

**Auburn Trail/Ontario Pathways Trail Connector Feasibility Study
Project Advisory Group Meeting—August 25, 2011
Farmington Town Hall**

Approved Minutes

Committee Members Attending:

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)
Dennis Brewer, Director Parks & Recreation, Town of Canandaigua
Peter Ingalsbe, Deputy Town Supervisor, Town of Farmington
Bryan Meck, Recreation Advisory Board, Town of Farmington
Stephen Beauvais, Regional Local Project Liaison, New York State Dept. of Transportation, Region 4 Office

Committee Members Excused:

Rick Brown, Director Development and Planning, City of Canandaigua
Christopher Dorn, Parks Maintenance Supervisor, City of Canandaigua
Terrence Fennelly, Councilperson, Town of Canandaigua
David Wright, President, Victor Hiking Trails
Brian Emelson, CPRP, Director of Parks & Recreation, Town of Victor
Andrew Spittal, Board Member, Ontario Pathways
Kristen Hughes, Director, Ontario County Department of Planning
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

Consultants:

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

Audience:

Michael Casale, Farmington Town Board
David Degear, Chair, Town of Farmington Planning Board

I. Introductions and Minutes

All present introduced themselves. Since there was not a quorum present, approval of the Minutes was rescheduled to the next meeting.

II. Overview of June PAG Meeting

Consultant Roseann Schmid noted that there was a good article on the project in the Victor Post. She then briefly reviewed the last meeting using a power point presentation. She listed the involved agencies including: the Towns of Farmington and Canandaigua, the City of Canandaigua, the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC), consultants Fisher Associates, the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT), NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and this Project Advisory Committee.

A. Goals and Objectives

The consultant went on to say that the purpose of this Project Advisory Group is to provide a feasibility study for linking the Auburn Trail in Farmington to the Ontario Pathways Trail in Canandaigua. Showing

a timetable for the project, she noted that the project is on schedule although the meetings with the property owners involved have been shifted to allow input from the public first. At the June meeting, those present discussed some goals for the study:

1. *Connect the Auburn and Ontario Pathways Trails to provide a link with regional trail systems,*
2. *Connect with important destinations,*
3. *Connect communities,*
4. *Encourage walking and biking on the trails,*
5. *Explore the funding process to accomplish the linkage,*
6. *Get public input about other trail users such as horses, cross-country skiers, ATVs or snowmobiles.*

B. Challenges and Opportunities (Project Needs)

Ms. Schmid continued with the challenges and opportunities for this project. Some challenges include:

1. *The former railroad route is now partially in private ownership.*
2. *Busy Route 332 must be crossed.*
3. *There are waterways and wetlands along the way.*
4. *Agricultural needs must be considered.*
5. *Access must cross private land.*
6. *There are right-of-way limitations.*

However, there are opportunities to connect walkers and bicyclists with stores, schools and parks. The gas line easement and railroad alignments offer possible routes.

C. Trail Alignment Alternatives

Ms. Schmid showed the alternative trail alignments discussed at the June meeting.

III. Results of Ranking of Evaluation Criteria (from June PAG Meeting)

The other consultant, Carl Ast, spoke next. He referred to a survey taken of the Committee members at the end of the June meeting which listed the following evaluation criteria in order of importance:

1. *Connectivity to origins and destinations (proximity and number of locations),*
2. *Meeting multiple objectives,*
3. *Consistency with Parks and Recreation Plans and Community Support,*
4. *Cost,*
5. *Environmental impacts,*
6. *Need for a permanent easement or right-of-way (number of parcels),*
7. *Street crossings (number and difficulty),*
8. *Property impacts (number and location),*
9. *Directness of connections (overall length),*
10. *Traffic speeds and volumes of on-street alternatives (for on-street alignments),*
11. *Land use compatibility.*

IV. Identification of Origins and Destinations

At the last meeting, a variety of origins and destinations were discussed including connections to parks and neighborhoods, schools, stores and other commercial destinations, recreational use by businesses and neighborhoods, access to the underground gas line right-of-way and former railroad alignments including the Auburn branch and the Canandaigua and Batavia branch.

V. Development of Potential Alignments

Mr. Ast then turned to the topic of possible alignments. These include the former railroad right-of-way, State, County, Town and City right-of-ways, municipal parks, the gas line right-of-way, private properties

either along the roadway right-of-way or between other corridors and the existing/active railroad right-of-way. He showed a map of these possible alignments, pointing out that there are multiple alternatives within each corridor. In designing these trail alignments, there can be on-road and off road plans. Mr. Ast showed the committee possible designs for each. Unfortunately, there are barriers to both plans including private construction in the former railroad right-of-way, streams, wetlands, and roadside drainage.

VI. Evaluation of Alignments

Next, the consultant applied the committee's criteria to show how to evaluate the alignments to connect the available trail corridors between the Auburn Trail and the proposed Ontario Pathways extension to Buffalo Street.

- 1. Criteria #1, connectivity, reduces the number of possible alignments from 15 to less than 10.*
- 2. Criteria #4-11 narrow the number of potential alignments to three possibilities.*
- 3. Criteria #2 and 3 meet multiple objectives and are consistent with Parks and Recreation Plans and community support.*

Mr. Ast pointed out that there are challenges to some possible alignments. There is an existing active railroad between Buffalo Street and Route 332. A former railroad property has a driveway access on the north side of Emerson Road. A former railroad property now has farm structures and operations on both sides of the former railroad alignment. Route 332 can only be crossed at an existing traffic signal.

VII. Feasible and Preferred Alignments to be Considered

Mr. Ast explained that the next step is to do a process check. Of the 15 possible alignments, seven had four or more intersections with a ¼ mile or less distance to get to the trail or destination within the buffer areas. Two of these seven use already developed corridors. In evaluating the remaining five, use cost as a filter. This should get us down to two or three possible alignments. This advisory committee will review them in making a final decision. Public input will be provided at a public information meeting in January, 2012.

The consultant listed some next steps to be taken including:

- 1. Refining the process to incorporate comments to present at the public information meeting.*
- 2. The Project Advisory Group will review alignments and suggest additional ones to be evaluated.*
- 3. The public information meeting to be held on September 14th.*
- 4. Scheduling meetings with owners of key links to trail alignments during September and October, 2011.*
- 5. The Advisory Group will meet again to discuss findings and establish alternative alignments for evaluation and consideration in October, 2011.*

VIII. Questions/Comments/Discussion

Mr. Casale asked about public input. The first step is a public information meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on September 14 at Farmington Town Hall. Mr. Casale also inquired about the possibility of taking a survey. This could be done on the Town website, the Recreation website or even Facebook. Notices of the meeting should be posted in schools, libraries, banks and store bulletin boards.

Mr. Brewer asked for more information about the September and January public meetings. Mr. Ast said their goal is obtain input: What are trails for? Ms. Schmid said that the difference between the two meetings is that trail routes will be presented in January.

Mr. Meck asked if property owners impacted by the trail can get tax relief. Mr. Ingalsbe said he does not believe Victor offers tax relief.

The consultants said there is usually a mixed response from property owners about a potential trail. Mr. Brewer pointed out that there was much opposition in Shortsville but the public meeting presentation turned this around.

Mr. Beauvais commented that Federal funds can be used to purchase property for a trail.

A question was raised about adding schools to the destinations in the new section of the trail. The consultants pointed out that there are no schools in this area.

Ms. Schmid asked if the ¼ mile buffer (about three city blocks) is acceptable. All agreed.

Mr. Brand asked how this integrates with existing trails. A selling point would be to show how it has been done successfully elsewhere. He also noted that access from developed areas to destinations involves municipal maintenance. The existing population in the corridor as well as those in connecting areas will benefit. In any grant applications, these numbers should be estimated. Mr. Torzynski agreed.

In regards to tax relief, Mr. Brand pointed out that Incentive Zoning by both Farmington and Canandaigua would allow more property uses and could increase property values in the corridor.

All agreed that it is too early in the process for discussions with potential property owners. Mr. Ast noted that many potential alignments do not require the use of private land.

Mr. Ingalsbe asked how many alignments will be presented at the September public meeting. Mr. Ast said all 15. Ms. Schmid added that the public may suggest other alignments. Mr. Beauvais commented that, of the 15, about half scored higher regarding destinations. Perhaps more information could be added such as the percentage of the trail which is on and off road. Mr. Torzynski noted that this should be considered ahead of time. We need to be ready to discuss the options. However, as Mr. Casale pointed out, a trail is not the same as a road.

Mr. Torzynski asked what the multiple objectives are. Mr. Ast responded that the question should be: Does it meet all criteria? Verification is not a test. Ms. Schmid noted that not all objectives are part of the evaluation criteria but they may still be important objectives. Mr. Torzynski responded that including on and off road routes accomplishes this.

Mr. Brand questioned if the goal for year round use of the trail conflicts with reality. Mr. Ast replied that, in winter, grooming the trail for cross-country skiing is needed.

Mr. Brand noted that we must be careful not to disturb nesting areas or wetlands. Ms. Schmid added that a drain or structure on the trail could be necessary in wet areas. She pointed out that woods are an issue during hunting season and nearby farmland during the growing season. Mr. Beauvais added that you need to make sure access roads to fields are maintained for the farmers. He explained that while hunting can be a risk, this should not kill trail projects.

IX. Next Steps

Mr. Brand said we now need to bring the project to the attention of corridor residents. This can be done by newspaper articles, municipal websites, development association newsletters (e.g., Farmbrook), email services, hand-outs for municipal clerks, informational displays at libraries, Town and City Halls, and notices for post offices, bank and store bulletin boards. Could a hand-out be given with applications for hunting licenses? He suggested asking other trail towns what they did to publicize trail development.

Ms. Schmid pointed out that the entire shaded area is impacted, not just those directly on the trail route. Maps could be placed on municipal websites. It would be nice to get feedback before the meeting.

Mr. Ingalsbe asked if Victor Hiking Trails could mention the project on their website.

Mr. Brand and the consultants will work with Supervisor Fafinski's secretary on a press release since her background is in journalism. Ms. Schmid suggested a flyer for all three municipalities involved including their websites. It can give information on the proposed multi-use trail and tie it in with the Farmington recreation survey and the Town of Canandaigua trails master plan.

X. Adjournment

The next meeting will be a public meeting on Wednesday, September 14, at 6:30 p.m. at Farmington Town Hall, 1000 County Road 8 in Farmington.

Mr. Brand adjourned the meeting at 8 p.m.

These minutes were taken and respectfully submitted by

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