

B&A Rail Trail Feasibility Study Questions and Answers

CEDC and CLC sponsored a public information meeting regarding the trail feasibility study on September 24, 2019, which was attended by 59 people. Below is a list of questions posed and information provided during the meeting, in some cases combined or edited for clarity. Where new information is presented in this document it is in **green text**. Some questions will be responded to more fully in the final feasibility study document.

- Have the quality-of-life benefits of trails been quantified, for other trails? Can they be quantified? *Trail benefits and a forecast of economic impact will be described in the feasibility study.*
- Are there studies comparing the level of public support for a trail before and after construction? *Before-and-after studies of public support for trails are unusual. Anecdotally, public support for recreational trails often increases once a trail is built. Relevant studies will be described in the feasibility study.*
- How much will it cost to build the trail? *A ballpark estimate based on the costs of other trails with a similar surface, and the overall length of the trail is \$8.5 million. However, many factors determine the actual cost, which cannot be estimated without further planning and design.*
- What kinds of funding are available for trail construction? *Most trails utilize a combination of funding sources, including state or federal grant funds and matching funds from the private sector. In New York State, most of the funding for recreational trails come from state government via competitive grant programs.*
- What will be done in 5 years? *The schematic timeline presented in the flyer is meant to provide a sense of the stages of trail from idea to construction. It does not represent a timeline either for the trail as a whole or any one section of it. Five years to opening a section of trail is a best-case scenario. The final study will identify the segments of trail that could possibly be completed within 5 years.*
- What will the trail be like in the hamlet of Claverack? Will equestrians be riding on streets in the hamlet? *The trail, as proposed, would use local streets. It is unlikely that equestrians would ride on hamlet roads, as they seek safe and appropriate routes for their horses, such as quieter areas with soft surfaces.*
- Is there a plan to also study the old Boston & Albany railbed through Ghent, north of Mellenville? *The terminus of this feasibility study is at Mellenville/Philmont; the corridor in Ghent north of Philmont is not part of this study.*

- What affect do trails have on the value of property along the trail? *This question has been studied for specific trails in numerous communities across the country at different times. Recreational trails or greenways have no impact or a positive impact on property values near to a trail. Some studies may be found on the website of the Rails to Trails Conservancy.*
- The presentation mentioned shared lanes. Will the report describe where the trail will use shared lanes, and what the current conditions are on those roads? *This study will describe the current conditions on roads where shared lanes are proposed.*
- In some parts of the old corridor, residents have leases on county-owned land. *There has been no effort to change lease agreements.*
- If the trail requires a corridor 8-10 feet wide, how could that work in Mellenville Square? *In that area, the proposal is that the trail would be an on-road facility or side path, and not utilize the old railbed, as shown on slide 16 in the presentation, included at the end of this document.*
- How will the trail be policed? Who maintains the trail? *In general, trails are monitored by trail users, volunteers organized by a trail manager, and sometimes municipal agencies also play a role. Many trails are supported and policed by a volunteer trail “Friends” group. Any incident of trespassing by users of the trail onto private property would be addressed by local law enforcement, as with trespass on private property in other parts of a community.*
- What about hunting near to the trail or shooting by farms near the trail? *Trail users would be at risk during hunting season. This was identified by attendees at the meeting on September 24 as an issue where further information is needed. The feasibility study will address this question. Other trails in the county pass through agricultural areas and are managing such potential conflicts.*
- How many people are using the Harlem Valley Rail Trail? *The most recent effort to estimate the number of people using the Harlem Valley Rail Trail was in 2015. As part of an effort to [study use of trails across the state](#), Parks & Trails New York surveyed trail users on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail at Millerton and at Copake Falls. At Millerton, an estimated 136,000 users, and at Copake Falls an estimated 54,908 users visit in any given year. Trail use varies with the time of day, day of the week, and season. These estimates are to be used with caution, because only a limited number of users of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail submitted surveys.*
- What is the life span of the trail? How often will it need to be re-surfaced? *Speaking generally, asphalt will need to be resurfaced in 20-25 years; stone dust needs significant maintenance sooner (5-10 years).*
- Can different sections of the trail be different surfaces? *Yes.*

Are neighboring property owners liable for someone wandering off the trail onto their property and being injured?

New York State law provides the framework for such situations. This is described in an article by Tommy L. Brown, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University,

“Landowners, by their actions, can allow blanket permission for anyone to use their property; they can exclude all recreational use; or they can decide whether to allow recreationists on a case-by-case basis.

Two sections of New York law, Penal Law 140.00-140.10 and Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) 11-2111-2117, define the rights of landowners versus recreationists or others who might enter or use private property.”

You can view the full article at this [link](#).

- *What are the next steps? For any section of this trail to proceed to further planning or construction, it will proceed through approval by public officials, including the County Board of Supervisors if the county-owned railbed is involved, and funding will need to be sought to support a detailed plan and design. Next steps will be described in the final feasibility study.*
- *Would some private land be purchased to implement this trail? The proposed alignment minimizes the use of private land. Land purchase is a possibility in some cases. While the ownership of the old railbed has been studied in this project, no parcels have been identified for acquisition. Acquisition is not the only option. Generally, in cases where a landowner is willing to allow a trail across his or her land, there are several options, including trail access agreements and trail easements, in addition to acquisition.*

For more information about the trail feasibility study, please contact Christine Vanderlan, christine.vanderlan@clctrust.org or F. Michael Tucker, mtucker@columbiaedc.com.

Fish and Game Road to Claverack Town Park

