

**Auburn Trail/Ontario Pathways Trail Connector Feasibility Study
Project Advisory Committee Public Informational Meeting—September 14, 2011
Farmington Town Hall**

Approved 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)
Rick Brown, Director Development and Planning, City of Canandaigua
Christopher Dorn, Parks Maintenance Supervisor, City of Canandaigua
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
Andrew Spittal, Board Member, Ontario Pathways
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

Consultants:

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

Public:

Michael Buskus, Farmington; Joe Proe, Town of Canandaigua; Meg Colombo, Finger Lakes Visitors Connection; Reginald Neale, Farmington; Jeffrey Hennick, Victor Hiking Trails; Julie Sherwood, Messenger Post Publications; Robin Evans, Ontario Pathways; David Degear, Chair, Farmington Planning Board; Michael Casale and Steve Holtz, Farmington Town Board; Bill Taylor, City of Canandaigua; Chauncey Young, Victor Hiking Trails; Kevin Reynolds, Town of Canandaigua Rails Committee; George Cretekos, Farmington

A. Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Brand welcomed everyone and explained that there are two sets of Minutes to be approved before the public part of the meeting can begin. Mr. Brewer moved to approve both the Minutes of the June 29th meeting and the August 25th meeting. Mr. Hughes seconded. The motion was carried by a unanimous aye voice vote. Mr. Ingalsbe explained that although not all members of the Advisory Group were present at both meetings, all had read the Minutes and could act to approve them.

Mr. Brand then briefly summarized the need for a link to connect the Auburn Trail from County Road 41 in Farmington with the Ontario Pathways Trail in the City of Canandaigua. This Advisory Group expects to complete its work by March, 2012. He then introduced Consultant Roseann Schmid from Fisher Associates.

B. Purpose of Feasibility Study and Study Limits

Using a power point presentation, Ms. Schmid began by listing the agencies involved in this project: 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. The purpose of this project, she said, is to evaluate the feasibility of closing the gap in the trails, not to design the project. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project will be area residents and other trail users.

C. Goals of the Public Informational Meeting

The consultant went on to state that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to get input on who should use the trail and how should it be aligned. The Advisory Group has established the following criteria (in order of importance) to evaluate the alignments:

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.*

Tonight, they are asking the public for information and ideas to guide the remainder of the study.

D. Scope and Schedule

Ms. Schmid showed the schedule being followed. The next Advisory Group meeting will be in October and a second public meeting will take place in January, 2012. The final report is scheduled for March, 2012. Meetings with involved property owners will also take place during this time.

E. Goals and Objectives

The overall goal, Ms. Schmid said, is to connect a State-wide network of trails from north to south by closing this regional gap. This includes both existing trails and planned trails. In addition, key origins and destinations will be linked by this connector. She asked for input for additions to the following list:

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.*

The design standards, Ms. Schmid pointed out, will depend on the trail users. Horses, for example, have different needs from bicyclists. The main need is provide a safe facility to encourage trail use. Finally, the Advisory Group needs to understand the criteria used by funding agencies if this trail connection is to be actually constructed. Funding is crucial.

F. Potential Trail Users

It is assumed that the trail will be used by hikers and bicyclists. Federal funding will not permit ATVs. However, should snowmobiles use the trail? What about horses? Ms. Schmid asked for public comments.

One audience member suggested cross-country skiers and baby strollers. Robin Evans from Ontario Pathways commented that snowmobile license fees are put into a fund to maintain trails. Michael Casale, Farmington Town Board member, explained that these funds are disbursed to clubs. Kris Hughes, head of the County Planning Department, added that the County sponsors grants to three clubs in the County who maintain the trails on a volunteer basis.

David Wright from Victor Hiking Trails noted that the handicapped in motor scooters also must be accommodated under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Steve Beauvais from NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) said that recreational trails may be funded under a federal transportation program administered by State Parks and Recreation. There are grant opportunities providing funds for equipment to maintain trails.

A comment was made that the Genesee Valley Greenways trails receive maintenance from snowmobile groups.

Andy Spittal from Ontario County Trailways commented that the City of Canandaigua does not allow snowmobiles on its trails. Chris Dorn added that snowmobiling there is unlikely.

Peter Ingalsbe, a Town Board member for Farmington, said the Town website has received a request for horses to be able to use the trail connection. Someone in the audience noted that trails used by horses have high maintenance costs. Chauncey Young from Victor Hiking Trails said that the Lehigh Trail has a parallel trail for horses. This seems to work. Ms. Schmid said this would be the ideal. An audience member pointed out that horses are not allowed to use the Auburn Trail in Victor.

A concluding remark was that one possible funding source could be the Federal Rails to Trails program.

G. Challenges and Opportunities (Project Needs)

Carl Ast, the Project Manager from Fisher Associates, spoke next. He began by discussing the challenges. A major one, he noted, is the need to cross Route 332 twice if you follow the railroad right-of-way. Some of this land is now privately owned. This is true for the Auburn line and the Canandaigua-Batavia branch. If the connection crosses Route 332, it must be at a signalized intersection. However, Townline Road has a truck turnaround with a concrete surface too wide for a pedestrian crossing. Other problems include:

- 1. Waterways and wetlands along Route 332;*
- 2. Farmers' needs and the protection of farmland;*
- 3. Access across private land;*
- 4. Right-of-way limitations.*

There are, of course, great opportunities, too. Mr. Ast listed some of these as:

- 1. Connection to parks (Canandaigua has two new parks, Outhouse Park and Blue Heron Park),*
- 2. Connection to schools and stores,*
- 3. Recreational use by businesses,*
- 4. An underground gas line and*
- 5. Railroad alignments.*

H. Trail Alignment Alternatives

Mr. Ast stated that there are multiple alternatives in each corridor. Maps with various routes were put up in the front of the room for the audience to study later in the meeting. The maps showed alignments to use available trail corridors between the Auburn Trail and the proposed Ontario Pathways extension to Buffalo Street. The possible alignments included: the former railroad right-of-way (now private), the roadway right-of-way (State, County, Town, City), municipal properties like parks, the gas line right-of-way, private properties along the roadway right-of-way, private properties between other corridors and the existing/active railroad right-of-way.

The consultant showed a possible design for an off-road alignment to accommodate hikers, the handicapped in motorized wheelchairs and bicyclists as well as an on-road alternative which allows bicycles on the road and walkers on the sidewalks.

Repeating the evaluation criteria for alignments (see Section C), he asked for any additional ones. The audience was provided with comment sheets for their input on this and other issues.

I. Evaluation Criteria

J. Development of Potential Alignments

K. Process to Evaluate Alignments

The main criteria, Mr. Ast said, is connectivity. There will be a ¼ mile buffer around the points. Using this, the original list of 15 criteria is reduced to six or seven. The next step uses criteria #4-11 to narrow the number of potential alignments to three possibilities. The final step uses criteria #2 and 3 meet multiple objectives consistent with Parks and Recreation Plans and community support.

Ms. Schmid commented that there are maps available for comment or adding additional alignments. Mr. Ast requested comment on the alternatives.

L. Questions, Comments, Discussions

Jeffrey Hennick from Victor Hiking Trails pointed out that safety should be explicitly listed as a criterion for evaluations. He pointed out that he saw a close call on the East Victor Road portion of the Auburn Trail where walkers and cyclists share the road with cars. He added that scenic views should also be stressed as a way to attract tourism.

Farmington resident Michael Buskus agreed, saying he rides along similar trails on his bike. Safety should be #1. Do we want children riding near Route 332?

Mr. Casale said this consideration will come out later in the process and will certainly be a factor.

Someone in the audience asked about vegetation. Ontario Pathways is wooded. Shaded trails get more use than open ones.

Mr. Ingalsbe referred the audience to the Town website, saying they can make comments there. He noted that several people have already done so and their comments will be kept in the file.

M. Next Steps

When there were no more comments, Mr. Ast explained that the next steps will be to review the feedback from tonight's meeting, incorporate comments and evaluate criteria to narrow choices down to three to five alternatives. The Advisory Group will meet again in mid-October. There will also be meetings with involved property owners. The consultants will develop recommendations and present them to the Committee in mid-December for additional refining.

In early 2012, there will be a second public information meeting. This input will be incorporated into the final report which will be presented to the Advisory Group in March. He then provided contact information for the audience.

Mr. Brand announced a break at 7:31 p.m. for the audience members to come up and study the maps and fill out comment sheets or notate map hand-outs with alternative routes. The tape recorder was turned off. The Chair reconvened the meeting at 7:49 p.m.

Brian Emelson from the Town of Victor Recreation Department suggested that the consultants obtain testimonials from people in other communities who have trails going through their properties. This will alleviate concerns about vandalism, the amount of traffic at any one time (usually less than people expect) and the positive impact on local businesses. Names should not be given but endorsement of trails by other citizens allays residents' natural fear of change.

Chairman Brand requested all present to spread the word about this project to keep the momentum going. How can local governments get support? He suggested Incentive Zoning to create a win-win situation. He thanked the local newspaper for sending a representative because this will rally community support.

N. Adjournment

The Chair said the next meeting will be at the end of October. He thanked Victor Recreation for putting up posters about this meeting at Hang Around Victor Day. The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m. Mr. Ingalsbe locked the building.

These minutes were taken and respectfully submitted by

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