Appendix F: Public Survey and Comments

As part of the public outreach for the project, an on-line opinion survey was developed. Attendees at the public information meetings were encouraged to submit comments through the on-line survey as the preferred method for receiving, tracking and considering public concerns, preferences and attitudes. The survey made available to the public through the NVCOG project website via Survey Monkey. The survey was activated the day after the third public information meeting (March 8, 2019) and remained open through fall 2019. It consisted of seven questions with a focus on soliciting preferences for particular route options and identifying concerns and issues.

The survey questions and a summary of the 20 responses received is presented herein.
Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Trail
Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study
Comment Form

1. Name and Address (Required)

Name *

Company

Address *

Address 2

City/Town *

State/Province *

ZIP/Postal Code *

Email Address *

2. Did you attend one of the 2019 NRG Trail Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study public meetings? Please check all that apply:

☐ Thomaston, February 28

☐ Harwinton, March 6

☐ Litchfield, March 7

☐ No, I did not attend a public meeting.
3. How did you first learn about the NRG Trail Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study?

☐ Newspaper Advertisement

☐ Newspaper Article

☐ Word of Mouth

☐ NVCOG Website

☐ From a Project Partner

☐ Flyer/ Poster

☐ Other (please specify)

4. Please describe yourself (choose all that apply)

☐ An interested resident of Harwinton, Litchfield, Torrington, or Thomaston

☐ A non-motorized multi-use trail user (bicycling, walking, running, etc.)

☐ An OHV trail rider at Thomaston Dam

☐ A recreational user of Thomaston Dam (other than OHV riding)

☐ A local business owner

☐ An owner or occupant of commercial or residential property adjacent to an NRG Route option

☐ Other (please specify)

5. Are there particular route options presented at the public meetings or in project materials that you are in favor of? Please list route option numbers and be as specific as possible. You can review the route options at the project webpage.
6. Do you have specific concerns about any route(s) presented in public meetings or in project materials? If so, please list them. Be as specific as possible, and provide an explanation including what alternative routes you think are a better option and why. You can review the route options at the project webpage.

7. Additional Comments:
Survey Response Summary

A total of 20 people completed the on-line survey, with 17 responses received within the first couple of weeks of it being activated. One survey was completed as recently as August, 2019.

Question 1 asked respondents to provide information about themselves, including name, home address, the city or town they live in, and an email address. All respondents provided their personal information, as well as an email address.

Question 2 asked respondents if they had attended one or more of the three public information meetings. Respondents were asked to check all that applied; therefore, the total number of answers exceeded the number of completed surveys.

Two of the respondents attended all three of the public meetings while seven indicated that they had not attended any of the meetings. Nine people attended two of the meetings.

The public meeting held in Thomaston on February 28th was attended by 60% of the respondents and 55% attended the public meeting in Harwinton.
Question 3 was included to solicit feedback on the most effective method for informing the public about the project. It asked people to indicate how they first learned about the project. Despite the small number of respondents, it was evident from the results that the most effective methods for reaching the public involved were “word of mouth” and alerts from special interest groups.

Thirty-five percent of the respondents indicated they learned about the project by “word of mouth” and 35% indicated they had received an email and Instagram notice from the New England Trail Riders Association (NETRA), the Pathfinder Motorcycle Club, BTR, and the Connecticut Off-Road Enthusiasts
Coalition (COREC). Only 12% of the respondents learned about the project through a newspaper article or from a project flyer/poster.

It was also important for the Study Team to understand who was responding to the on-line survey and identify which interest groups may be over-represented in completed surveys. To ascertain this information, Question 4 asked respondents to describe themselves. Respondents were permitted to describe themselves in multiple ways, so the total number of answers exceeded the number of completed surveys.

Not surprisingly, the largest interest group represented in the survey was an OHV rider at the Thomaston Dam property. Seventy-five percent of all respondents characterized themselves an OHV rider. However, half of all respondents indicated that they were recreational users (other than OHV riding) of the Thomaston Dam and users of multi-use trails dedicated to non-motorized activities. An interested resident of one of the towns included in the project was checked by 25% of the respondents. It should be noted that the USACE manager of the Thomaston property and the president of the NETRA both completed the survey.

The Study Team identified and assessed a large number of possible trail alignments and routes, and the intent of the public information meetings was to present the potential list of sections and routes and solicit comments on the appropriateness of each. This action would provide some insights into which segments should be advanced. Question 5 in the on-line survey furthered this inquiry by asking respondents to indicate if there are particular route options that were presented at the public meetings or in project materials that they were in favor of. They were asked to list the route option number and be as specific as possible. This was an open ended questions so responses cannot be grouped into categories.

The following responses were submitted in response to question 5. The comments have not been corrected or modified for misspelling, grammar or typographical errors:

1. The Dam area is designated for off road vehicles only...keep it that way as we have NO other options in the entire State of CT.
2. The Greenway needs to be placed on the east side of the river on Corps property. Where it is placed anywhere off Corps property is not relevant to the Thomaston Dam project.

3. like #7. There is a lot of historical content on Valley Road in Harwinton. Cross the river on the Campville Bridge, go south on valley Road, and cross again on Castle Bridge. One bridge is already in place and the other can be rebuilt. This would preserve the historical aspects of Harwinton that were built before the 1955 flood.

4. I really like the 10/12/15/16 route. I have hiked most and biked the 15 paved part, and it would open up a whole new route currently underutilized, and would promote cleaning up the garbage that currently collects every spring when it floods. It has a better access to the river via lower banks as well. I already use 10B to access fishing holes when park at the bridge.

5. The route options I am interested in using are 10-B, 12-C-13-A, 15-A, 15-B, and 15-D. Those options will keep the Greenway on the east side of the Naugatuck River to keep a safer environment for all users of the ACoE Thomaston Dam area. Keep the Trailbike (West Side) and Greenway (East Side) on opposite sides of the Naugatuck.

6. In favor of: Route Option 3 (R3) w/X-O – proximity to river; required fencing not likely to deter from use/enjoyment; potential upgrade of Park & Ride for trailhead/boat launch R5 – near river; sufficient land between RR and river to route trail; while seg. 5-C not part of R5 there is potential for use of part of it for linkage to East Litchfield R-7 w/X-2,3 – near river; takes advantage of old road and rail beds R-11- near enough to river; uses old road bed, part of Campville Hill Rd, Valley Rd: potential for parking/boat launch R16- near river; use of USACE roads; south end near parking Crossings – I view these favorably as was explained a necessary option to avoid extensive work on steep slopes. Also these bridges could be considered opportunities for attracting corporate sponsorship.

7. The route into the Thomaston Dam as well as the route from the former Plume and Atwood site

8. The east side routes 10b->12A->13A->13D->15A->15B->15F->16C->16D look good because they seem to provide additional walking trails without infringing on existing trails already in use. More folks outdoors is always good and we should do it in a way that lets the most diverse groups enjoy the land. By going with the east side, you can open up more walking trails without taking away the only OHV riding in CT.


10. As a lifetime AMA member and current member of New England Trail Riders Assoc I fully support a separated area for riding and walking/biking. Walking/biking should be on the EAST side. I also support opening up the 1000’s of acres of state land for ATV and OHV use
11. As a user of the Thomaston Dam riding area, and a user of other trails, I support all the options that don't require any shared use of the dam. In other words, use the east side of the river for all of the distance that is being used by motorcyclist on the west side.

12. East side of river is the only option that preserves our OHV riding area. There's only one riding area in Connecticut. The Thomaston Dam riding trails have been successful and enjoyed for decades. Please do not take it away or alter the trails. The current users of the Army Corps area of the Thomaston dam already contribute to the local economy – We purchase fuel and visit local restaurants and shops. Multi-use trails are also very important and need to be created. But please note at the degradation or compromise of the only existing, fully functional legal OHV trails in Connecticut. Thank you for the presentation of your project study and for providing a platform for public comment. Please let me know if there are ways I can facilitate or assist you in advocating of using the East side of the river for your trail.

13. Any route on the EAST SIDE of the Naugatuck River, that DOES NOT detract or infringe on the OHV trails SYSTEM. DO NOT put non-motorized paths near/sharing with the OHV trails.


14. I am in favor of sections 15-A thru 15-E to keep the Greenway path away from the OHV trails.

15. in favor of east side of river

16. I would be in favor of east side of river proposals.


Question 6 asked respondents to provide specific concerns about any route(s) presented in public meetings or in project materials. They were asked to be as specific as possible and provide an explanation of their concerns. Respondents were encouraged to indicate alternative routes they thought would be a better option and explain why.

The following responses were submitted in response to question 6. The comments have not been corrected or modified for misspelling, grammar or typographical errors:

1. It will start off as sharing the trails, then the hikers will complain of vehicle noise and dangers of collision...then no more off road vehicles.

2. Please reference item 5. Placing the trail on the west side of the river will create hazardous user conflict with established dirt bike riding trails. The Corps has NO intention of closing or altering the present trail network. This has been the Corps' position from the beginning of this effort.
3. I have walked along the river from RT 118 to Valley Rd. I realize there are steep banks along the route and the west side may be more appropriate for that section.

4. I'm really concerned about loosing 9/14/17 as CT's only legal ORV riding for families like mine how love riding dirt-bikes together. I prefer to be respectful to my neighbors. And not ride my own land everyday. The T-Dam is the perfect place for us to ride together and be and not bother anybody, especially when the east side is mostly unused and has better access to the river. The banks along the old RR bed are really steep, and the old Rte 8 pavement North of the parking area is too far away from the river to see it.

5. Pleas avoid 9-C, 9-D, 14-A, 9-E, 14-B, and any other west side route along Naugatuck River that will cause safety issues with the motorized trail bike area.

6. Routes in dirt bike/hunting areas (R9,10,12,13,14) – best to avoid due to mutual nuisance( and possibly animosity) factor. So East of the river(R16) in this area is my suggested preferred alternate

7. My concerns are about the use of the Thomaston Dam considering water impoundment and hunting season; and the area of South Main St south of McMahon Drive with the level of traffic into and out of the various commercial enterprises Greenway users, safety and driver awareness.

8. All of the routes through Thomaston dam X4->9C->9D->X5->X6->14A->9E->14B->17A would take away the only OHV riding area in ct. Theres a readily available alternative on the east side (10b->12A->12C->13A->13D->15A->15B->15F->16C->16D) that would permit both constituencies to enjoy the outdoors without stopping each other from that enjoyment.

9. I sincerely hope that the decision is made to route the Greenway on the East side of the river. I come up from Long Island with my family to ride at Thomaston Dam several times a year, spending hundreds of dollars each time on the ferry, gas and restaurants. I fully believe the intention is not to eliminate OHV use at the Dam. However, it would only take a few incidences of either hikers or riders being at the wrong place at the wrong time for that to change. I have seen this happen before and it is inevitable that it will happen here. Since there are several options to separate motorized usage from pedestrians with a river, why not ensure continued usage and revenue from all activities in the safest manner possible?

10. I respectfully support East side as the only acceptable option for walking/hiking. OHV users have been using trails for years without incident. Keeping OHV and walking trails in separate areas is safer for all parties involved

11. Please dont use any portion of the trail that is being proposed on the west side of the river where it is currently being used by motorcycles.

12. I support the use of the East Side of the river and strongly suppose all other options.
13. The OHV trails have been there for DECADES. It is VERY well maintained and used by a LARGE user group, partaking in an outdoor activity that is already exercise and fun. WHY would any proposed route for the walking path be suggested to go on the WEST side of the river, thereby impinging on the OHV trials? WHY? All engineering resources should be devoted to making a walking trail system AWAY from the OHV trails. Why were resources spent on proposing trails in the OHV area?

14. Any routes that encroach on trail bike area: 9C, 9D, 9E, 14A, 14B

15. I did not like sections 1-A thru 1-D going alongside the road

16. west side route through thomaston dam riding area will be unsafe and cripple the riding at the dam

17. I would be apposed to any proposed route on the west side of the river on Army Corps property

18. I feel that the greenway should be routed completely away/separate from the OHV trail riding area. It should be put on the opposite side of the river from the OHV trails.

The last question on the survey asked respondents to provide any additional comments. The following responses were submitted in response to question 7. The comments have not been corrected or modified for misspelling, grammar or typographical errors:

1. If you are going to take our land, replace it in kind with other tracks of land for riding.

2. None.

3. It would be an absolute crime to take away existing trails on the west side from the ORV community who has a long standing tradition (since the 70's) of maintaining, improving, and enjoying the trail system thru multi generations of family and friends, ESPECIALLY when the East side is open, and underutilized. We can all coexist by bulding the walk/run/bike trail on the East side. I look forward to enjoying both sides of the river.

4. I am a volunteer at Thomaston Dam riding area for over 13 years to keep the trail system working and safe. In my opinion mixing this last motorized bike riding area in Connecticut with a non motorized Greenway will make the trail system unusable and create safety concerns for both users of the Greenway and motorized trail bikes.

5. Public Meetings well organized with excellent responses to questions. Highly impressed by Storymap to clearly present options. The Project Webmap and Matrix are also quite helpful in understanding the details. All the work done to determine a preferred route (with phasing recommendations) will be of great benefit to Towns when they consider building sections of Greenway.
6. With the possibility of random water impoundments and the resulting trail clean-up as well as trail closures due hunting season, has any consideration been given to avoiding the impoundment area of the Thomaston Dam by following Rte 222 until the point where Rte 222 veers away from the Naugatuck River and then establishing a trail from there to the intersection of Valley Road and Wildcat Hill Rd? One of the most pleasant section of the Appalachian Trail is the portion where it follows the Housatonic River along River Road north of Kent until it crosses Dawn Hill Rd, to once again ascend to the ridge crest. The above would provide the reverse, away from the river and allow for the enjoyment of one of the quieter stat roads before reuniting with the river. A side spur could also be made into the Thomaston Dam impoundment area. In regards to the South Main St portion of McMahon drive; I often ride my bicycle during the warmer months along this section of the proposed trail and I find this to be one of the more dangerous areas of my ride due to the volume of traffic, very narrow break-down lane and the numerous commercial driveways. For the record, I have flashing font and rear LED lights as well as rear-view mirror attached to my sunglasses and am often surprised by the vehicles that come up behind me and attempt to cross in front of me to access on of the many commercial establishments that line this portion of South Main Street. Fortunately, most drivers are attentive and courteous but I fear that will not be in the future if they have to forego crossing traffic enough times to allow either pedestrian and/or bicycle traffic to pass. Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

7. I don't live in Thomaston, but I come up from the city around eight times a summer with my son who's 8 and my wife to ride at Thomaston dam (and a few more times by myself). We always stop for lunch in Thomaston, buy gas and stop at the grocery store for water and snacks. This is the only riding area in Connecticut where you can bring your kids to ride (it'd be great to open up more but I understand that's not what this is about) and it would be a shame to take that away when there's an alternative route that both lets us keep the existing riding area and expand the walking trails on the east side.

8. Thank you for allowing me and others that enjoy my sport to express our opinions and provide our input. Good luck with your project. JG

9. I appreciate the open dialog of the organization and I hope we come to a mutually beneficial agreement that accommodates everyone.

10. motorcycles. Look forward to using the greenway and the Thomaston Dam riding area.

11. Thank you once again for your invitation to attend your public presentations. Thank you for listening to the current users of The Thomaston Dam OHV trails. I support your efforts for East Side of river.
12. I can say that MOST OHV trail users DO NOT oppose a walking trail, BUT we vehemently oppose any trail that will detract from the current trail riding experience, which is the ONE legal place in Connecticut!! Why not open some state forest and have trail system for OHV built and maintained through OHV registration and trail passes, similar to how Massachusetts does it? We have a lot of state forest land, and making a trail system in other parts of the state is NOT unreasonable.

13. Thank you for collecting this public input.

14. Thank you for these considerations

15. what about the hunting at the dam? will that stop or trail closed during hunting season? has any of these gone through a hunting area before? people dont stop using these trails when they are closed

16. Please try to preserve the dirt bike riding area. Thank you ;-)

17. I have been riding the OHV trails at the dam for over 25 years. My daughter and girlfriend have recently started riding there with me. They love the challenge of the terrain and being outdoors with nature. After our rides we stop in Thomaston at one of the restaurants to wind down and talk about our adventures at the dam. We also enjoy hiking/walking on the many trails throughout the state. In regards to that I feel that no part of the OHV area at the Thomaston Dam shouldn’t even be considered as a possible route for the greenway as this is our one and only legal riding area in the entire state! Thank You for taking this into consideration when planning the greenway.