



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday February 9th, 2022, 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.

NRG Trail Operations, Management, and Maintenance (OM&M) Discussion

Ms. Malanca began by inviting the committee to think of the NRG as a contiguous trail with, ideally, a consistent experience for the user from end to end. The goal today is the brainstorm ideas for a draft OM&M Guide to present to the towns. Aaron Budris explained that the goal of this document is to address best practices and considerations for towns along the greenway. He highlighted the main sections:

- Design and Amenity Considerations covers topics such as trail surface, design standards, [ADA accommodations](#), amenities (bathrooms, benches, and bike racks), wayfinding signage (manual developed by Milone & MacBroom in 2016). Mr. Budris invited thoughts from others.

Jack Walsh contributed that in Derby, the biggest request from the day they opened was to put a bathroom in. When they did, they used a private contractor for portable bathrooms. Ms. Malanca contributed that businesses along the trail may open their bathroom to trail users. She also mentioned that there have also been conversations in Torrington regarding how to maintain bathrooms, if they should get locked at night, etc. She also pointed out [CPTED](#) practices for benches. Finally, she stressed that ADA considerations should be top-of-mind when designing trails. Mr. Nielsen asked about the bathroom at the Watertown (Echo Lake Rd) trail, wondering who had maintenance responsibilities. Anna Bergeron said she didn't know. Roy Cavanaugh contributed that it is a composting toilet and it is operated by the town – he mentioned that it was shut down last winter. Sal Porzio said that Waterbury is putting up a prefab restroom that will be tied into utilities in one of their parks in Waterbury. Mr. Porzio said the general preference in Waterbury was plumbing as opposed to composting. Mr. Budris added that Cheshire have both kinds of facilities. Ms. Malanca contributed that sewer capabilities are also a consideration. Mr. Budris said he has seen a few trails that have installed bicycle repair stations with air pumps and tools. They are relatively inexpensive and can be very valuable to cyclists. Ms. Malanca asked if DOT still held the position that greenways were not part of the right-of-way or highway signage. Ms. Bergeron was unsure but did mention that DOT could give an encroachment permit, but the group would be responsible for purchasing and installing the sign. Mr. Budris and Mr. Nielsen corroborated, both pointing out how difficult the process had been. Ms. Malanca concluded by saying that she was not looking for a definitive answer today, but that it would be worthwhile to continue thinking about this issue. Ms. Bergeron offered having an offline discussion about signage issues. Mr. Stewart asked if there would be standards for the type of benches, fencing, etc. that should be installed? Mr. Budris said that was not the intention, since he thought most towns would choose to use materials and furniture it uses in other town parks. Mr. Stewart pointed out that while he wouldn't want to be forced to use any particular type of product, uniformity throughout would really contribute to the "single trail" feel of the NRG. Mr. Nielsen said that examples of existing amenities could be added to the guide.

- Next, Mr. Budris introduced the Maintenance section. These considerations include trash collection, vegetation control, amenity upkeep, winter maintenance, and long-term issues like resurfacing and fence replacement. Estimated \$5,000-\$7,000 per mile annually for general upkeep, not including longd

"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."

term considerations like fence replacement or resurfacing. Mr. Nielsen pointed out that a regular maintenance program reduces liability for towns.

Mr. Walsh said that winter maintenance is a huge concern, specifically whether trails should be cleared after winter storms. Mr. Budris agreed, pointing out that a lack of winter maintenance could impede commuter use. He also added that in the winter, many other recreational options are inaccessible which makes the trail even more valuable. Ms. Malanca put forth the idea of towns developing a maintenance plan for their trails. She noted that CT is more likely to grant funds to trails that have a maintenance plan in place. Vin Siefert asked about long-term maintenance for pedestrian bridges, and if other towns were performing regular inspections. Ms. Bergeron said that state records of bridge inspections are available online. Tony Ciriello said that Mr. Siefert raised a good point, because Watertown is also concerned about this. Mr. Stewart said the state has never inspected pedestrian bridge in Naugatuck (aside from requiring an inspection before it was rehabbed initially) – Ms. Bergeron pointed out that may be because of a difference in funding between state vs. federal dollars.¹ Ms. Malanca thought this would be an excellent topic to include in the OM&M Guide: maintenance for pedestrian bridges. Mr. Porzio and Ms. Bergeron both agreed that planning maintenance *before* construction is the best practices. Mr. Porzio contributed that Waterbury’s plan has been not to have their trail open in the winter. Mr. Budris estimated that most trails do not maintain trails in the winter. Ms. Malanca explained that if trails are decided to be opened in the winter, reasonable expectations need to be set based on the town’s resources, other more important plowing commitments, etc. Mr. Siefert envisioned that hopefully legislation would come out compelling the state to perform the inspections. Mr. Nielsen said this would be looked into. Mr. Ciriello noted that more bridges fail due to scour (abutments undermined through erosion) than to structural issues.

➤ Rules and Regulations covers permitted uses, hours of operation, speed, and pets. Mr. Budris underscored that one of the most debated topics right now is whether to allow “e-bikes” of all varieties. He pointed out that it enables people who may have mobility constraints to experience these trails; they allow for longer rides, which is good for commuters; and they seem to pose minimal danger to other users. He also explained that there are three classes of e-bikes recognized by the state. Many trail managers allow Class I and Class II, and do not allow Class III on multiuse trails. However, this doesn’t address motorized scooters, hoverboards, motorized skateboards, etc. The Rails to Trails Conservancy recommends keeping the trails open to as many users as possible. Moving on to other issues, he pointed out that “dawn till dusk” hours of operation would preclude those commuting home from work or exercising after work, especially during the fall and winter. The question of enforcing speed is also a concern, when very few bicycles have speedometers.

Mr. Walsh explained that the dog issue has been an ongoing problem for Derby. When they allowed it, it turned out to be “a big mistake.” The biggest issue is not just pet waste, but safety, especially on narrow trails. Mr. Walsh stressed that on the Derby trail specifically, he would have banned pets from the beginning. Mr. Porzio contributed that when he was writing the rules for Waterbury, he also considered leash length. Ms. Malanca agreed, citing that wildlife could also be a problem.

Mr. Budris then displayed a draft of proposed rules. Ed Mone asked why motorized vehicles were even being considered for a walking/biking trail, as it seems counterintuitive to the point of the trail. Ms. Malanca explained that Class I and Class II bikes still require pedaling but provide assistance for the mobility impaired. She cited a study that said most users were unbothered by e-bikes. Ms. Malanca also noted that there is legislation pending, which is why it is an important issue to discuss. Mr. Mone wondered if allowing Class I and Class II would create a slippery slope where people might see someone else with a motorized vehicle and make an assumption that anything is allowed. Mr. Siefert said that educating the public with a graphic or description of the e-bike classes

¹ Ms. Bergeron later put in the chat: “DOT will inspect pedestrian bridges only over State Roads. The States Local Bridge Program does not mandate inspections. DOT only requires inspections to help determine funding eligibility at the onset of the project.”

could be helpful. Mr. Budris brought up another point that any sort of speed limit might not work for a crowded trail vs. an empty trail.

Many participants brought up the question of enforcement, for multiple issues – pets, speed, motorized vehicles, etc.

Mr. Budris concluded by noting that the ideas discussed today would be added to a document that would be shared with the Steering Committee members. Ms. Malanca reminded everyone that any proposed rules would only be suggestions with the ability for any town to modify them as they see fit.

Project Updates

Waterbury: Judy Mancini announced that Waterbury is 50% through their project, a new pedestrian bridge is in place, and the project is on schedule. ([See photos](#))

Ansonia: Mr. Walsh said he has been on the new section of Ansonia Riverwalk and it is essentially done, but there has not been an official opening yet. Mr. Eannotti said the section is substantially complete.

Ansonia Routing Study: Joshua Eannotti reported that the next step will be stakeholder and public engagement meetings which will be scheduled soon. VHB has developed an evaluation matrix that has been shared with the City. Draft trail alignments have also been reviewed by the City, and minor changes are being made based on their feedback. They are looking forward to

Derby/Shelton Bridge: Work is ongoing on the bridge. Mr. Nielsen said the big issue is relocating the utilities that cross the bridge. NVCOG is working with DOT to add some landscaping features to make the connection to the Shelton Riverwalk more aesthetic. Paul Grimmer explained that the Housatonic Riverwalk redevelopment will be done in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Shelton/Derby Bridge. Developers will be responsible for extending the Riverwalk in compliance with Shelton's construction standards. Construction may start in 2022 and is expected to take about a year. These are mixed use developments. Shelton is looking at redevelopment of the Shelton Canal area and lock as a park.

Derby Route 34: The project has been awarded, Mr. Nielsen reported. A pre-construction meeting will occur in a few weeks. ETA for starting construction is April 1st. The State has also been awarded for a federal RAISE (similar to TIGER) grant for the Derby train station, which includes better pedestrian connections to the downtown and greenway, though that is about two years out.

Oxford Route 67 Alternative Transportation Plan: NVCOG recently published the final project report that details the routing of a proposed multiuse path along Route 67 and the Little River between the Larkin State Bridle Trail in Southford and the sidewalk network in Seymour with connections to the NRG Trail. The study also looked at the possibility to add transit service in Oxford.

Thomaston- Watertown: Watertown submitted a DEEP Rec Trails grant to assist the town in completing design work that would appease the DOT's concerns about impacts to the water main in the corridor. DOT has withheld approval of LOTCIP funds to construct the adjacent trail sections in Thomaston and Watertown. Paul Bunevich said that town staff continue to work on the design of the trail. Mr. Mone asked if the LOTCIP application would include a bridge to cross Branch Brook. Mr. Nielsen said that Thomaston's LOTCIP request would provide funding for trail construction and the bridge. Mr. Porzio said he would like to talk to the Watertown staff about where the Waterbury and Watertown trails could connect, with some recent shifts in Waterbury.

Seymour Beacon Falls TOD Project

Mr. Nielsen shared that a grant application was submitted to the CT Communities Challenge Program by NVRDC. The project extent runs between downtown Seymour and downtown Beacon Falls. This would include a 2.2 mile section of the NRG, and would also involve a new connector road between Route 42 and Route 67 and possibly relocating the train station between both towns. The infrastructure improvements would pave the way for private development similar to Quarry Walk in Oxford.

Funding Opportunities

[CT DEEP Recreational Trails Grant](#): Ms. Malanca is on the CT Greenway Committee where she reviews applications. They received \$22 million worth of requests, and only \$3 million to disburse. The award letters are going out now. Watertown ranked high, but they didn't make the first cut of funding. There is a possibility of high scoring projects that were not selected like Watertown getting funded down the line. The decision-making process was very difficult.

[CT DEEP Community Connectivity](#): Grants were recently awarded to 17 communities, explained Ms. Bergeron. Another grant program geared towards rural communities will soon become available, with \$5mil/year for three years. It will be modeled after the Transportation Alternatives program with COGs having an initial review of applications. These would be construction funds only, not for planning.

[Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#): The Transportation Alternatives Set- Aside program had the most changes to any existing transportation funding program in the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Mr. Nielsen explained. Smaller urban areas, including the Waterbury area, are now eligible entities. NVCOG will work with the DOT to figure out how the program will be rolled out, but Mr. Nielsen is confident that this committee can use these funds to get NRG projects built. Mr. Siefert asked about the request to Senator Murphy for Congressionally Directed Spending, and Mr. Nielsen explained that it was not included in the BIL.

Membership

This discussion was tabled.

Other Business

Kinneytown Dam

FERC has ruled that the Hydroland is out of compliance with their license exemption for Kinneytown Dam. [The details are recorded in this story map.](#)

NVision 2022

A regional conference hosted by NVCOG been scheduled for the fall. There will be a short video documentary about multiuse trails. Some members of the NRGSC have already been interviewed and will be featured in the video. Mr. Budris invited anyone to reach out if they would like to participate. He hopes to present a rough cut at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 a.m. Next Meeting Wednesday, May 11, 2022.

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee (present in BOLD)

Municipal Representatives

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| Torrington | Rista Malanca* Jeremy Leifert |
| Litchfield | Cleve Fuessenich |
| Harwinton | Suzanne Stitch Joan Kirchner |
| Thomaston | Stacey Sefcik |
| Watertown | Paul Bunevich |
| Waterbury | Kenny Curran Judy Mancini |
| Naugatuck | Jim Stewart Vincent Seifert |
| 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
Anna Bergeron – CT DOT
Bill Purcell – Valley Chamber
Bob Gregorski - Trout Unlimited
Chuck Berger – Retired Watertown Town Engineer
Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway
Dave Faber –Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club
Janell Mullen – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom
Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y
John Ceretta - Railroad Museum of New England
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
Matthew Coleman – US Army Corps of Engineers
Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT
Mike Jastremski – Housatonic Valley Association
Robert Phillips - 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

Ed Mone – Town of Thomaston
Richard Crowther – NVCOG
Christine O'Neill – NVCOG
Tony Ciriello – SLR/ Town of Watertown
Josh Eannotti - VHB/ City of Ansonia
Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury
Roy Cavanaugh – City of Waterbury
Lissa Jennings – Thomaston EDC
Paul Grimmer – Shelton Dev. Corp.