

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

Town of Westport

Westport Police Department
Police Headquarters Classroom
50 Jesup Road

Tuesday May 1, 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.

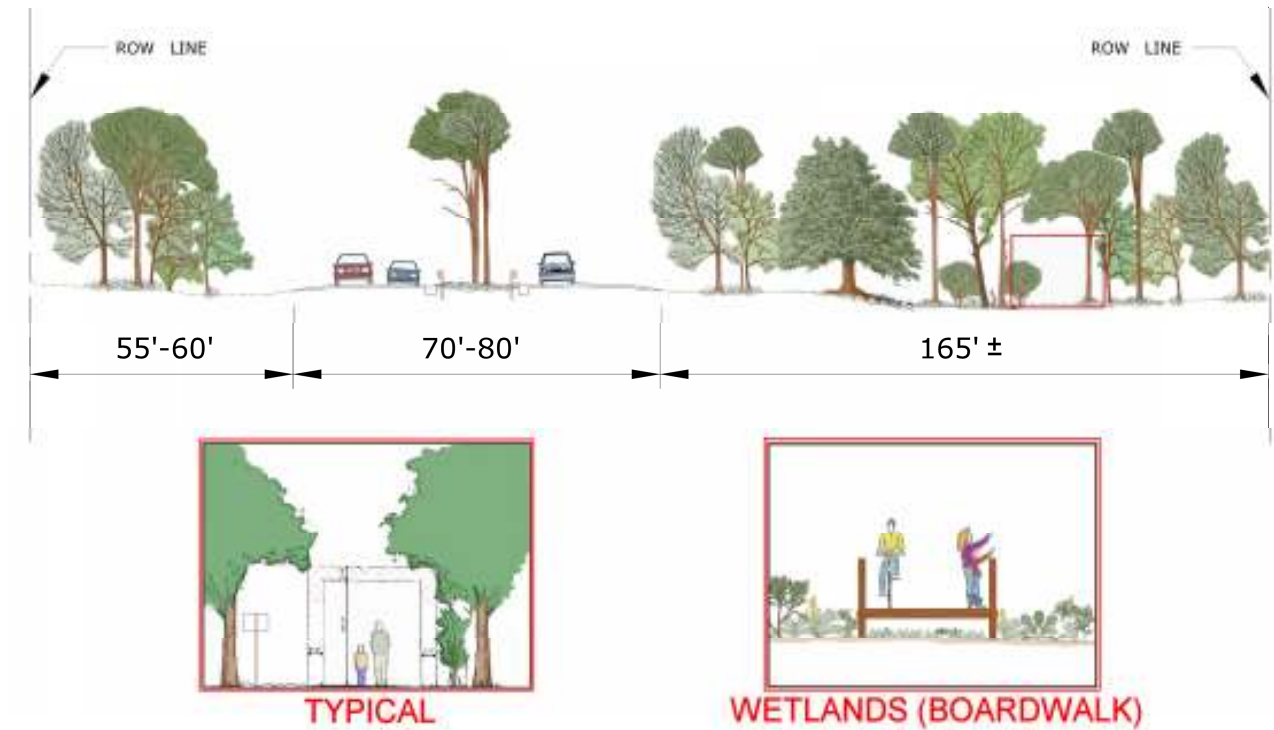
In 2010, the Department submitted a grant application to the National Scenic Byways Program for the purpose of exploring the feasibility of a multi-use trail along the Merritt Parkway. The grant was awarded to the Department and funds became available in October 2011 to begin the feasibility study process.

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 Westport, 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 1, 2012

Time: 6:30 pm

Location of Meeting: Police Department Headquarters Classroom, Town of Westport

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 Westport 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 Westport. 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 Westport. 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 the 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. River Crossings
2. Safety at Crossings
3. Historic and Landscape Impacts
4. Safety between Pkwy and Trail Users
5. Cost of Construction and Maintenance
6. Wildlife/Environmental Impacts
7. Screening
8. Cost Effectiveness vs. Number of Users
9. Privacy and Safety of Abutters
10. User Conflicts
11. Appropriate Treatment of Side roads (not cycle safe)
12. Noise - for Abutters
13. Parking
14. Distraction to Drivers
15. Proper Use of State Property?
16. Emergency Access
17. Maintenance of Trail (litter)
18. Security
19. Loss of Vegetative Buffer
20. Quality of Materials Used in Construction
21. Liability
22. Hunting
23. Visual Impact of Fencing
24. Cleaning Up after Pets (spec. Horses)

Opportunities:

1. Health and exercise
2. Family time
3. Connect to Trumbull Mall, Red Barn Restaurant, Westport YMCA
4. Use as a linear park
5. Walking safely – lack of sidewalks elsewhere in Town
6. Use park-and-ride lots for parking
7. Reduce Fairfield County's carbon foot print
8. Alternate commuting corridor – alternate modes of transportation
9. Link to the East Coast Greenway
10. Make use of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development
11. Connect to the Audubon in Fairfield
12. Opportunity to detour expert bike riders off narrow local roads
13. Employ Boy/Girl Scouts for service projects
14. Emphasize historic and environmental aspects of the Parkway
15. Nature appreciation
16. Tie into Sherwood Island Park
17. Cross country skiing in the winter
18. Use Town property adjacent to Bayberry Lane
19. Trail can serve as a link between different parts of Town
20. Safe place to bike
21. Increase property values
22. Access to Merritt 7
23. Access to Route 33 and downtown
24. Host benefit rides/events

Suggestions:

1. Use the Boy Scouts for maintenance/ownership of the Trail
2. Create a Statewide maintenance board for trail repairs
3. Create a smart phone app. to identify areas needing maintenance
4. Use way-finding signs
5. Crosswalks
6. Environmental impacts are less important than widening the Parkway
7. Emergency call boxes
8. Use examples of existing trails to respond to NIMBY worries
9. Build a bridge or dam to cross the Saugatuck River (or self-service ferry)
10. Calculate the cost effectiveness of the Study
11. Significant motorist outreach program will be needed to educate
12. Post "Hours of Use" for the trail
13. Consider designing a pilot section of the trail – show benefits
14. Install display boards and kiosks with educational information
15. Adopt-a-Trail -> get community businesses/volunteers involved
16. Improve the sidewalk connection to downtown (Rts 33/57)
17. Focus on difficult intersections
18. Begin a 503C to help coordinate private donations
19. Town Health Department is along corridor, use as a resource
20. Conduct a cost/benefit for trail vs rail through the corridor
21. Survey Towns regarding cost
22. Training courses for trail users
23. Install trash and recycling bins
24. Allow Town-owned facilities along the trail (serving food/drink)