

2/8/2017: Red text indicates added information and clarification provided by the Thruway Authority.

Memorandum

To: Village of South Nyack Board of Trustees
From: Tappan Zee Bridge Task Force
Re: Review of Public Comments on Esposito Trail changes from Concept F
Date: January 23, 2017

Below are issues that were raised by various attendees of the last few South Nyack Village Board Meetings. The Tappan Zee Bridge Task Force met on January 19, 2017 to review the comments. Many of the issues raised have trades-off in benefits and impacts. The Task Force has attempted to summarize these, so they can be weighed by the Trustees in their decisions. Some issues require more information or discussion with the Thruway Authority. Residents brought to our attention a looming deadline of February 9, 2017 for the Thruway Authority to submit project plans, specifications and estimates to the FHWA and said they would like to have their questions posed to Thruway officials prior to that date.

The design schedule that included the February 9, 2017 date for the submission of plans, specifications and estimates (PS&E) has been updated as a result of the collaboration on the design that occurred between the Thruway Authority and the S. Nyack Task Force after the selection of Alternative F, which included the public meeting at Living Christ Church on November 15, 2016. PS&E submission is now expected June 5, 2017.

- The Task Force did not review questions regarding the use of the Esposito Trail with regards to parkland status; those comments have been referred to the Village's legal counsel.
- The Task Force did not review questions regarding Village parking; those comments will be referred to the Board of Trustees for their possible directives to the Village Parking Committee.

Comments/Issues

- 1. Eliminate the spur path connecting the SUP to the Esposito Trail.**
- 2. Create a pedestrian and bicycle entrance to the SUP from South Broadway where the spur path splits off from the SUP.**

The Thruway Authority maintains that these would require a new Environmental Assessment, which cannot be accommodated due to both budgetary and scheduling restrictions.

The Authority progressed the Environmental Assessment of the Shared Use Path Facilities and Connections in a transparent manner with extensive public participation. You may recall that this concept was raised by a member of the Task Force at one of our meetings (to evaluate alternatives) and was not advanced as it would encourage on-street parking on S. Broadway.

3. Move the paved side path to the east side of the cinder pedestrian path.

The Task Force had previously debated this issue extensively and came to a consensus on the current placement. The current placement requires a bicycle cross over at the top of the ramp, which some have suggested may create a hazardous situation where pedestrian and bicycle traffic intersect. The current plans provide certain design elements intended to mitigate any hazards.

Placing the bicycle path on the east side of the trail would alleviate the intersection of bicyclists heading to the SUP with trail walkers proceeding south on the trail. However, pedestrians heading from the trail to the SUP would now cross over the bicycle traffic.

The placement also affects crossing traffic at Clinton Avenue. The western placement allows bicycles to enter and leave the trail from and to Franklin Avenue without crossing pedestrian traffic, while bicycles traveling west on Clinton Avenue will cross pedestrian traffic. Moving the paved path to the east side of the trail swaps these conditions.

Traffic control lights and signage at the Clinton/Franklin/Trail intersection may mitigate some of the issues.

The Thruway Authority has stated its intention to take possession of the paved side path, which is currently located contiguous to the Thruway right-of-way. This may complicate the ability to relocate the path to the east side of trail.

At Task Force meetings it was also noted that having the Esposito Trail contiguous to private properties was favored over the Side Path being closer to residences. The need to light the Side Path also played into this decision as lights could be more easily shielded and would be further away.

4. Do not pave the side path

In preparing its December, 2015 report to the Board of Trustees, the Task Force had considered consequences of connecting the Esposito trail to the SUP. The concern was that long-distance bicyclists coming from Piermont or Nyack would see the Esposito Trail as a shortcut to the SUP, rather than peddling around 9W to the parking lot. The side path was proposed to channel the cyclists to the SUP in a way that would separate them from pedestrians. It was assumed that given a choice, the cyclists would prefer to ride on the paved surface.

If the side path is not provided, it is likely that many cyclists will still choose to take the cinder trail as a shortcut, mixing with pedestrians.

5. Make no improvements to the Esposito Trail.

Specific comments included:

- Eliminate the stonework from the entrance at Clinton.
- Eliminate display areas for interpretive signage
- Maximize the amount of existing greenery that can remain in the trailway as well as the amount of new greenery (native vegetation) to be added wherever possible.

The extent of improvements to park trails in general varies greatly, from completely unimproved woodland hiking trails to fully paved and landscaped urban park trails. People can have vastly different opinions on the desirability of the extent of improvements to any particular park. There is a value

judgement with no inherent right answer. The Task Force requests that the Board of Trustees give guidance as to the extent of improvements and to any specific elements.

Based on input from the mayor, Task Force, Mr. and Mrs. Smolin, Mr. and Mrs. Leader, and Mr. Hirsch (the founders of Preserve South Nyack), the trailhead was substantially redesigned to address many of the above concerns. The revised plan calls for reduced paving, removal of the stone columns and signage, and a marked increase in trees and other landscaping.

6. Reduce the width of the paved side path to the minimum allowable standard and push it as close to the edge of the railway as possible in an effort to maximize the amount of the cinder path that remains.

The Task Force agrees that the side path should be built to minimum standards necessary to achieve its purpose. We have no expertise on this subject. However Page 2-20, Section 2.3.3.3 of Appendix B: Project Scoping Report/Design Report (February 26, 2016) for the project shows a standard value of 10 ft. minimum, in accordance with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials manual (AASHTO). Appendix B can be found through the following link: http://www.newnybridge.com/documents/sup/Appendix-B_Project-Scoping-Report-Design-Report.pdf" We will review the design with the Thruway Authority and inquire as to what design standards are most appropriate and applicable.

The proposed width of the paved side path will be limited to the minimum allowable standard under AASHTO guidelines, which is 10 feet.

7. Create an uncrossable median between the cinder trail and the paved side path.

The Thruway designers had initially proposed a barrier. The purpose was to keep the bicyclists from crossing onto the cinder path. The Task Force spent considerable time reviewing this element with the Thruway landscape designer. There was a concern that some cyclist could erroneously enter to cinder path and then be trapped, not having the ability to recognize their mistake and cross over to the side path. The same would be true for pedestrians who accidentally entered the side path.

The possibility of having occasional openings in the barrier was considered.

Discussions with the Police and DPW then also raised the issue of the necessity of emergency and maintenance vehicles to be able to turn around. They felt the barrier would be problematic.

The Task Force concluded that bicyclists would generally prefer to use the side path and pedestrians would generally choose to use the cinder path anyway. It was noted that the entire SUP has no barrier.

The Thruway landscape designer proposed using a raised median to be an indication of and encouragement of maintaining the separation.

A recent comment raised the issue of unrestrained children and dogs crossing into the path of bicyclists.

A physical barrier would certainly prevent this. However such a barrier would alleviate this only for the extent of the side path.

The Task Force recommends that, should the Board of Trustees consider a physical barrier, they review the issue with the Police and DPW.

8. Include bicycle speed calming measures, such as speed tables, particularly at crossings.

The Task Force has already discussed this suggestion with the Thruway team and they have agreed. They will return with specific proposals.

We are currently reviewing various options to be included in the final design, including reducing the speed limit to 5 m.p.h., dismount zones and speed tables.

9. Add a cyclist-specific traffic signal at Clinton Avenue.

(Example: <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bicycle-signals/>)

10. Post and enforce a bicycle speed limit of 5mph. Officers should be posted on bicycles as opposed to motorized vehicles to reduce the environmental impact on the trailway.

11. Clearly post and enforce a dismount zone at Clinton Avenue and the crossing point at the top of the ramp.

12. Post signage at the intersection that directs cyclists off of the Esposito trailway when they reach the dismount zone and onto Franklin once they leave the side path to keep them off the section of trailway that runs north of Clinton Ave to Cedar Hill.

13. What will the reconfigured intersection of Clinton and Franklin look like? What signage is proposed for the intersection? Does that intersection remain Village Right of Way?

The crossing at Clinton Avenue is certainly a complex crossing. The trail is located immediately adjacent to the intersection. Concept F proposes a new traffic light at the intersection to replace the current blinking light. The Task Force supports including appropriate wayfinding signage and signage and signaling devices to maximize safety.

The Task Force will review these issues with the Thruway traffic engineers.

The Task Force defers to the Board of Trustees and Police Department for appropriate enforcement policy.

Please see the Authority-provided information in #8 above.

14. Continue “dawn-to-dusk” rule enforcement for the entirety of the Esposito Trail, including the portion that is shared with the paved side path.

15. Add a gate that closes off the portion of the Esposito Trail to the south of the connection after dusk.

The Thruway Authority has characterized the side path as a commuter route and has suggested that it must remain open when the SUP is open. This highlights a conflict between Village’s and Thruway’s jurisdiction and policies. The Task Force does not see any practical method by which the side path can remain open while the Esposito Trail is closed. If the Esposito Trail is closed, pedestrians coming up the ramp would have to walk on the paved path, which is not designed to accommodate them.

This issue requires further discussion with the Thruway Authority.

The suggestion to add gates requires discussion with the Police Department.

Hours of operation are not currently determined, but will balance use of the path as a transportation facility (as described in the EA) for cyclists and pedestrians with security and neighborhood concerns.

16. Eliminate all lighting.

The current design proposes short light posts that illuminate only the paved path. They are designed to minimize spillover.

This issue correlates with the Village's policy on trail operating hours conflicting with proposed SUP hours. The Thruway Authority has indicated that lighting of the path may be required while the SUP is open due to their characterization of the side path as a commuter route.

The Task Force will review these purported requirements with the Thruway team. Should any lighting be determined to be required the Task force will review proposals to ensure light doesn't spill over to nearby homes.

As described in the recent EA and earlier EIS, the Shared-use path was intended to primarily serve transportation users. Subsequently, through community input – including Village leaders – the Authority was encouraged to provide limited ancillary facilities, such as parking and restrooms, which would provide increased access to the shared-use path. While the shared-use path would accommodate recreational users, it would also serve as a transportation facility. For safety and security, lighting would be required. As noted in the EA, the Authority is committed to making the lighting only minimally visible; north of South Nyack Village Hall where the Esposito Trail is visible from south Broadway and the residences across the street, the lighting would be scarcely discernable due to the existing illumination of the South Nyack Village Hall and parking lot.

17. Install a new wooden fence to replace the chain-link fence that currently separates the trailway from the Interchange.

The current proposed design includes new wooden fencing on both sides of the Trail.

18. Post signs with trail rules in the parking lot, where the spur path branches off from the SUP, and at Clinton Avenue. Include information about South Nyack and what a nice sleepy little village we have and an encouragement to fit in with the community, to respect the residential nature of the area, and abide by all local laws, specifically traffic laws.

The Task Force believes this is a reasonable suggestion.

We are happy to support the Village's decision in this regard.

19. What drainage measures will be done on the Esposito Trail?

Page 2-27, Section 2.3.3.7 of Appendix B: Project Scoping Report/Design Report (February 26, 2016) for the project states in part:

"[Concept F] will require collection of the water quality volume or "first flush" stormwater runoff from the SUP, SUP parking area, and ancillary facilities and convey it to proposed water quality treatment facilities located in the interchange area. Mitigative measures to be considered will include:

- Green infrastructure practices, such as vegetative swales, filter strips and porous pavement will be incorporated into the portion of the SUP constructed alongside the existing Esposito Trail, which is included in both alternatives, and accounts for up to 30 percent of the new impervious area on the site

The features described in the Task Force response and included in the developing design plans will result in improved drainage in the area of the Esposito Trail.

20. Request that the state provide funds to South Nyack to improve fencing and boundaries between the trail and residential property south of the connection.

The Task Force believes this issue is outside the scope of this project and defers to the Board of Trustees for guidance on whether to pursue this suggestion.

21. Request funds from the state to provide new sound proof windows and privacy landscaping to residents' homes that are directly impacted — Clinton Ave, Franklin Street, South Broadway, Depot Place, and any other affected areas.

There are specific requirements for noise mitigation with respect to highway projects that are subject to Federal law. Justification for this request would be established since no substantial noise impacts were identified in the Environmental Assessment. The Task Force defers to the Board of Trustees for guidance on whether to pursue this request.

Construction impacts

In addition to the design suggestions above, comments were received about construction impacts and schedules. The Village should request that the Thruway Authority provide the Village with detailed plans and updates on timetables, road closures, trailway closures, detours, etc. The Village should negotiate with the Thruway Authority to maintain as much trail access as possible during construction.

The Authority has been, and will continue to keep the Village apprised of upcoming construction activities.

Other Issues

Several comments were received that the Task Force feels is outside the scope of the project or the Task Force's mandate.

- 1. The Village should take additional measures with regard to traffic flow on Clinton Avenue between Franklin Street and South Broadway, and Franklin Street between Clinton Avenue and Cedar Hill Avenue. These are not specifically Plan F questions but they are related to and are direct consequences of Plan F and thus should be considered now in conjunction with everything else.**

Traffic volumes on these streets, including diversions related to construction of Alternative F, are contained within the EA. Level of Service (LOS) analyses at affected intersections were performed and determined to meet standards. Any additional measures regarding traffic flow are under the Village's jurisdiction.

- 2. What can the Village do we reduce car speed from light-to-light (Clinton) and stop sign-to-stop**

sign (Franklin).

(Speed tables example: <http://www.enterpriseflasher.com/prod-traffic-tables.php>)

3. A commentator expressed concern over the ownership of Elizabeth Place Park.

Research shows that the land was conveyed by the Thruway to the Village on July 5, 1960, with the condition that it be used for a park. (Reference recorded deed: LIBER 724, PAGE 193.)