



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday March 10th, 2021, 9am

Via Zoom

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

Co-Chair Rista Malanca started the meeting, and introductions were made.

Rista introduced the regional priorities update. She explained that the intent is to make a list of regional priorities available to communities to assist with funding opportunities. Seven priorities were identified and listed in the document, but since those priorities are fluid, the committee developed criteria that could be used to continually re-evaluate priorities.

Aaron Budris briefly walked the committee through the final draft of the priorities document. He explained that the document lists completed and active trail sections along with details about all 38 identified trail sections. There is a narrative about each with section length, status and cost estimates where available. It also includes a table of all identified trail segments with details. The regional priorities criteria and list of projects were discussed and approved by the NRGSC in December, and a draft document was circulated to the committee for review and comments. All comments received were incorporated into the final draft sent out with the meeting materials. Aaron explained that the last step would be endorsement of the document by the committee.

Jack Walsh made a motion to endorse, Cleve Fussenich seconded that motion. The Committee unanimously voted to endorse the 2021 NRG Trail Project Priorities Document. The [final document](#) has been published on the NVCOG Website.

Ed Mone asked about the progress on the trail section in Watertown connecting Frost Bridge Road to the section that has been fully designed in Thomaston. (*Background: Thomaston applied to the Local Transportation Capital improvement Program (LoTCIP) to fund Construction of the trailhead, trail and bridge at a cost of approximately \$600,000. Watertown applied for LoTCIP funding to construct the adjacent section of trail to Frost Bridge Road. At a meeting with DOT in February, 2020, the department expressed concern about constructing the trail in Watertown since it will be near a City of Waterbury Drinking water supply main for part of the route, and disturbance of the City's main would be a major issue. The Thomaston section is fully designed, and ready for construction, and contingent on funding approval for the Watertown section to create a "logical termini"*). Paul Bunevich explained that he had surveyed the route and located the water main, pending some additional test pits once the weather breaks. Has just about finalized the alignment working with the Waterbury Water Department. He thinks any issues can be dealt with. Watertown will be doing design in house.

Mark Jewell and Joshua Eannotti with engineering firm [Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc \(VHB\)](#), presented an overview of the Ansonia routing study currently underway. Mark explained that Ansonia has been working hard to construct segments of trail, including trail expected to be constructed this summer on the east bank of the river adjacent to downtown. The routing study that VHB is currently working on will address a gap in routing north of the current end of the NRG Trail on Pershing Drive. Joshua explained that the routing study will be looking at alternative alignments from Pershing Drive north to the Seymour border. Looking at on and off-road

"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."

facilities trying to be as close to the river as possible. There are several obstacles including flood walls and levees on both riverbanks, dense development including downtown Ansonia, the Waterbury Branch rail line, the Ansonia Copper and Brass Site, construction material storage sites, etc. They are not limiting themselves to looking at one bank or the other. VHB will be coordinating with Seymour on connections to that town's sections. VHB is currently studying existing conditions and will provide updates and opportunities to provide input going forward as routing alternatives are developed. Josh provided a project timeline: Existing Conditions Report in development, public information and coordination this summer, with a final report later in 2021. Mark Nielsen asked if the concept of relocation of Route 334 would be considered as an alternative. Joshua said it would be considered, with some concern over how long that concept might take to implement. The City does have a BUILD grant in to develop that concept but has not heard anything about awards. Mark Jewell asked that any comments from the NRGSC on the routing study be funneled through Aaron Budris (abudris@nvcogct.gov).

Mark Nielsen presented the [Derby-Shelton Bridge Improvements project](#) that has been long in planning and design. The project will reconfigure the deck of the bridge that connects the downtowns of Derby and Shelton, creating a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly atmosphere. The sidewalk on the north side of the bridge will be narrowed slightly, and vehicle lanes shifted with narrowed shoulders to accommodate a cycle track and pedestrian promenade on the south side of the bridge. The improvements are fully designed, and the construction project has been awarded to Mohawk Construction and is underway. The entire deck will be replaced along with parapet walls, railing and installation of decorative lighting including under the bridge. The slip ramp that once connected to the bridge on the Seymour side adjacent to the primrose development will be replaced with landscaping and a bike/pedestrian way connecting to the Shelton Riverwalk. Mark explained that the [Route 34 project](#) design is nearing completion on the Derby side. The dedicated bicycle facilities that were originally included in early designs has been removed, but the City is still committed to providing a connection from the NRG Trail to the train station as part of future development projects along Route 34.

Mark Jewell explained that the TA funded **Ansonia Riverwalk sections 3&4** project bid has been awarded to Schultz Construction, and a notice to proceed will be issued on March 15th.

Judy Mancini reported that the City of Waterbury went out to bid in the fall for construction of **Waterbury Phase I** (Eagle Street to Bristol Street). There were issues with the bid process, and the City will be rebidding the project with changes to specifications and expected to do so by in March. Construction is still planned to begin this year.

Aaron Budris gave a brief update on the **CT Trail Census and CT Trail Finder projects**. CT Trail Census has posted 2020 trail use data at www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu. There was a large covid-related increase in trail use across the state as people searched for safe recreation and exercise options. The Derby section of NRG again saw the heaviest use of all trails tracked by the program, although it did not see the same increase in use over 2019. That may be a result of people looking for less crowded places out of Covid precaution.

The [CT Trail Finder](#) development is fully underway. A website is being developed that will provide authoritative trail manager sourced trail information for trails across the state. It will be based on the same platform as the [Vermont/ New Hampshire Trailfinder](#), and efforts are underway to collect and enter trail information on a limited set of trails for a launch this summer on trails day, with additional trails and trail systems being added after launch. Aaron said that he is working with the CT Trail Finder team at UConn to get open sections of NRG Trails included early and may be reaching out to municipalities soon for information. Rista added that the CT Trail Finder could be a great economic development tool, driving users to trails.

Cleve Fussenich mentioned that Michael Lloyd from Washington CT was joining the meeting, and said that it would be terrific if someday, the Steep Rock trails in Washington could connect to the NRG trail via the Litchfield Community Greenway.

Mark Nielsen discussed the Federal **Transportation Alternatives** program. DOT selected top priorities from applications submitted in 2019 and are going through a vetting process on those top priorities with their consultant. NVCOG has towns in multiple urbanized areas, which is difficult, but provides multiple alternatives. Projects on the NRG, including those submitted by Seymour/Beacon Falls and Naugatuck do still have a chance to be funded. Still awaiting a new Federal Transportation Bill, which may provide more funding and more control locally over funding for projects in small urban areas, like around Waterbury. MPOs may have more control in the future. Rista asked if there would be a new solicitation once a Transportation bill is passed. Mark said that there would not, the solicitation in 2019 was it.

Plans for the state to re-enter the Federal **Recreational Trails** Program was discussed. Several years ago, CT left the federal Rec Trails program, and instituted a new program using state bond funds that would be easier to access (without so much red tape) and presumably be able to distribute more funds than the Federal program. After two successful grant rounds, the Bond Commission has not approved funds for the program the last two years, despite being in the state budget. DEEP has initiated the process to re-enter the Federal program, and have been discussing having parallel programs with federal funds and state funds if they are made available.

Mark Nielsen discussed the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LoTCIP). This is a program run by the COGs, and trail projects are eligible. Naugatuck has an approved pre-application in for a section of trail. 100% construction funding is available using state funds in the program, but municipalities are responsible for 100% of the design. There is more local control over selecting projects, and there is more flexibility in design since there are no federal funds involved.

Rista discussed the [Transportation and Climate Initiative](#) (TCI) that is being considered. The program consists of a “cap” on carbon emissions with a fee assessed on fuel wholesalers. It is designed to reduce carbon emissions, and will also generate revenue through the fee that can be used on carbon emission-reducing projects, including trail projects (although trail projects may not score highly for carbon reduction). CT has signed an MOU with intent to join the program, and it is being considered by the legislature.

Aaron Budris and Kevin Zak discussed the ongoing issues of fish passage at **Kinneytown Dam**. The Dam apparently has a new owner, Hydroland, who has proposed minor short-term fixes to dam operations. Those fixes will likely not substantially improve fish passage. The Naugatuck River Restoration Coalition has formed, and is working with state and federal partners to ensure that fish passage is restored. The Coalition has developed an [interactive storymap](#) that provides background and details about the current issue, and is regularly updated as the issue progresses.

Aaron Budris presented a [Naugatuck River Greenway Trail 2020 Progress Report](#) and asked for any corrections or additions. It will be posted to the NVCOG website.

Since the last 2 steering committee meetings were postponed, and took place a month later than normal, there was a discussion about whether the schedule should be adjusted for the rest of the year keeping the meetings three months apart, or if they should revert to the original schedule. It was decided that the originally scheduled dates would remain, with meetings in May, August and November.

Next Regular Meeting: May 12, 2021 at 9:00 am
Location – TBD (Likely Virtual)

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

(present in BOLD)

Municipal Representatives

Torrington	Rista Malanca* Jeremy Leifert
Litchfield	Cleve Fuessenich
Harwinton	Suzanne Stitch Joan Kirchner
Thomaston	Stacey Sefcik
Watertown	Roy Cavanaugh Paul Bunevich
Waterbury	Kenny Curran Judy Mancini
Naugatuck	Jim Stewart Vincent Siefert
Beacon Falls	Liz Falzone Josh Carey
Seymour	Rory Burke
Ansonia	Sheila O'Malley
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
Jennifer Reilly – CT DOT
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
Denise Raap – Litchfield First Selectman
Ed Mone - Thomaston First Selectman
Joshua Eannotti - VHB
Mark Jewell – VHB
Richard Crowther – NVCOG
Michael Lloyd- Steep Rock Association