



Meeting Notes

Place: Plainville Library
Auditorium
56 East Main Street
Plainville, CT 06062

Date: July 26, 2016

Notes Taken by: Andrea Drabicki

Project #: 42201.00

Re: Public Information Meeting #1, 5pm-7pm
Farmington Canal Heritage Trail Gap Closure Study and
CT**fastrak** Connection Study (Gap Closure Trail Study)

The public meeting took place on Tuesday, July 26, 2016 from 5 to 7 PM. The meeting consisted of an open house where members of the public could obtain information and talk to staff about the Gap Closure Study. There were project boards showing base maps of the Plainville and New Britain corridors for the public to review. The project team then gave a formal presentation at 5:15 PM, which was followed by a question and answers period.

Forty Seven (47) people from the public signed in at the meeting.

Presentation

Mr. David Head began the meeting by stating the overall purpose of the public information meeting (PIM) was an introduction to the project, to familiarize the public with the Study Team and key Stakeholders, and concluded by opening up the floor to questions.

Mr. Head then discussed the Objectives of the Study and the Study Vision. These are important concepts so that the public and the decision makers in the communities can always refer back to these to ensure the Study is accomplishing the objectives.

Objectives of the Study are:

- 1.) Close the Gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail through Southington and Plainville.
- 2.) Identify a connection to the CT**fastrak** station in downtown New Britain

The Study Vision is:

The vision for the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail and CT**fastrak** Gap Closure study is to connect the communities with a world-class multi-use trail that closes the gap in the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) through the towns of Southington and Plainville with a connection to the CT**fastrak** station in downtown New Britain. These links will prioritize safety, comfort, and mobility for all users, regardless of age or ability, through cohesive and attractive trails that promote economic and community vitality

Mr. Head discussed the reason that the Study is being undertaken, which is to complete the last unplanned section of the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) through the Towns of Southington and Plainville. The FCHT will traverse over 80 miles when complete and presently the 4 mile section through Plainville is the only section not either being designed or in construction. This is due to the active rail line that runs north and south through Town. This study will allow the Towns to identify a corridor that they can move into design and eventually construction.

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Hand in hand with this is to determine a connection over to the CT **fastrak** station in downtown New Britain. Both of these connections will allow for greater use of alternate means of transportation in the region.

Mr. Dan Burden of Blue Zones then gave a short presentation describing the tangible results of establishing a scalable community for all user types and citizens. Having worked in over 3,500 towns and cities across North America, Mr. Burden presented the following information as results of communities with established greenway development corridors:

- Where we spend our money matters
- Communities that focus finances on establishing an auto centric culture have the worst traffic problems
- Property tax reductions occur within communities that establish a more walkable, multi-modal greenway development plan
- Social capital can often be more important than financial capital
- Quality of life index increases for all community residents but especially among seniors

Mr. Head then briefly described the scope of work, schedule and the public engagement for the Study. The scope of work is comprised of seven tasks and the timeframe for the Study is expected to last 18 months, which would have the final reports available for review in August of 2017.

Mr. Head next discussed how the public can participate in the Study, the main opportunity being through the website, www.gapclosurestudy.com. The website will have updates posted, as well as meeting minutes and presentations, upcoming events and includes an "Interested Parties" sign up. The Interested Parties list generated from the website and the sign-in sheets from the public meetings will be used to email the public with project updates.

Mr. Head then went over the next steps of the Study which included reviewing the information gathered from the public today, begin looking at alternatives, keep all interested parties updated, and preparation for another round of public meetings in October. These meetings will take place the first week in October beginning Monday, October 3rd. Please check the website for updated information as we get closer to the meetings.

Question and Answer Period

Mr. Head then opened the floor to the public for questions, there were many questions posed and a good discussion followed. Below is a summary of the questions and answers:

A member of the public asked how the trail positively affects communities or businesses. It was noted that many of these trails / bicycle facilities generate additional influx into the communities they go through. Another member of the community asked if individuals will be advised ahead of time if their properties will be affected by the new trail. It was noted that at this point in the process we are not even to the point where we can identify if a property may be affected with any degree of certainty. As the project moves forward and alignments get refined, if there is a property that will be affected the owner will be notified. It was also noted that, as this time, we aren't even to the point of thinking about the possibility of eminent domain; Mr. Head noted that the Department of Transportation historically will not utilize this tool for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

A question was asked about a related project, which will extend the trail from Red Oak Hill Road in Farmington to Northwest Drive in Plainville. The member of the public was also concerned about the pavilion that will be constructed as part of that project. The study team responded that that section of the trail is part of a separate project and outside of the scope of the current study.

Another question was stated requesting to know if environmental diversity will be looked at. Mr. Head stated that yes an important component of the study will be to determine if there will be any environmental impacts and if so what these may be.

A question was raised concerning the safety of a trail and if the Plainville police had been contacted. Mr. Head stated that security on the trail is an important piece of the puzzle. The police, fire and emergency services in all the towns have been reached out to and will be part of the study process.

A comment was brought up as to how the issue of tree roots along the trail will be handled. Mr. Head stated that this would be through routine maintenance from the Town or an advocacy group. However, Mr. Head also noted that many of the issue with tree roots have been designed out of newly constructed trails with the use of root barriers and removal of nuisance trees (shallow root systems) with local approvals.


Manager Robert Lee, Plainville, concluded the meeting by mentioning his excitement about the upcoming planning process and that he encourages public engagement.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

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:



David Head

Notes Approved by:



Tim Malone

Distribution: website – interested parties list

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