



Regional Naugatuck River Greenway Routing Study Community Workshop

Wednesday, November 18, 2009
Thomaston, CT

MEETING SUMMARY

Thomaston First Selectman Ed Mone welcomed everyone to the public workshop. He thanked everyone for attending and voiced his support for the greenway. Reporters from the Republican American newspaper were present at the meeting. Sam Gold, of the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCNV), next provided a regional perspective of the Naugatuck River and Greenway. He stated that the broad intent of the project was the creation of a non-motorized multiuse greenway trail from Derby to Torrington along the Naugatuck River.

Sam reviewed the vision and benefits of a greenway in this corridor. Sam noted the greenway would likely take a different form in different areas. In some places, non-motorized users would travel on a paved path or stone dust. In others, users would travel on a sidewalk and bike lanes along the roadway.

Sam stated that this project would determine the routing, phasing, and costs of the greenway. The final product would be a document for each of the four municipalities and a compilation document for the COGCNV five-municipality greenway area. He discussed where we are now in the study and the schedule.

Sam noted that the focus of tonight's meeting would be on the towns of Watertown and Thomaston. The purpose of the meeting is to gather input from the communities to assist in the routing determination. In addition, Sam discussed the on-going study on the Waterbury portion of the Naugatuck River Greenway. He noted that Alta Planning + Design, the firm leading this study, is also currently wrapping up the Waterbury study.

Four local representatives provided insights on the status of local greenway planning. Maura Martin, of the Thomaston Greenway Committee, first explained what Thomaston has completed to date on the greenway. Chuck Berger and Lisa Carew, both from the Town of Watertown, voiced their excitement and anticipation for the planning process. Kathy McNamara, Vice-Chairman of the Waterbury Greenway Advisory Committee, then provided an updated on the Waterbury Greenway Study. She noted that the committee has reviewing a draft document now and expects a final document in December 2009.

John Monroe, from the National Park Service – River and Trails Program, next discussed upcoming projects within his agency. He stated that next year, the National Park Service will be coordinating projects along the entire 44-mile corridor length. John stated that this corridor has great potential as a greenway.

Jeff Olson, Alta Planning + Design, next offered a PowerPoint presentation on "How Greenways are Transforming Communities in Connecticut and Beyond." Jeff began by providing background information on greenways, such as who uses them, what their benefits are, and connections that they can provide. He discussed and encouraged public art and environmental opportunities on greenways.

Jeff next provided information on national and local examples of greenways and specific components of each. He wrapped up the presentation discussing opportunities and challenges in the towns of Watertown and Thomaston.

A small group exercise followed the presentation. There were two large-size maps of Thomaston and two large-size maps of Watertown. The attendees were asked to go, in equal-sized groups, to one of the maps of their community. The community members were then asked to discuss the following questions and mark up the maps with their suggestions.

1. What are the key places/destinations that the Greenway trail should connect to?
2. Where are the critical gaps between these places and the Watertown River?
3. Where along the river are the best places for amenities *besides* a trail, such as a small boat launch, a picnic area, parking, rest station, etc.

After about 30 minutes, each smaller group reported back to the entire group with their recommendations for routing and amenities.

Thomaston Comments:

1. Key places/destinations to be connected?
 - Along Elm St. down to Rite Aid (S. Main St.)
 - Away from the noise
 - Harwinton has purchased some land along river (north)
 - Connection to Hillside Cemetery which is nearby to conservation land
 - Connection to Branch Brook/Black Rock State Park and Leatherman Caves
 - Mattatuck Trail in Reynolds Bridge area (connection to Watertown)
 - Bring trail next to river near old clock factory to avoid the bad curve on Rt. 254
 - Utilize existing old railroad bridges for crossings and possibly create loop trails
 - Piggyback onto existing bridge to create new crossing
 - Negotiate with railroad for "rails with trails"
 - Army Corps of Engineers land, walking trail on east side of river and south of dam (west of railroad track)
 - Connect from Reynolds Bridge to train station and spur connections to Clock Walk
 - Access points to river at Maple St.
 - Fishing, kayaking
 - Okay to cross river and have trail on Watertown side of river
 - Stone dust/screenings easier on the body

2. Where are the critical gaps?
 - east side of river across from downtown
 - north of Plume & Atwood site
3. Where are the best places for amenities other than a trail?
 - Sand pit parcel for canoe access and fishing
 - Small park at south end of Maple Street (near the river ideally)

Watertown Comments:

1. Key places/destination to be connected?
 - Future bus depot
 - Frost Bridge
 - Mattatuck Trail Extension
 - Boy Scout Camp (in Waterbury or Thomaston)
 - Leatherman Cave
 - Army Corps of Engineers Blackrock Dam
 - Black Rock State Park
2. Critical gaps between destinations?
 - South of Jericho Connector to Waterbury
3. Where are the best places for other amenities?
 - Fishing spots and boat launch north of old drive-in site
 - nice-size greenway parking area on old drive-in site or south of it, near Frost Bridge Road
4. What other amenities would you like to see?
 - Rest rooms
 - Parking
 - Picnic areas
 - A unified design theme (signs, logos, railings, lighting, benches, etc.)
 - Bike racks
 - Concession areas to rent out (Generating maintenance funds)
 - Playscapes
 - Extend the Greenway to 26.2 Miles – Marathon!
5. What obstacles exist?
 - Rt 8/262/Echo Lake intersection
 - Vehicle access (parking)
 - Frost Bridge Road (new traffic light where RR line crosses?)
6. What “theme” might be appropriate?
 - Time/clocks
 - Leatherman Caves
 - Trumbull
 - Look at “History of Watertown” – Contact Watertown Historical Society
Mr. John Pills

Echo Lake Rd.
Town History

The meeting adjourned and Sam thanked everyone for attending.