



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday February 13th, 2019, 9am

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury

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

Co-Chair Jack Walsh opened the meeting, and introductions were made.

Bill Paille and Matt Ciminella of BSC Group gave an update on the **Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study** via Skype. The project team developed a storymap (<https://arcg.is/1CyT5D>) that walks users through the corridor section by section, detailing each potential route option. The webmap highlights each option in turn, describing the route, and presenting relative construction and ROW costs. Matt gave an overview of the web app and discussed work that went into it. Public information meetings were scheduled in Thomaston, Harwinton and Litchfield on February 28th, March 6th and March 7th respectively. Those meetings will be aimed at presenting route options to the public and receiving feedback about them. The project team will be accepting comments via a survey that can be accessed on the webpage (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRGTrail>). The project webpage on the NVCOG website (under projects) also includes a detailed webmap (<https://arcg.is/1nG5zK>) that contains much of the data collected and used during the project, and allows users to explore trail options in much more detail.

Aaron explained that following the public engagement sessions, the project team will be presenting all of the information about each route with recommendations to the project stakeholders who will be deciding which options are preferred. The project is expected to wrap up this summer. **UPDATE** – *The public information meetings were very well attended. The majority of attendees were off road motorcycle enthusiasts concerned about losing riding privileges at Thomaston Dam. Project staff repeatedly explained that there was no intent to negatively impact the Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) riders, and this study is trying to collect all information about all potential route options so that well informed decisions can be made in the future.*

Sal Porzio was unable to attend the meeting to give an update about the Waterbury Phase I project. Aaron gave a brief update. Final design is underway, and the City is expected to go out to bid for construction late in 2019, with construction likely starting in spring 2020.

Mark Nielsen discussed the **Watertown-Thomaston Recreational Trails** project. 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. 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. NVCOG worked with Thomaston to submit a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LoTCIP) application. If received, LoTCIP funding would be used to construct the trail and purchase and install the bridge over Branch Brook. DEEP has agreed to allow the funds originally intended to construct the trail portion in Thomaston to be repurposed to instead design the bridge and conduct permitting. The hope is to be able to get the bridge and trail built at the same time to avoid the

“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.”

construction of a dead-end trail awaiting the bridge. A meeting was set up to discuss the application with DOT staff. **UPDATE** – *the meeting with DOT focused on the lack of logical termini for the LoTCIP project. DOT indicated that if Watertown had a more firm timeline or funding to construct the adjacent section to Frost Bridge Road, Thomaston’s request could be approved.*

Aaron discussed progress and news regarding the **NRG Signage Procurement Project** that is being funded with a DEEP Rec Trails grant. The final DRAFT of the interpretive NRG Vision sign was presented and a full size mock-up was shown. Aaron thanked everyone who provided input and suggested changes to previous drafts. 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 Signage Procurement project was also intended to purchase trailhead wayfinding signage to direct potential trail users to trailheads, and to help promote the NRG. DOT has pushed back against trailhead wayfinding signs for multiuse trails on state ROW, stating that it will not allow this type of signage to be installed along state routes. Aaron explained that NVCOG has continued work to get the DOT to clarify their policy, but it may take some time. NVCOG staff was set to present the issue to the Bike Ped Advisory Committee, which serves to advise DOT on non-motorized issues. The Rec Trails grant that is funding the purchase of the signs expires in May, so Aaron explained that NVCOG is going ahead with “plan B” – purchasing trailhead signs instead. These are similar to the wayfinding signs, but do not include arrows. They are intended to be placed at trailheads, park entrances or trail parking areas to denote that the trail is part of the NRG Trail. They will serve to unite the open sections under common branding, and promote the overall trail to trail users and potential trail users. All signs will be purchased prior to May, and NVCOG will be working with local public works and parks departments to get them installed.

Rista Malanca was unable to make it to the meeting, but sent the following update on **Torrington** work to be included in the notes: *The City is set to go out to bid in the next month or so for a spring/summer construction on the trail section ending at Bogue Road. The grant expires in September so everything needs to be completed by then. Also, the City has construction money for the closure of Franklin Street to vehicles, making a pedestrian plaza, including along a portion of the NRG. Granted this is a very small section, only a few hundred feet, but it will connect to the Franklin Street Trail Head and we will have on street signage to connect to the portion we are building with the grant money. Torrington also received a community connectivity grant that is also going to construct a few hundred feet on the opposite side of Main Street, and final design is underway! As for the Sue Grossman Trail, a public meeting for a routing study connecting the trail to downtown went very well, we had about 30-40 people attend and most were constructive comments about the challenges we are facing, traffic, flooding, grading etc. It was a very positive meeting. Rista is pulling together a meeting of department heads to review and pick a preferred route and also a route we want BSC to design, they may be different due to property ownership or construction cost. Hoping to have final design of all 5 miles by the end of summer.*

Aaron congratulated **Ansonia** and **Thomaston** on their **Rec Trails grant awards**. Jeremy Leifert discussed the Thomaston award that will design the section of trail between the short section of NRG being built adjacent to the WPCA to the DOT District office. This section of trail will connect to the sidewalk network which is being improved as part of a Community Connectivity project. Ansonia received funding to investigate routing of the NRG Trail north of Bridge Street.

Aaron explained the **CT Trails Census** also received a Rec Trails grant that will allow the program to be staffed with a full time director and a part time analyst/ public outreach specialist for one year. The program is being transitioned to be housed at UConn Extension. It is presently administered by NVCOG. NVCOG staff will still be involved with the program as a technical consultant, and as coordinator for several of the trail sites in the region that are participating in the program. More information: www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu.

Mark Nielsen discussed an upcoming trail funding opportunity. NVCOG will be soliciting applications for the federal **Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set Aside Program** under the next federal transportation bill. While a new transportation bill has not been passed, CT DOT is anticipating that the TA set-aside program will continue in future legislation and has assumed that the program will essentially remain the same as specified in the FAST Act. CT DOT has requested that COGs solicit and prioritize potential projects. As authorized in the FAST Act, CTDOT is sub-allocating 50% of the expected funding level to Census-defined urbanized areas. Mark explained that funding is limited and it will likely be competitive. To complicate things, funding is allocated by urbanized area, of which NVCOG contains portions of 4. NVCOG will be working with adjacent COGs and DOT to prioritize projects. Typically, TA funding is used for non-motorized transportation related projects, and the funding can be used for design and construction of Multiuse trails or sidewalks. **UPDATE:** *NVCOG has issued a solicitation. More information:* <https://nvcogct.org/news/nvcog-soliciting-transportation-alternatives-set-aside-program-projects>

Aaron reported that the www.NaugatuckRiver.net website has been updated with information about newly opened trail sections. Please send information, news or any content for the website to Aaron.

Jack Walsh discussed vandalism that took place recently on the NRG in Derby. Several park benches were damaged by vandals, and damage was estimated at \$3,000 each. Jack discussed the coverage of the damage in newspapers, and the overwhelming response. He said that a second article overstated the vandalism. More information: <https://www.nhregister.com/valley/article/Vandals-strike-Derby-Greenway-again-13608114.php>

Jeremy Leifert discussed efforts in Thomaston to develop a Town Center Plan, and establish a downtown district that would include the NRG trail as part of its vision.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10

Next Regular Meeting: May 13 at 9 am

Location – TBD

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Municipal Representatives

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

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:

Howard Pincus – Naugatuck Railroad

Bill Paille – BSC Group

Matt Ciminella – BSC Group