatuck River south of the existing bridge carrying East Main Street over the River, then travels southerly along the top of the west bank of the River to the end of Maple Street, passing between businesses and the top of the river bank. Crosses ravine with a new pedestrian bridge. To the rear of the Seth Thomas building. Discussion followed regarding cost and benefit of the two routes. Ed Mone expressed preference for route option 26 citing cost and access to downtown. There was discussion about using River Street instead of Elm, but it was explained that there are not complete sidewalks on River Street, so Elm provides a better user experience with very little investment. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 26 be the preferred route.**

**Section 9 - Maple Street/ Clock Factory to Thomaston Plaza.** Route Option 40 was presented as the staff recommendation. This option would cross Northfield Brook on a new pedestrian span, then follow between the river and businesses along on South Main Street, passing behind the Thomaston Firehouse and DOT District IV office, ending at the Route 8 southbound exit ramp at Watertown Road. There was discussion about the one pinch point at the self storage facility on McMahan Drive. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 40 be the preferred route.**

**Section 10 - Thomaston Plaza to WPCA.** Route Option 42 was presented as the staff recommendation. Begins at south side of State Route 8 SB exit ramp and travels southerly along Waterbury Road as separate bi-directional path before turning onto the access drive to the ConnDOT storage shed where it continues along the west bank of the River, traverses under the Reynolds Bridge and behind the Steward EFI property and two residential properties before connecting back onto Old Waterbury Road and WPCA facility. Ed Mone suggested the study should include alternatives between Thomaston Plaza and Reynolds Bridge. Suggested alternatives include traveling around the perimeter of the Modern Motors dealership lot, and traveling under Route 8/along its northbound on-ramp. **There was consensus by the committee that Route Option 42 be the preferred route.**

Next steps were then discussed including schedule. NVCOG anticipates the draft report including a narrative of the preferred route will be completed over the next few weeks and distributed to the Committee members for comment; then the report will be released to the public for comment in early November and the final report issued by the end of the year.

The meeting ended at approximately 3:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Budris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Aaron Budris  
NVCOG Senior Regional Planner