

Merritt Parkway Multi-use Trail Frequently Asked Questions

What would be the surface material of the trail?

The material is not known at this time. More than likely, it would be a combination of hard and soft at different areas depending on terrain.

Would there be lighting along the trail?

The Merritt Parkway is not illuminated. In keeping with the existing character, a trail would not be lit. However, the use of small lights or reflectors may be considered for safety reasons to delineate the edges of the trail.

Where would parking for the trail be located?

It is expected that the existing Park and Ride lots, whose peaks are normally during the week and not on weekends (when a trail would likely be most heavily used), would be utilized for a trail. It is possible that additional parking may be provided by nearby businesses that may have surplus spaces. The possibility of building new surface lots will also be discussed during the study process.



Public Workshop

MERRITT PARKWAY MULTI-USE TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

STATE PROJECT 173-410

City of Norwalk

Norwalk High School
Cafeteria
55 County Street

Thursday May 17, 2012
6:30 pm

Connecticut Department of Transportation Personnel

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Merritt Parkway Multi-Use Trail Feasibility Study

The purpose of the study is to determine whether a multi-use trail is feasible through the Merritt Parkway corridor. By documenting and analyzing many factors, including any effect on the scenic and historic character of the Parkway, and by soliciting stakeholder input, an informed decision can be made as to whether a multi-use trail is appropriate.

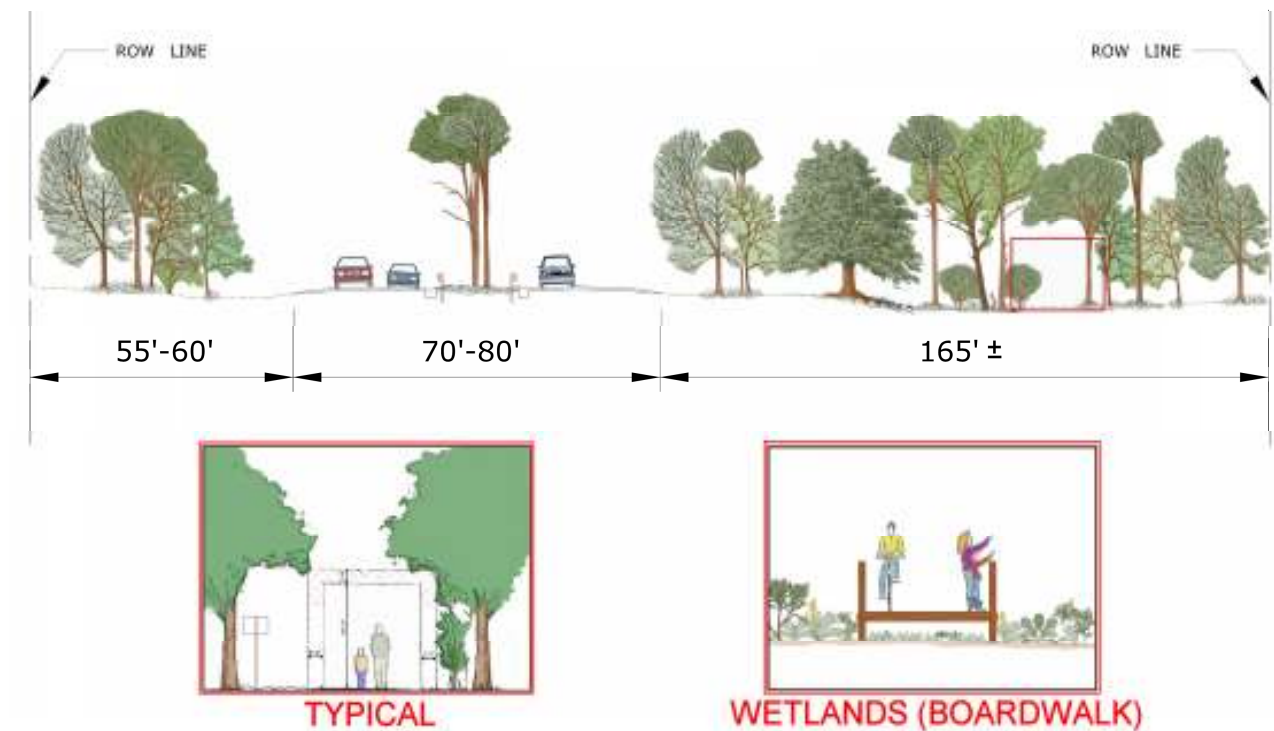
In 2010, the Department submitted a grant application to the National Scenic Byways Program for the purpose of exploring the feasibility of a multi-use trail along the Merritt Parkway. The grant was awarded to the Department and funds became available in October 2011 to begin the feasibility study process.

One of the most historic roadways in the United States, the Merritt Parkway (built during the Great Depression) is famous for its 66 unique bridges which settle into the surrounding topography and landscape. Unlike most other Parkways in America, the Merritt Parkway was conceived as a commuter corridor for the purpose of alleviating traffic on the already crowded Route 1.

The Parkway is not only a State Scenic Road and a National Scenic Byway, but it is also on the National Register of Historic Places. Its significance as a historic property is found in the bridges, the aesthetics of the alignment, and the landscape, the combination of which is truly unique.



TYPICAL CONCEPTUAL CROSS-SECTION



POSSIBLE TRAIL TREATMENTS THROUGH VARYING TERRAIN

An extensive public outreach program is being conducted as part of this study. In addition to meetings held with the elected officials of each City or Town along the Parkway, two public meetings will be conducted in each municipality.

The purpose of this meeting, the first of the two, is to collect information from local residents and to identify and prioritize community challenges and opportunities. With a focus on Norwalk, this meeting is designed to meet stakeholders and understand their individual concerns.

Once all pertinent information has been collected and a conceptual design for the trail has been established, the second meeting, a Town Information Meeting, will be held to present the conceptual design and gather any additional feedback. Currently, that meeting is expected to be held in Fall/Winter of 2012.

The information, ideas, and concerns raised by this process are critical to the success of the study. We invite you to share input and provide us with the local knowledge that is essential for this study to best serve the community.

**MERRITT PARKWAY MULTI-USE TRAIL
PUBLIC WORKSHOP**

REPORT OF MEETING

Date of Meeting: May 17, 2012

Time: 6:30 pm

Location of Meeting: Norwalk High School, 55 County Street, City of Norwalk

Subject: Merritt Parkway Multi-use Trail Public Workshop

Mr. William Britnell of the Department of Transportation's Division of Highway Design opened by outlining the purpose/goals of the multi-use trail study with a presentation to the workshop attendees. He noted that this is a feasibility study and it will eventually lead to decision as to whether a trail should be constructed. He explained the meeting is a working meeting and that DOT representatives are looking for input specific to Norwalk as there will be a similar meeting held in each municipality along the Merritt Parkway.

Following the presentation, attendees were broken into small groups, each headed by a DOT representative. Attendees were given the task of identifying concerns they may have about a potential trail. They were asked to focus their discussion specifically on Norwalk. After approximately 15 minutes of discussion within the groups, the group leaders reported to the rest of the room. The concerns were recorded on flipcharts as they were being reported. When all groups had been heard, attendees were asked to vote on their greatest concerns using stickers that had been distributed to each person. During the time attendees were voting, DOT staff was available for questions and concerns. Specifically, Ms. Sue Fiedler of the Department's Landscape Design unit talked with citizens whose properties directly abut the Merritt right-of-way. She took note of where their homes were by marking survey plans and listened to their specific concerns.

Once voting had been completed, the groups were reformed and given the task of brainstorming local opportunities that a trail could create within Norwalk. Following another 15 minutes of discussion, group leaders again reported out to the rest of the room. The discussed opportunities were recorded on flip charts.

Finally, attendees were asked to provide suggestions for the trail. It was noted that as the groups had already discussed concerns, the suggestions provided during the session might focus on potential resolutions to those concerns. Following 15 minutes of discussion, group leaders reported their group's recommendations, which were again recorded on a flip chart.

Will Britnell thanked the attendees for coming and the workshop was officially ended. Numerous residents and attendees remained behind to talk with DOT personal.

Following the workshop, the information collected on the flip charts was compiled below. The concerns are ranked according to the number votes they received during the workshop, whereas the opportunities and suggestions are simply listed as they were recorded.

Concerns:

1. Road Crossings
2. Privacy
3. Civil Engineering Challenges (Design Challenges)
4. Motorized Vehicle Use on Trail
5. Safety of Users
6. Signage at Road Crossings (for Drivers)
7. Too Many Challenges Exist to Build Trail
8. Noise/Air Pollution for Trail Users
9. Litter
10. Tree Cutting
11. Liability
12. Addition of Too Much Pavement
13. Impact to Wildlife
14. Type of Fencing to be Used
15. Large User Groups
16. Preserving the Integrity of the Parkway
17. Equestrian Conflicts
18. In-line Skater Conflicts
19. Cost/Benefit of the Project
20. Restrooms
21. Vandalization
22. Emergency Access

Opportunities:

1. Tie into Cranberry Park (north of Parkway)
2. Health Benefits
3. Link Communities
4. Safe way to bike
5. Connect to Hutchinson Parkway Trail
6. Bike Commuting
7. Alternate form of Transportation
8. Recreation benefits of being outside
9. Improve the ROW – remove invasive species and dead trees
10. Connect to Route 7 Employers
11. Educational Opportunities
12. Highlight Bridge Architecture
13. Link for the East Coast Greenway
14. Safe route to area schools
15. Connect to the Norwalk River Valley Trail
16. Tie in to the local supermarket
17. Cross Country skiing during the Winter
18. Children can connect with nature
19. Create a tourist attraction
20. A place to host fundraisers
21. Tie in to Rail Station at Route 7
22. Tie into Stop and Shop, back entrance to avoid vehicles

Suggestions:

1. Create a smartphone application for trail users
2. Educational Opportunities (dial-a-number for access to specific area info)

3. Composting Bathrooms
4. Interpretive Signing for Bridges/Parkway History
5. Use volunteers/boy and girl Scouts for maintenance
6. Signalize Route 123 for optimum pedestrian use
7. Construct an elevated trail over difficult/dangerous sections (Route 7/RR/Main Ave)
8. Marked and Signalized Intersections
9. Use old RR bridge (in Trumbull) for crossing if needed
10. Conduct special outreach to educate about trail
11. Tie into the "Keep Norwalk Beautiful" organization
12. Easier commute
13. Construct dual paths for different user types
14. Use a living fence
15. Check for areas of cell phone "dead zones" along the trail for safety
16. Solar powered garbage compactors
17. Photography events
18. Post the Hours of Operation
19. Install Bike racks at park and rides
20. Break the project into multiple phases
21. Delineate different lanes for different speeds
22. Bike rental program
23. Schools - use trail for gym/educational opportunity
24. Education along trail (plaques or signs)