

**Auburn Trail/Ontario Pathways Trail Connector Feasibility Study  
Project Advisory Committee Meeting—June 29, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.  
Canandaigua Town Hall**

**Draft Minutes**

**Committee Members:**

*Ronald L. Brand, Director of Planning & Development, Town of Farmington (Lead Agency Staff)  
Robert R. Torzynski, AICP, PTP, Program Manager - Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning, Genesee  
Transportation Council (GTC Staff Lead)*

*Terrence Fennelly, Councilperson, Town of Canandaigua*

*Dennis Brewer, Director Parks & Recreation, Town of Canandaigua*

*Peter Ingalsbe, Deputy Town Supervisor, Town of Farmington*

*Bryan Meck, Recreation Advisory Board, Town of Farmington*

*David Wright, President, Victor Hiking Trails*

*Brian Emelson, CPRP, Director of Parks & Recreation, Town of Victor*

*Kristen Hughes, Director, Ontario County Department of Planning*

*Stephen Beauvais, Regional Local Project Liaison, New York State Dept. of Transportation, Region 4  
Office*

*Scott E. Sheeley, Regional Permit Administrator, New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation  
Region 8 Office*

*Sue A. Poelvoorde, Sr. Natural Resources Planner, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic  
Preservation, Finger Lakes Regional Office*

*Excused: Andrew Spittal, Board Member, Ontario Pathways; Rick Brown, Director Development and  
Planning, City of Canandaigua; Christopher Dorn, Parks Maintenance Supervisor, City of Canandaigua*

**Consultants:**

*Carl W. Ast, P.E., PTOE, Project Manager, Fisher Associates*

*Roseann Schmid, P.E., Fisher Associates*

**Public:** *There were no members of the public present.*

**I. Introductions**

Mr. Brand called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. and introduced all those present.

Mr. Brand explained that funding for this \$80,000 feasibility study is provided by a \$74,000 grant from the Genesee Transportation Council under the Federal Unified Public Works Planning Program. The matching funds of \$2,000 each are from the Towns of Canandaigua and Farmington as well as the City of Canandaigua.

He then asked Ms. Schmid to discuss the Committee's purpose, scope and schedule for the trail connection feasibility study.

**II. Purpose, Scope and Schedule of the Trail Connection Feasibility Study**

Ms. Schmid explained that the Committee needs to get a consensus on the goals and objectives for this study, to identify potential trail users, to identify challenges and opportunities for the project, to establish a framework to evaluate trail alternatives and a create a method for consensus on feasible alternative routes. How do we rank the alternative routes in Farmington?

The consultant stressed that this project is limited to studying the feasibility of linking the Auburn Trail to a statewide network of trails in the Canandaigua area. Other funding will be required to do the actual

construction. The final report should provide the methodology as well as the costs for the preferred location and right-of-way, the actual construction and inspection.

In discussing the scope and schedule for this work, Ms. Schmid said that the Committee will consider ways of coordinating with existing trails and municipalities; make an inventory of existing and planned conditions, needs and opportunities; do a development and analysis of alternatives and make recommendations; plan for follow-on activities and create a final report. Another important task will be to meet with the landowners impacted by the trail to obtain their support. Funding sources must also be identified and ideas generated on how to obtain the necessary grants.

Finally, the consultants distributed a project schedule to the attendees. Project Advisory Group meetings are planned for August, October and December, 2011. Contacts with property owners will take place in July. Public meetings are planned for September 2011 and January 2012.

### **III. Goals and Objectives**

The primary goal of this project is to connect area and regional trails. The consultants handed out maps of existing trails and discussed connections to other trails and feeders. Mr. Emelson commented that the Town of Victor is planning to connect the Auburn Trail to Pittsford with a bike/pedestrian bridge over the Irondequoit Creek currently under construction. Mr. Brewer added that the Town of Canandaigua got a seven mile railroad line opened as a trail and hope it can be connected to other trails. The Town of Canandaigua now has a Trails Master Plan for seven linkages including future trails in the new Blue Heron and Outhouse Parks.

Mr. Beauvais noted that a feasibility study for the Auburn Trail in Victor, Pittsford and Brighton was done some years ago which helped the involved Towns to develop ideas on how to link their sections and what it might cost. His agency has a grant program called TEP which is funded every two or three years for recreational trails. As much as \$50 million can be available State wide. Guidebooks will be printed later this year for the next round of funding. The process takes six to nine months. The process involves:

1. A call for projects,
2. Receiving applications,
3. Ranking them,
4. Having funds available.

Ms. Schmid pointed out on the map the gap between the end of the Auburn Trail on County Road 41 in Farmington and the trails in the Town of Canandaigua. Closing this gap is important to the regional trail network. She stressed that trail origins and destinations must be linked—trails must lead somewhere people want to go if they are to be used.

With a goal of providing a multi-use trail for the expected users within and between communities, the committee also must provide a safe facility that meets design standards. The consultant then asked those present if they had any other goals in mind.

Mr. Hughes asked about including tourist destinations. All agreed. Another suggestion was to plan a route that allows children to ride their bicycles safely to school. One goal to be added is to encourage people to walk and bicycle. These are better for the environment and for residents' health than using an automobile.

Mr. Hughes pointed out that any route to a school needs community involvement since safety is a concern. Police/sheriffs should be involved. Parents will be concerned about the sex offender map. Since costs are involved, benefits should also be identified. Canandaigua is already an urban area and Victor is growing towards that status. We need to recognize long term operational realities.

Mr. Torzynski noted that these issues go far beyond planning a route for the trail. Mr. Hughes responded that a trail is a functional system, not a static object like a swing set. What supports the trail? Mr. Emelson commented that trails must be sustainable and viable. Mr. Torzynski added that these features will help it to continue in operation. Mr. Hughes agreed, saying that we should use life cycle design with a 25 or 50 year window just as we do when we plan roads. We need to think beyond building the trail to the delivery of public services.

Ms. Schmid summarized the preceding conversation by saying we need to consider these factors and their costs. We are designing for long term maintenance. What will be sustainable and viable? As Mr. Hughes pointed out, we need to have answers ready for critics with legitimate concerns.

Returning to the issue of trail users, pedestrians and bicyclists were the first groups mentioned. Other potential users might include roller bladers, skate boarders and motorized scooters required under ADA regulations. It was noted that some people would want motorized recreational vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles) to be added. Mr. Brewer said the growing equestrian community will ask to be included. Ms. Schmid noted that horses will need different design standards, possibly a different section of the trail with an appropriate surface. The members commented that, although the Town of Victor does not allow horses, the Town of Mendon does allow them on the Lehigh Trail and even includes parking for horse trailers. Mr. Brand said that Farmington has 50 stables not counting the racetrack and the most horses in the County so there will definitely be an interest in adding a horse trail there.

Mr. Torzynski added that this subject will come up at the public hearing. A trail allowing horses might be more attractive to landowners. Although Federal funding will not allow ATVs, permitting snowmobiles is up to the community.

Mr. Sheeley commented that the Genesee Valley Greenway allows horses and snowmobiles even though it is a narrow trail. This can work when trail usage is low but it is risky. Perhaps this should be discussed at the first public meeting. Mr. Emelson said horses are a problem in Victor because of the road crossings so they are not allowed. Clerk O'Malley noted that people do ride horses on the Mertensia-East Victor Road section, leaving physical evidence of their presence. This could be another concern.

Mr. Brand asked the group to return to the subject of goals. Should we consider how to maximize or sustain the highest ranking criteria of the funding agencies? Should we design for this? Ms. Schmid said the group needs to understand what they look for. They can add understanding the ranking system of granting agencies as a goal. The Committee members discussed having the preferred criteria such as connections to population centers and destinations as part of their goals as well as fitting these into municipal and County master plans. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that the application is meeting a real need and not just trying to gain points in a ranking system. All agreed.

It was also agreed to postpone any decision on allowing horses and/or motorized vehicles until public input is added.

Mr. Hughes noted that horses might be a more important means of transportation in 10 years. However, would the State think that way?

Mr. Brand asked about seasonal vs. year-round trail users. Ms. Schmid replied that snowmobiles will come up at the public hearing but if they are allowed, cross country skiers will not use the trail. Mr. Hughes pointed out that the County offers a separate snowmobile trail system under a public-private partnership.

#### **IV. Challenges and Opportunities**

Mr. Ast began with the project challenges. The Auburn trail presently ends at County Road 41. The former railroad right-of-way is now privately owned. Wetlands and a creek also offer challenges. One plan would involve crossing Route 332 twice. The first crossing is not signalized. Since traffic moves at the rate of one car per second, it is not possible to cross this street without a traffic light. Mr. Brand

pointed out that there are many accidents at signalized intersections on Route 332 since drivers ignore the traffic lights.

The consultant continued by explaining that, when 332 was widened, a sidewalk was installed but it is only five feet wide. It would need enhancing to be used as part of the trail system.

Mr. Ast said that Ontario Pathways is supposed to go to Buffalo Street so this is the planned point of connection. An old Comprehensive Plan listed Baker Park but this is no longer considered. The industrial driveway for Constellation Brands is another challenge. Mr. Brewer pointed out that Outhouse Park with its trail will be nearby. Mr. Ast added that using local roads for the trail system can create right-of-way issues.

The consultant pointed out that the Auburn branch is still active in this area, serving Pactiv and other companies. Mr. Brewer noted that Blue Heron Park and its trail system are in this area.

Moving on to opportunities, Mr. Ast noted that Route 332 has many signalized intersections for crossing. In Farmington, there is a network of Town parks within developments. Another potential location is the gas easement corridor. A trail connection to the Farmbrook intersection has been proposed.

The southern portion of the trail within the Town of Canandaigua also has signalized intersections along Route 332. There are businesses such as Tom Wahl's and Abbots which could be destinations. There were comments from committee members that Victor has a trail over the gas pipeline with the owner's permission and that privately owned land might be donated. Since the railroad operates at low speed and has light traffic, could a trail fit into the railroad right-of-way? This is being done along Route 104. Mr. Beauvais added that there are 80 rail-to-trail sites already in the U.S. Some areas allow for 30-40 foot separation. Mr. Ast said we can look at this.

Mr. Hughes noted that the airport is being expanded and this must be considered in any planning since local roads will be closed.

Mr. Beauvais suggested that the group might consider phasing the trail.

## **V. Trail Alignment Alternatives**

Mr. Ast said there are alignment corridors with multiple alternatives within each corridor. Is Route 332 too much of a barrier? Should we connect along 332? On the east side, it is possible to follow the former rail line. On the road, should we follow the New Michigan Road right-of-way? Off road travel would only be possible for pedestrians and bicyclists along the former railroad alignment or a new trail across private lands.

The consultant listed the evaluation criteria:

1. Connectivity to origins and destinations,
2. Directness of connections,
3. Street crossings,
4. Property impacts,
5. Need for a permanent easement or right-of-way,
6. Land use compatibility,
7. Traffic speeds and volumes of on-street alternatives.

The group added costs as #8.

Mr. Ast asked everyone to rank these in importance before leaving today.

## **VI. Questions, Comments, Discussion**

Mr. Brand inquired about the Local Infrastructure Policy Act and how it applies to trails. Mr. Beauvais said he does not have an answer yet—the State moves slowly. Mr. Hughes explained that rural areas are concerned that this Act negatively impacts rural areas because they have less density of population. Mr. Beauvais noted that it is hard to count trail usage. Perhaps the best way is to look for a national study for a similar area.

Mr. Ast pointed out that part of Farmington is in the Canandaigua School District. Could the trail be used as a route to school? He noted that there are several parks along the way which offer recreation for healthy communities. Ms. Poelvoorde commented that destinations are keys. What about hospitals? Mr. Hughes responded that Thompson Hospital and many medical buildings are on or near Route 332. The committee members also noted that there could be a tie-in with bus routes if more buses could carry bikes.

Mr. Brand returned to the “smart growth” concept. Do we guide a trail to serve existing and planned needs for development in our communities or put it in areas which are less populated? How far from the Route 332 corridor should we go? 332 is where growth is planned as the infrastructure is already there. Where will the future trail users live? Mr. Beauvais pointed out there can be ozone problems along busy roads. Federal money for transportation includes trails. Get people out of cars and on foot or on bicycles.

Ms. Schmid asked if there is a dollar range for TEP grants. Mr. Beauvais said yes, a maximum of \$2.5 million although one \$5 million one was funded. The Victor project is \$900,000. Current projects run \$1-\$2 million. Phasing is possible.

## **VII. Next Steps**

1. Complete inventory (July)
2. Begin needs-opportunities assessment (July-August)
3. Meet with property owners of key links to trail alignments (July)
4. Meet again with advisory group to discuss findings and establish alternative alignments and evaluate (mid-August)
5. Public information meeting (September)

There was a discussion on how best to approach the property owners. Mr. Ast said they could be contacted separately by phone or in a group meeting. Mr. Brand suggested holding any meetings at either Farmington or Canandaigua’s Town Halls. Mr. Wright noted that farmers will be concerned about a nearby hiking trail during times when they are spraying their fields. Others pointed out that hunting season would be a concern. Mr. Brand added that the Farmington resident who owns the former rail bed is interested in the trail project.

Mr. Beauvais commented that Mendon did a feasibility study for extending the Lehigh Valley Trail. Some property owners were opposed. It might be best to strategize your approach to property owners. Would someone local, known to the property owners, be a better contact person than Fishers Associates? Is a one-on-one discussion better than a public meeting? It was noted that public meetings are often attended by the opponents of the plan and not the supporters.

The meeting ended with a discussion of when and where to hold the next Advisory Group meeting. Mr. Brand said that tonight’s meeting was held in Canandaigua because a large number of members of the public were expected to attend and Canandaigua has a larger facility. He suggested the next meeting be hold in Farmington Town Hall at 1000 County Road 8 in Farmington. The group agreed on Thursday, August 25, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

These minutes were taken and respectfully submitted by

Leslie C. O'Malley, Ph.D.  
Clerk

DRAFT