

“Concept F – Refined”

Introduction

In early 2016, after negotiation between the Village of South Nyack Task Force and the State and after public meetings with residents, the Village chose Concept F for the termination of the Shared-Use Path (SUP). The main thrust of Concept F was to create a primary SUP access point and parking lot inside Exit 10. A secondary component was a spur connector ramp linking the SUP to a partially-paved Esposito Trail. Such a secondary entrance could provide Village residents with convenient access to the SUP.

Recent additional factors suggest that the siting of the spur connector ramp and the location of the secondary access point and partial paving of the Esposito Trail could lead to far greater impacts than originally thought and could encumber the Village with considerable long-term burdens. These additional factors include the possible requirement to widen most of Franklin Street – perhaps at taxpayer expense – to accommodate SUP pass-through cyclists, the possible addition of double-decker commuter buses and a bus stop to Franklin Street, and insights from artist renditions showing the transformed Esposito Trail.

This document presents a plan, referred to as “Concept F – Refined”, that reduces overall impact upon the Village yet crucially retains the best features of the original Concept F.

Overview: Original Concept F

- Primary SUP access is at the main parking lot and comfort station area within Exit 10.
- A secondary SUP entrance is placed on the Esposito Trail at the Clinton/Franklin intersection.
- An inclined SUP connector spur ramp joins the partially-paved Esposito Trail to the main SUP.

Overview: “Concept F – Refined”

- Retains the new parking and comfort station area within Exit 10 as the primary SUP access point.
- Retains a secondary SUP access point from the Village.
- Places that secondary SUP entrance at the closed Thruway on-ramp adjacent to Village Hall.

Benefits of “Concept F – Refined”

- Preserves the most significant and best part of original Concept F (the parking lot inside Exit 10).
- Also in keeping with original Concept F, provides a secondary SUP access point in the Village.
- Promotes the safety of SUP cyclists and other users.
- Reduces the long-term impact on the Village of South Nyack and its residents.
- Promotes and preserves the charming residential character of the Village.
- Preserves the current “natural” character of the Esposito Trail.
- Saves the State money.

Basic evaluation of the options from a safety, fiscal, aesthetic and benefits point of view suggests that “Concept F – Refined” could provide an effective and rational solution for a secondary SUP access point that is best aligned with promoting the long-term health and interests of the Village of South Nyack.

The proposed secondary SUP access point for “Concept F – Refined”

Anecdotal evidence indicates that most long-distance cyclists today pass through the Village on their way to the commercial downtown area of Nyack and to points north such as Bear Mountain. Once the SUP opens, SUP distance cyclists may continue a similarly minimal pass-through relationship with the Village.

Managing the flow of cyclists and other SUP visitors whilst lowering overall impact on the Village is critical.

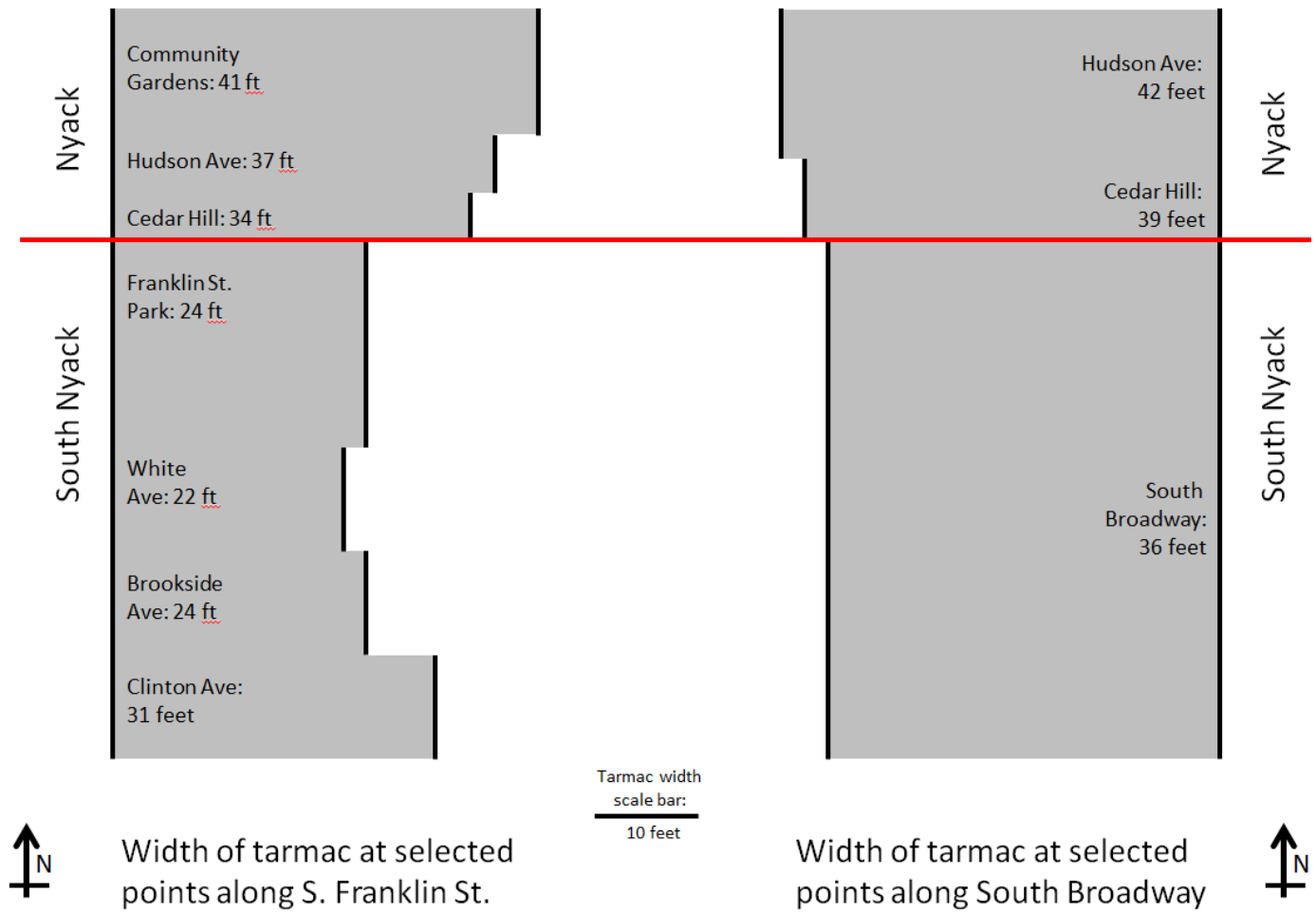
“Concept F – Refined” adopts a simple solution for the secondary SUP access point, as show below.



Caption: This annotated photograph shows the proposed “Concept F – Refined” secondary SUP access point, located at what will become the closed on-ramp to the Thruway. The picture was taken from the Esposito Trail looking in a southeasterly direction down onto the current Thruway on-ramp. For an SUP cyclist, pedestrian or other user coming westwards over the New NY Bridge towards Nyack, the fork in the SUP depicted in this annotated image offers two simple choices. Proceed ahead to arrive at the main parking area and comfort stations within Exit 10. Alternatively, take the short right fork onto the closed on-ramp and continue along the wide tree-lined level-surfaced boulevard of South Broadway directly to the heart of Nyack’s commercial center.

Reasons for considering this secondary access solution are presented next.

Schematic plan view of road widths at specified points along Franklin Street (left) and South Broadway (right)



(All tarmac widths measured by hand with tape measure on 2016-11-25)

Original Concept F directs SUP cyclists from the Esposito Trail onto Franklin Street. The Village would need to undertake measures to ensure their safety. To accommodate SUP cyclists between Clinton Avenue and Cedar Hill Avenue, most of Franklin Street would need to be widened so that bike lanes could be added.

The cost of widening Franklin Street would likely be borne by Village taxpayers. Regardless of funding, it would demand major construction work and retaining walls along the Esposito Trail between Clinton and Cedar Hill. Storm run-off generated by the widened roadway could require additional costly drainage work. Overhead power, cable and telephone lines and an underground fire hydrant line would need to be moved.

Aesthetically, today's natural rusticity of the Esposito Trail along Franklin Street could be transformed to have a more urban-like channelled feel with less open greenspace. Much of the tree-lined green buffer and grassy embankment between Clinton and Cedar Hill that separates the gravel trail from the road bed of Franklin Street could be permanently turned into tarmac and walls, and about 25 mature trailside trees may need to be destroyed to make way for the widened road. Alternatively, if widening Franklin Street is deemed too burdensome, SUP cyclists could be accommodated by continuing them on the Esposito Trail but that could pressure the Village into paving the rest of the trail northwards all the way up to Cedar Hill.

Apparently, Franklin Street would not need to be widened to accommodate only the proposed new buses.

Impact of road widening on the Franklin Street section of the Esposito Trail



Caption: Esposito Trail between Clinton and Brookside Ave, looking north: The mature trees and green buffer at left could disappear in order to widen Franklin Street to accommodate SUP cyclists.



Caption: Between Brookside and Cedar Hill Ave, looking north. This narrowest part of Franklin may require the greatest amount of greenspace embankment to be converted to tarmac, drains and retaining walls.



Caption: The convergence of the Esposito Trail with Clinton Ave/Franklin Street, looking north. Already busy with traffic, negotiating this intersection will become more problematic for SUP users with the proposed addition of double-decker commuter buses to Franklin Street and potentially a commuter bus stop at the NE corner of the junction. If Franklin Street is widened to accommodate bike lanes, SUP cyclists proceeding north to Nyack or south back to the SUP may sensibly choose instead to proceed along the quieter parallel Esposito Trail to avoid riding next to traffic, like the cyclists in the photo below. If so, costly and disruptive road widening and permanent alteration of the Esposito Trail greenspace may only partly address safety concerns of SUP distance cyclists and could pressure the Village to pave the rest of the trail up to Cedar Hill.



South Broadway secondary SUP access: Safety and cost rationale

“Concept F – Refined” proposes that the secondary SUP access point be off South Broadway at the closed Thruway on-ramp next to Village Hall, as shown in the annotated picture on page 2. Pass-through cyclists and other users could conveniently access the SUP at this secondary at-grade location.

South Broadway, a beautiful, wide tree-lined avenue that runs the length of the Village, may be regarded as the prettiest and most welcoming north-south roadway for cyclists traversing the Village. Unlike Franklin Street, South Broadway already features the essential infrastructure of wide roads, drainage, utility lines and fire hydrants required to accommodate SUP cyclists at little or no additional cost to Village taxpayers.

Between Village Hall and Cedar Hill Avenue, the existing South Broadway road bed is a uniform 36 feet wide offering space for parked and moving cars and cyclists to co-exist. Additionally, southbound South Broadway can be expected to experience less traffic once the current Thruway on-ramp closes, thus further enhancing safety for SUP cyclists.

Distance cyclists can typically sustain a cycling speed of 20-25 miles per hour or more. Keeping them off the Esposito Trail where they would be forced to cut across pedestrians, families with children and joggers is sensible.



Caption: Weekend distance cyclists returning from their visit to Nyack cafés enjoy a peaceful ride along leafy South Broadway. “Concept F – Refined” would allow these cyclists and other users to conveniently join the SUP at the secondary access point off South Broadway next to Village Hall.

Impact of original Concept F plans for the Esposito Trail near Village Hall

The recently-unveiled urban trail-like scene, below, depicts the Concept F vision for the Esposito Trail near Village Hall, featuring fencing, paving, bollards, lights, and signage. Pedestrians and joggers would need to be extra vigilant at this intersection with the partially-paved Esposito Trail because the irresistible lure of a gently-curved downhill ramp that joins with the main SUP may encourage SUP cyclists to speed here.



Image from New NY Bridge website. Intersection of Esposito Trail and SUP spur ramp at top of stairs near the gazebo. View direction is looking south. Village Hall is visible left of center.

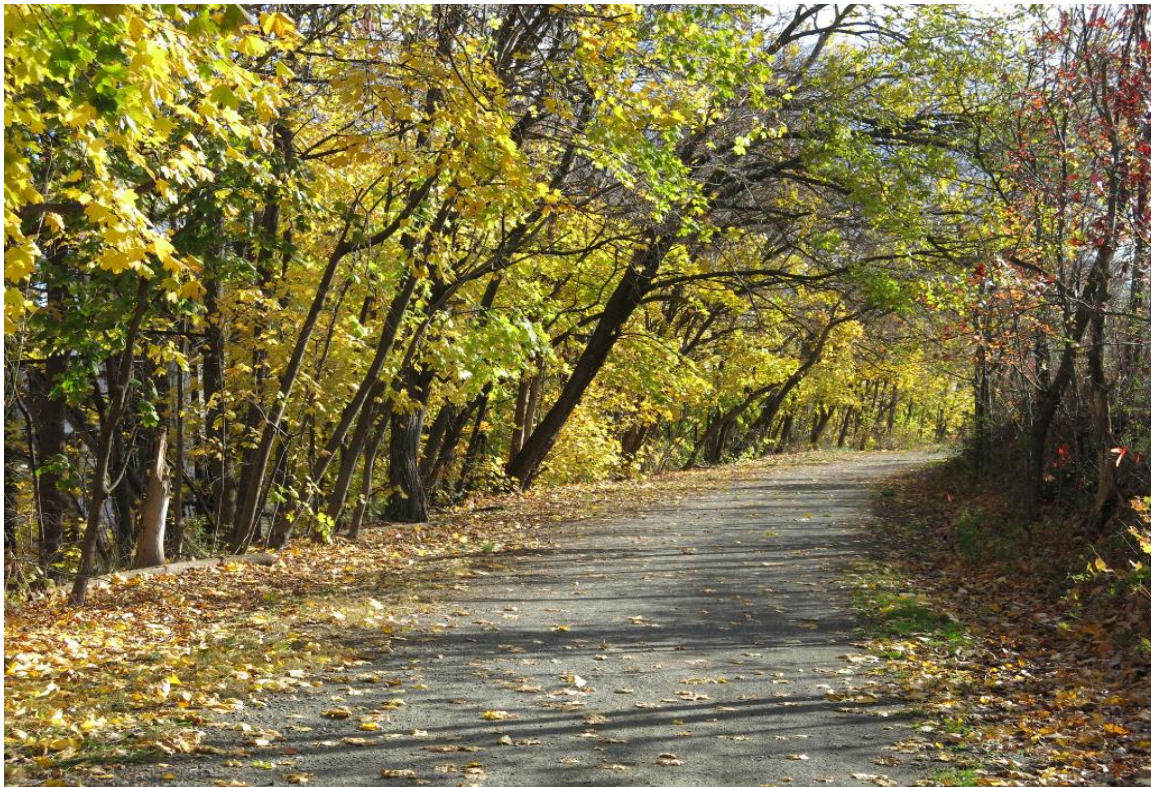
The paved Esposito Trail will remain open beyond dusk, potentially until 11pm each night, requiring Village Police vehicles to patrol the fenced-in Esposito Trail and connector ramp. Maintenance-wise, DPW could be burdened with keeping the paved Esposito Trail and the connector ramp free of leaves, ice and snow. Also, use of rock-hard granite dividers may lead to persistent erosion of the adjacent gravel trail.

The existing embankment behind Village Hall is shown below, viewed to the northwest. Major engineering work would replace this scene with the urbanized paved inclined SUP spur connector ramp. The landscape expert noted that all of the existing mature trees here including three specimens measuring more than 24-inches in diameter at chest height would be destroyed to make way for the SUP spur connector ramp. The rustic trailside fence may be replaced by a four-foot solid fence further reducing the current open aspects.





Caption – top and bottom images: Shown here, the existing rustic Esposito Trail between Village Hall and Clinton Avenue would be transformed under original Concept F. The gravel trail would be relegated to a width of 8 feet to allow a 10-foot-wide paved lane to be added for pass-through SUP cyclists and other SUP users. Long stretches of the Esposito Trail would be enclosed by tall, solid or partly solid fences and lighting and signage would be imposed. A range of people could be expected on the trail late into the nighttime requiring Police vehicles to patrol the paved trail and spur ramp. The peaceful and bucolic scenes captured here would no longer be available for the enjoyment of Village residents.



Parking

The main feature of original Concept F is a visionary new parking lot within Exit 10 that would serve as the primary SUP parking facility on the western shore of the Hudson River. It would include comfort stations, bike racks, and an elevator to the SUP.

The provision of a secondary SUP access point on or near Village property could provide residents with convenient access to the SUP but could open the Village to an on-street parking burden since car-driving out-of-town SUP visitors may also appreciate its convenience.

Whichever option is chosen for secondary SUP access, careful management and monitoring would be needed by Village authorities to ensure that Village roads are not overwhelmed with SUP visitor parking. The Village is exploring potential parking solutions and a feasible system for managing on-street parking – one that could have the bonus of generating some income for the Village – may have been identified.

Potential impact: Original Concept F

Original Concept F in fact provides two secondary SUP access points – one marked by a grand vanity entrance on the Esposito Trail at the Clinton/Franklin intersection and another at the South Broadway stairs near the Village Hall gazebo. The ambitious entrance trumpeting the SUP access point at the Clinton/Franklin intersection has been designed to attract visitors and is at the same grade level as its surroundings. It would additionally appeal to casual cyclists and families with toddlers who wish to use a secondary SUP entrance since bikes and strollers would not have to be lugged up or down the stairs near Village Hall.

On-street parking availability in the vicinity of the Clinton/Franklin secondary access point may, however, be limited since parking there is already restricted. Currently no parking is allowed on either side of Franklin because it is too narrow, nor on the south side of one stretch of Clinton. Double-decker commuter buses and a potential bus stop added to Franklin Street would further complicate this busy residential area.

Potential impact: “Concept F – Refined”

“Concept F – Refined” provides just one secondary access point, off South Broadway at the closed Thruway on-ramp adjacent to Village Hall and pressure for nearby on-street parking could similarly be expected. Contrasted with the Clinton/Franklin area, though, there are benefits to allowing on-street SUP secondary access parking near Village Hall: (a) South Broadway is a wide road that already has space for parked and moving vehicles and cyclists. (b) Approximately 290 yards of the southbound (western) side of South Broadway abuts Village land and contains no houses. Allowing for a standard parked car length of 18 feet, about 48 vehicles for SUP visitors could be parked on the street along that stretch of the southbound side of South Broadway and the absence of houses on that side means that it would affect fewer residents. (c) Once the Thruway on-ramp closes, South Broadway can be expected to experience a marked reduction in traffic so the whole area could be generally quieter and less congested. (d) Suitable implementation of a flexible payment system could deter SUP visitors from parking on adjacent streets. For example, on-street SUP visitor parking on Cornelison, Mansfield and Washington Avenues could be charged at 2x or 3x or 4x the rate for the preferred and potentially less detrimental on-street parking option along South Broadway.

Overall, any plan for a secondary SUP access point could expose the Village to SUP parking pressure that must be carefully managed. On-street secondary SUP access parking on South Broadway near Village Hall would seemingly be less problematic than would on-street parking near the already-restricted and busy Clinton/Franklin residential intersection.

“Concept F – Refined” summary

“Concept F – Refined” has the following benefits:

- Preserves the most significant and best part of original Concept F (the parking lot inside Exit 10).
- Again in keeping with original Concept F, provides a secondary SUP access point in the Village.
- Promotes the safety of SUP cyclists and other users.
- Reduces the impact on the Village of South Nyack.
- Saves the State money.

- Eliminates the need for major infrastructure changes around the Village.
- Puts SUP cyclists where they belong on spacious Village roads, not on Village trails.
- Better manages the flow of SUP cyclists through the Village by directing them onto the quieter, wider South Broadway boulevard which leads to the heart of Nyack's commercial center.
- Controls potential SUP visitor on-street parking in a better-provisioned part of the Village.

- Preserves the current "natural" character and pastoral appearance of the unpaved Esposito Trail.
- Preserves existing ecosystems, trees and open aspects along the entire length of the Esposito Trail.
- Preserves the relationship of Village residents with the trail.
- Reduces impact on the peaceable and visually attractive residential character of the Village.
- Preserves the location and appearance of existing Esposito Trail access points.

- Allows Village residents to conveniently access the SUP at the closed thruway on-ramp.
- Allows Esposito Trail users to access the SUP by taking the South Broadway gazebo stairs and skirting Village Hall to the secondary access point – a short, easy connection.

“Concept F – Refined” also allows for these additional beneficial considerations:

- Avoids funneling SUP cyclists to one of the busiest intersections and narrowest north-south roads in the Village, where double-decker buses and a bus stop may further compromise safety.
- Avoids widening Franklin Street, likely at taxpayer expense, to accommodate pass-through cyclists.
- Reduces pressure to pave the rest of the trail up to Cedar Hill.

- Avoids major transformation and urbanization of the Esposito Trail.
- Avoids construction of a major SUP spur connector ramp on the embankment behind Village Hall.
- Avoids mixing potentially speeding SUP cyclists with pedestrians, joggers and families at the top of the SUP connector ramp.

- Eliminates DPW burden to clear the SUP spur connector ramp and paved Esposito Trail in winter.
- Eliminates liability potential of the Village for the paved Esposito Trail and SUP connector ramp.
- Eliminates impact of de-icer chemicals on Esposito Trail ecologies.
- Eliminates police patrol vehicles on the paved Esposito Trail and SUP connector ramp.

On balance, objective assessment suggests that “Concept F – Refined” is simpler, safer, more suitable and less disruptive for the unique and charming community that is our home, the Village of South Nyack.