



Place: Plainville Library  
Lower Level Meeting Room  
56 E Main St, Plainville, CT 06062

## Meeting Notes

Date: May 22, 2017

Notes Taken by: Geoffrey Morrison-Logan

Project #: 42201.00

Re: Plainville and New Britain Planning Public Meeting Summary  
Farmington Canal Heritage Trail Gap Closure Study and CT**fastrak**  
Connection Study (Gap Closure Trail Study)

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The public meeting took place on Monday, May 22, 2017 from 6:00-8:00pm. The meeting consisted of a presentation to report on the findings of the work that had been undertaken since the 2016 Fall Public Workshops. This work included the review of the long list of alignments, the creation of screening criteria, the development of a short list of trail alignments for Plainville and New Britain, and a set of criteria that will be used to evaluate the short list of alignments. The presentation, followed by a large group question and answer period, began at 6:15pm and went for approximately one hour. After the presentation, there was an open house segment where members of the Steering Committee and the consultant team were available for one-on-one discussions with the public. Comment forms were distributed at the meeting to gather input on the alignments and evaluation criteria. The PowerPoint presentation and PDF's of the short list alignments have been made available on the project website.

A total of 93 members of the public signed in at the meeting, and 22 comment forms were submitted.

**1. Call to Order:** Geoffrey Morrison-Logan (VHB) called the meeting to order at 6:20pm, welcoming members of the public and introducing Tim Malone (CRCOG). Mr. Malone also welcomed the public and provided a brief overview of the agenda for the public meeting.

**2. Public Comment:**

a. No one chose to speak at this time.

**3. Presentation Overview:**

a. Mr. Malone started the presentation with an overview of the scope of the study and highlighted some of the major deliverables that included:

- i. Document existing conditions, opportunities and constraints
- ii. Develop a list of potential trail alignments
- iii. Screen and evaluate potential trail alignments
- iv. Identify one preferred trail alignment that completes the FCHT gap
  - Identify one preferred trail alignment that connects to CT**fastrak** in New Britain
- v. Prepare concept plan
  - Conceptual level design
  - Cost estimates
  - Implementation plan

b. Mr. Malone provided a summary of the Work Plan that included three phases;



- Concern that on Alignment C, which goes through the Tomasso Nature Park, people walking their dogs on the path could disturb the wildlife. The team responded that this was a good point and would take it into consideration.
- Concern that there could be traffic problems in downtown and asked how you deal with that. The team responded that traffic engineers would pay close attention to such issues when designing the trail.
- Pointing out that it seemed possible to mix and match elements from the various alignments. The team noted that during the evaluation step, each alignment would be broken up into a northern and a southern segment, allowing them to be mixed and matched.
- A question about whether there would be consideration of scenic aspects of the study. The team responded that this would be covered in the evaluation.
- A question regarding costs of each of the alignments. The team responded that cost estimates would be developed during the next phase of the evaluation.
- A note that it was essential that the trail be kept off the road as much as possible to keep people safe and make them feel comfortable.
- A note that having the trail go through town means that people will stop and spend money in town.
- A question regarding potential property impacts and whether or not any of the alignments would impact private property. The team responded that at this time they were assuming some potential private property impacts on each of the alignments, but that the exact nature of them would not be clear until later in the process when the alignments are developed further.
- A comment that nobody had mentioned eminent domain yet. The team responded that it was too early in the process to discuss the use of this tool. A determination of the use of that tool would be made during the design phase by either the town/city or the Department of Transportation.
- A question regarding whether or not public safety officials have been brought into the discussion. The team responded that a series of focus groups were held in the summer of 2016 and that public safety personnel were invited.
- A note that in congested areas, cyclists could be instructed to dismount and walk if safety is a concern.
- A question about whether or not the north-south alignment would be prioritized over the east-west one. The team responded that those decisions would be made by the town/city and the Department of Transportation as the projects moved forward. It was noted that completing the East Coast Greenway has been a priority for the state, which the north-south alignment helps to accomplish.
- A question about where information on the long list of alternatives can be found. The team responded that the presentations from the fall public workshops are available on the project website.

- f. Ms. Carr provided a summary of the Evaluation Criteria that will be used to further assess the Short List of Alignments. The Evaluation Criteria include:
- i. Connectivity
  - ii. Safety
  - iii. Security
  - iv. Potential Property Impacts
  - v. Potential Environmental Impacts
  - vi. Estimated Costs

Ms. Carr outlined the steps that will be undertaken over the next 1-2 month to evaluate the Short List of Alignments, that include:

- Evaluate the Alignments
- Review Results with Steering Committee
- Recommend Preferred Alignment(s)
- Hold Next Public Meeting

- g. Ms. Carr presented a summary of the projects next steps that include; refining the alternatives, a public meeting in the summer, followed by preparing the concept plan in the fall of 2017.

**4. Open House:**

- a. Mr. Morrison-Logan provided an overview of the format of the open house. Six stations were set up in the room that had a poster-sized board of an alignment. Each station had a flip chart for participants to place general comments. The Steering Committee and the consultant team were available at each of the stations to answer questions about the alignments. Participants were reminded to fill out their comment forms or provide comments online at the project website. Comments received during the open house and on the comment forms will be compiled and made available at a later date.

**5. Meeting Adjourned:** The open house portion of the agenda ran until approximately 8:30pm.

**6. Additional Mail-in Comments**

Comment forms were available at the public meeting and posted to the project website at [www.gapclosuretrailstudy.com](http://www.gapclosuretrailstudy.com). The comment forms were a self-mailer format which allowed members of the public to fill them out at their leisure and mail them to Mr. Malone at CRCOG. A total of 22 comment forms were received. Feedback is organized by the questions asked by the comment form.

**Questions Related to Screening:** Do you agree with the screening criteria used to establish a shortlist of practical and feasible alternatives? Do you agree with the results of the screening process?

- 22 respondents answered yes, they agree with the screening criteria. No respondents answered no, and none of the respondents left this question blank.
- 17 respondents answered that they agree with the results of the screening process. 3 respondents answered no, and 2 left this question blank.

Raw comments provided on this question:

- More work needs to be completed and the public still needs to be educated as to the constraints that drove some of the preliminary alignment selections.
- Concerned that cost has not yet been factored into decision making. The longer it takes to design/engineer and building this trail, the more likely it will be that funds will be scarce or simply unavailable. If the latter is true and we (PGA) needs to look for private funding, cost will be a big factor in that effort.
- Include accessibility for as many people as possible. That section of Plainville has busy/dangerous roads, no shoulder, no sidewalks. We have to drive the ½-1 ½ miles to get into town if we want to do it safely.
- Strongly disagree that the trail which leads to the Tomasso Nature Park would disturb the wildlife. If the trail goes on the outside of the park, people could still enjoy the beautiful park.
- In Alignment C, please go around the park because of the wildlife.
- The idea of connectivity is the most important. Connect people to the trail, to town parks, to town center and businesses. Unfortunately, the portion of town north of Rt 372 and west of Rt 177 is currently not connected due to the lack of sidewalks and otherwise safe accessibility options. This trail is a chance to rectify that.

**Questions Related to the Shortlist of Practical and Feasible Alternatives:** What are your thoughts on the assumptions used to develop Alignment A, B, C, D, E, and F? Do you agree with the routing and trail type assumptions used?

- 19 respondents answered yes, they agree with the routing and trail type assumptions used. 2 respondents answered no (1 respondent answered both yes and no), and 2 respondents left this question blank.

Raw comments provided on the questions related to the shortlisted alternatives:

Preference for Alignment C due to its 95% off road character and that it utilizes the Nature Park.

- Preference for Alignment C which has the most off road options and seems like a safe route for children. Also, Alignment C has a nice route to the left of the airport through the swampy area. Preference for Alignment E since it's also mostly off road and the fact that Alignment C is to the left of Downtown Plainville, Alignment E from New Britain would bring you right through downtown to better businesses.

- Preference for Alignment B, C, and D. The more the historic canal can be used, the more attractive the Plan is. Avoid the routes going through neighborhoods, like the Willis Ave/Hemingway Street suggestion.
- None of the presented alignments brings the trail to the Plainville Senior Center so that the seniors would have a safe jumping off point for walking the trail. Many seniors do not or cannot drive, so they would not have access to the trail.
- Preference for Alignment D as it has most off road and does not go through center of Plainville. It will have access to center retail with connections to New Britain section.
- Preference for alignments that hug closely to Rt. 10.
- Agreed with the assumptions and as stated during the presentation, as the Technical and Steering Committees delve deeper into the details of the chosen preliminary alternatives, those assumptions might just be proven inaccurate, incorrect, or infeasible. Flexibility and adaptation are the keys to a successful conclusion to this study.
- Agreed with the majority: the northern rail is the greatest choice for that part of the alignment. Short of that, the march route intrigues me, but I wonder why the other side of the floodplain wasn't considered (west). If we can't get a significant amount of support from impacted property owners near the canal route by the church, we can hopefully still get the churches concurrence and get out onto Pearl St., then through the Park and to Town line, first via off road (east #1-west #2), then on-road if necessary. I like having the trail on Pierce Street and I like the floodplain route along the south bank of the Pequabuck River.
- Alignment C is the best route due to the fact that it's 95% off road which is great and it represents a nature/history (core) trail in Plainville. Alignment B would be second choice as it goes along the wetlands. Alignment E is preferred for New Britain section since it's mostly off road and protected.
- The single biggest criteria used is the minimum 75% off-road. PGA was always willing to accept less (much less) than that, and that has been a sticking point. Also please emphasize abandonment of any possibility of rail-with-trail.
- Alignment B, C, and D all have good parts to each, so how to select those and create one alignment that has the best of all three? For Alignment B, there seems to include fly over bridge at rail yard that is not a good idea due to long ramps required to get to height required. For Alignment C, how to do off-road on CT177? How to cross W. Main St? Alignment E looks to be a better off-road option and also possibly the more costly.
- Preference for Alignment C because of the mileage and the percentage off road for safety purpose.
- Alignment C is the best because it gives access to the trail and to downtown to people who don't have it. Please prioritize Plainville alignments before New Britain alignments because the prior have much higher priority to close the gap.
- Hemingway Street used in one route is heavily populated, with lots of houses, driveways, narrow roads, etc. Not a smart choice for a connection to the Park.
- On-road sections might not be safe, depending on what barriers can be effective for safety.
- Alignment C is visually the nicest though it might not be the most efficient.

- Hemingway Drive is such a thin road, hard to visualize a bike trail. Also, Hemingway and Broad have many private driveways, the chance of a car backs into a bike is quite possible.
- Respect fully the request that the North South project being prioritized over East West, if the two projects cannot be completed together. East West project should not delay completion of the North South project.
- Preference for Alignment C since it has the most percentage off road, uses state/town lands, and has little impact to privately owned properties.
- Preference for a multi-use trail having 90% or greater off-road. Having worked with the disabled for over 20 years and having a moderate to severe hearing impairment, safety and ADA compliance is of utmost importance to me. The trail chosen should also have minimal flooding concerns. Alignment B or C looks good.
- It is impossible not to go on the road somewhere. A large sidewalk with grass and a guard rail would work. Alignment C and D are two good choices which both show different parts of Plainville.
- The sections which are along roads should be protected from traffic using jersey barriers or other means.
- Would not pursue Alignment A, too much on road. On Alignment B, concerned about flyover in terms of both feasibility/expense and accessibility to persons of all ages or those with limitations. Pleased to see Norton Park as part of all alignments. The trails are appropriate resources to incorporate at Norton Park and also has great historical significance due to visibility of canal.
- Agreed with the focus on off road trails. The trail should offer people a chance to take advantage of what Plainville center has to offer. It's a way to showcase our town to passersby and solidify the connection to our residents. Alignment C is the best since it truly reconnects the northwest part of town back to the rest in a safe way. It also puts a bit of focus on the wonderful Tomasso Park. It avoids any entanglements with the railway and offers accessibility both to users and emergency services if needed.
- Preferred type of trails: Long stretch of undisturbed trails between road crossings, e.g. long sections of trail in and north of Granby; Trails leading to destinations, e.g. Unionville into Collinsville where the trail goes along the river into a quaint town like Collinsville; Wide multi-use trails with wide bike lanes and maintained during winter, e.g. Iron Horse Boulevard in Simsbury.
- Disliked type of trails: Trail is surrounded on both sides by very tall fence for a long straight section with one break in the middle, feels unsafe with no real escape route, e.g. where the trail crosses Tamarack Lane in Simsbury; Road crossing at every 300 ft., e.g. north section of New Haven; Bicycle unfriendly signs, e.g. "Bicyclists must dismount and walk across each road crossing".
- Need to make one section of the Plainville trail a destination for bicyclists where people want to stop and spend money.

**Questions Related to the Evaluation Criteria:** Each of the alignments will be evaluated against evaluation criteria that address: connectivity, safety, security, potential right-of-way/property impacts, environmental considerations, and costs. Are these the right criteria? Is anything missing? What in your opinion is most important?

- 18 respondents answered yes, they agree with the evaluation criteria. None of the respondents answered no, and 4 respondents left this question blank.

Raw comments provided on the questions related to the evaluation criteria:

- Safety is the most important evaluation criteria.
- Security and safety are the most important evaluation criteria.
- To have family use road sections must have barrier between cycles and motor traffic.
- Economic development is the most important criteria, e.g. the concept of transit oriented development.
- All are the right criteria and which one is most important is very subjective and has a lot to do with the specific design selected for each section of trail. A trail alongside a busy road will need to pay more attention to safety while a trail through a wooded area might be more concerned with security.
- Added plaques for history and nature summaries would be good.
- Connectivity is important. Also need to emphasize that planners are trying to get the alignment close to Plainville center.
- Needs to take into consideration if extra construction is needed such as tunnels or bridges.
- Highest priority: percentage off road should be very high (90%+). Connectivity for the section of Plainville near Tomasso is also priority.
- Unless we have safe and secure routes through town, people will go north from Farmington south from Farmington and not venture on our section of trail. Cooperation from police department is critical. Traffic enhancements through town is also very important.
- Environmental impact, safety, security and cost are important.
- Safety and environmental concerns are most important.
- Fun, emergency access, signage, facilities and parking are important.
- Safety and cost are important.
- Connectivity and safety are important.
- Connectivity and accessibility is most important. Beyond that, a focus on maximizing the off road nature of the trail.

**Final Question: Do you have any other comments about the project?**

- We want it yesterday (soon).
- Love the project. Hope the negativity will be proven wrong.
- Cost will be important but "cheap" is not always better. Also phasing in the Nature Park half of the trail first makes a lot of sense, especially following the canal route up to Pierce Street.



- Flexibility and adaptation are required. Unforeseen opportunities would be great. Hybrid designs are likely, as are on road portions of the trail.
- Presentation boards from 5/22 public meeting took too long to download, probably due to large file size. Please find a way to improve this, otherwise public will lose patience.
- Maps on the website print too small to distinguish street names. It would be great to have one pole in the middle of trail at intersections.
- All potential routes are well thought out and offer some creative solutions. On the New Britain link, any improvements a rail trail brings will improve Rt. 372 or Woodford Ave.
- Thank you for your patience, time and work! This is a very worthy project and you have a lot of support from the town's people!
- Impressed with the presentation. Very organized, well versed and no redundancy.
- Hope it finally goes through to completion.
- May consider implement project in phases if funding become a constraint.
- Suggest that parking lanes on both sides of streets be used for protected bike lanes and create off street parking.
- Urge more emphasis on the trail as multi-purpose, which will also increase public support and enthusiasm.
- Should focus on closing the gap and at a later date look at connecting to the FastTrack.
- This is a unique opportunity to look at surrounding multi-use trails in the state, take the best ideas from them, and create the perfect trail that would be the envy of surrounding towns.

## 7. Additional Email Comments

Additional email comments from the public as related to the May 22 Public Meeting were received by Mr. Malone at CRCOG and in the Gap Closure Study email account at [gapclosurestudy@VHB.com](mailto:gapclosurestudy@VHB.com). Below is a summary of the raw comments received.

- Please include this route in your evaluation: From Norton Park RD to Prior St, to Rosanne ST, to South. Canal to Canal ST, across West Main ST and then through the firehouse driveway to the Pequannock River, following the river down stream and across the RR at grade and north along Cronk Rd and continue to the current end at Northwest Dr along the abandoned ROW. This route will lead away from congestion of heavily traveled areas and bring the trail to a location that it historically followed. It will also bring the trail closer to the river, an important natural feature in Plainville. Lastly, the RR has multiple grade crossing by vehicles throughout Plainville. An additional bike and pedestrian crossing is no big deal. I biked and hiked this route many times as a youth. This is a unique opportunity to look at surrounding multi-use trails in the state, take the best ideas from them, and create the perfect trail that would be the envy of surrounding towns.
- Has there been any research in trying to use the sidewalk buffer on route 10 going southbound? I wonder if any of our neighbors feel the same. Especially after cutting down all the dead/dying maples there would be plenty of space to put a few new trees and possibly some planters? I believe that's why the town has been slowly replacing some trees with what I

think is more salt tolerant (Bradford Pear)? Then at Main st. people can go into the center of town.

- My only suggestion is to keep it as off road as possible. motor vehicles and bikes are not compatible, from first hand experience. As far apart as you can.
- A resident on Hardwood Road was concerned about the potential eastern trail alignments that may go through the wetlands behind their property. Suggested that one of the other alignments would be preferable as the resident acknowledge that the trail would be beneficial to the town. There might potentially be opposition from residents in this area against the eastern alignments.
- I like Alignment C a lot with trail coming down west of Robertson airport around perimeter of Tomasso Nature Park. I like idea of using route 177 bridge to cross railroad tracks. I kinda wish the trail would go west at the Pequabuck River instead of back eastward toward downtown. I think if u can find a way to cross route 372 west between route 177 and Chris's Auto Clinic on corner of West Main Street/Forestville Avenue junction and make it through Webster Street onto backside of Hemmingway Street into Norton Park you would hit a major homerun...There are a lot of woods from Gas Station on route 177 where first bridge for railroad tracks and 2nd bridge crossing Pequabuck. I also like idea of connecting New Britain to Plainville via Woodruff Ave and Pequabuck river trail Woodruff to route 177. Also, the Pequabuck river trail can possible connect Bristol to Plainville. I was also wondering if closing the route 372 and 72 junction on the Bristol-Plainville line could be an option in connecting the Farmington Heritage Canal Trail, maybe reopening Bohemia St.
- A resident from Perron Road strongly suggested the project team take the choice of Perron Road off the alignment list. The reason is that Perron Road is a narrow, small street that does not have sidewalks going all the way down. There is very limited street lighting. The people that live on Perron Road paid more for their houses because it is a dead end street, it is family oriented where people know who their neighbors are, and parents don't have to worry about their children when they play outside. The resident also wonders why a small park like Tomasso is considered as it is not open all year.

**Statement of Accuracy:**

- We believe these minutes accurately describe the discussion and determinations of this meeting. Unless notified to the contrary within 5 business days, we will assume all in attendance concur with the accuracy of these notes.

Notes Submitted by:



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Theresa Carr

Notes Approved by:



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Tim Malone

Distribution: website – interested parties list

Project File 42201.00