



**HHFT Visitation Data Committee Meeting**

**Date: Friday, October 27, 2023**

**Time: 5:30 - 7:30 PM (EST)**

**Zoom Video Meeting**

**MINUTES**

*This is the second background presentation provided to the committee, the first was the optional presentation and discussion of the draft Master Plan. The committee requested more background on the routes considered and remaining as it relates to their work on pedestrian movement and visitor counts. The alternatives are presented as background only and are not part of the scope of work of the committee.*

A meeting of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail Visitation Data Committee took place on October 27, 2023.

**Committee Members Present:** Henry Feldman, Village of Cold Spring; James Labate, Village of Cold Spring; Jeffrey Robins, Town of Philipstown; Chris Alice Winward, Village of Nelsonville; and Sarah Mencher, City of Beacon

**Committee Members Not Present:** Phil Cotennec, Village of Cold Spring; Greg Totino, Town of Fishkill

**Staff Present:** Amy Kacala, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT); MJ Martin, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT)

**Staff Members Not Present:** N/A

**Guests Present (if any):**

Chelsea Anderson, About the Work (AtW)

Michael Doherty (SLR)

Amy Kacala called the meeting to order at 5:38pm and welcomed everyone present.

**Background Presentation: Alternatives Analysis****Presented by: Amy Kacala, HHFT and Michael Doherty, SLR****Consultant Introductions**

The meeting was attended by Michael Doherty, a landscape architect from SLR, a multi-disciplinary design and engineering firm with offices in upstate New York and Connecticut. Mike has 20 years of experience and his expertise is in trail/park feasibility, routing and construction. SLR drafted the alternative alignments and analysis to be included in the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail DGEIS.

**Alternatives Analysis Overview/Process Introduction**

The intent of this background meeting is to provide an overview of the alternatives analysis that was prepared for the DGEIS, and have the group discuss any questions they may have for how the routes were identified and evaluated.

An alternatives analysis was conducted to determine the range of potential routes for the 7.5 mile trail between Cold Spring and Beacon. The route that performs best against the assigned criteria becomes the preferred trail option. The preferred trail option for the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail is the alignment shown in the draft 2020 master plan, which will remain a draft until environmental review is complete. The environmental review is intended to analyze the proposed project, providing a connection from Cold Spring to Beacon and places and spaces in between such as Little Stony Point, Breakneck Ridge, Dutchess Manor, Notch, etc.

The alternatives analysis is one of the supplemental documents that will be attached to the DGEIS environmental review when it is issued for public review and comment.

Most of the alternatives work was done as part of the 2015 masterplan and the 2020 masterplan serves as an update to the previous initiative. Notably, the alternatives analysis evaluated additional routes between the Village and Little Stony Point than had been initially reviewed in 2015. The alternative routes were identified across four different reaches through input received in public workshops, online surveys, field visits with Cold Spring's previous mayor, and input from other municipal representatives. Reaches are identified as follows:

- Reach 1 - Trail from Dockside Park to Little Stony Point
- Reach 2 - Trail from Little Stony Point to Breakneck Ridge
- Reach 3 - Breakneck Ridge
- Reach 4 - Breakneck Ridge to Long Dock Park

### **Performance Criteria**

Each route is assessed based on how well it measures up to developed performance criteria.

The 2020 master plan has more emphasis on accessibility and creating a “Trail for All,” in line with New York State Parks commitment to make reasonable efforts to ensure that programs and services are accessible to and usable by users of all abilities. All new construction is required to adhere to the most current accessibility standards. The masterplan identifies the trail as a shared-use path and targets compliance with Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas (AGODA).

There are set standards for pathways that share bicycle and pedestrian access. A minimum ten foot wide path is required for shared use paths, twelve to fourteen feet is more ideal to facilitate two way pedestrian and bike traffic. In areas where space is constrained, like shoreline trail, the width of the trail will be set to ten feet and in areas that are projected to be more congested, such as near Breakneck Ridge train station, the trail may be closer to fourteen feet to account for train arrivals. Most of the trail will average twelve feet. It is important the trail is designed to accommodate the need for safety features such as proper line-of-sight and minimum radius curves. The project also aims to address sea level rise setting the finish grade of the trail above 2020 100-year storm assumptions.

The trail alignment also must connect the locations identified in the master plan. Locations include Long Dock Park, Dennings Point, Notch Trail, Dutchess Manor, Breakneck Ridge, Little Stony Point and Dockside Park.

### **Proposed Routes**

Reach 1: Dockside to Little Stony Point (diagram included in presentation)

- **2020 Master Plan Alignment:**
  - Extends from Dockside Park to Little Stony point along the western side of the MNR tracks.

- **This represents a change from the 2015 route (Fair Street) in response to public input received since 2016 seeking a more direct route out of the Village that keeps unnecessary pedestrian traffic off of Main Street.**
- **Alignment 1:**
  - Begins in Dockside Park, bridges over the MNR tracks and continues along the eastern side of the tracks to Little Stony Point.
  - **Additional bridge is unlikely to be approved by MNR, making this particular path unviable.**
- **Alignment 2:**
  - Extends past Cold Spring Depot Restaurant and runs along the east side of the MNR tracks until Little Stony Point.
  - Requires private property, would require elimination of some parking by the Depot Restaurant and relocation of their garbage and outbuildings. Once to the rail corridor, it would require blasting out the cliff face. **Due to the impacts at the Depot, potential risk to the residences located at the top of the cliff and the complexity of blasting along a very heavily used rail corridor, this route was not deemed viable.**
- **Alignment 3:**
  - Extends past Cold Spring Depot and runs along the east side of the MNR tracks until Mayor Park, connects to Fair Street and along Highway 9D to Little Stony Point.
  - **For the same reasons as route 2, this route was deemed unviable.**
- **Alignment 4 (2015 Master Plan Alignment):**
  - Runs west to east along Main Street and extends north along Fair Street and Highway 9D to Little Stony Point.
  - **This route is viable for pedestrian movement, but it would not be able to accommodate the same shared use path facility (the defined project) as the Master Plan route.**
- **Alignment 5:**
  - Runs west to east along Main Street and extends north along Highway 9D to Little Stony Point.
  - This route is viable for pedestrian movement, but it would not be able to accommodate the same shared use path facility (the defined project) as the Master Plan route. Additionally, there are terrain and topography issues that would

require structure. **This route would not be accessible due to the existing slopes of the terrain.**

#### Reach 2: Little Stony Point to Breakneck Ridge

- **2020 Master Plan Alignment:**
  - Extends from Little Stony Point to Breakneck Ridge along the western side of MNR tracks.
  - **This was the preferred route in the 2015 plan as well.**
  
- **Alignment 6:**
  - Runs along the eastern side of MNR tracks and requires a bridge over the MNR tracks to connect to the Breakneck Trailhead as going through the tunnel is not allowed.
  - **Additional bridge is unlikely to be approved by MNR, making this particular path unviable. The length of ramping and height and length of bridge in this location would also be a significant visual impact to the landscape.**
  
- **Alignment 7:**
  - Runs along the western side of Route 9D, a large ramping structure crossing the Breakneck tunnel would be required to connect to Breakneck Ridge.
  - **Additional bridge is unlikely to be approved by MNR, making this particular path unviable.**
  - The committee questioned if tunnels could be constructed under the highway or tracks instead of bridges. Hard rock, poor soil conditions, extreme cost and high water tables would make tunneling infeasible.

#### Reach 3: Breakneck Ridge

- There were no alternatives presented for Reach 3. The land area is limited and consists of the area between Route 9D and the MNR tracks from the Breakneck Mountain Tunnel to the south to the MNR pedestrian overpass in the north.

#### Reach 4: Breakneck Ridge to Long Dock Park

- **2020 Master Plan Alignment:**
  - Runs from Breakneck Ridge to Long Dock Park through State Parks' property and multiple private properties.

- Most if not all land transactions/easements with private property owners are in progress or complete.
- In 2015 the route section up the hill along the highway was seen as necessary but not necessarily desirable. **The shift away from the road just north of Breakneck is the only meaningful change between the 2015 and 2020 route.**
- **Alignment 8:**
  - Follows highway 9D from Breakneck Ridge for nearly a mile before heading into state park land to Long Dock Park.

### Scoring Process and Analysis

The alignments were scored from 1-5, 1 being the worst performing and 5 being the best, over 10 criteria. Criteria used to evaluate the options are as follows:

- Alignment Design - desired design standards met, meets resilience criteria, multimodal
- Traffic and Safety - prioritizes accessibility, limits road crossings, promotes traffic calming and pedestrian safety
- Context - prioritizes scenic, ecological, and cultural experience
- Connectivity - Connects to the river and surrounding regional parks/trails
- Diversity of Users - Amplifies universal accessibility and safety for people of all ages and abilities
- Congestion Management - Manages access to popular destinations and minimizes negative impact on the environment
- Regional Support - Expansion of the regions recreational amenities
- Environmental Stewardship - Minimizes the impact of the environment, promotes ecological health
- Community - Prioritizes impacts on natural or manmade features including minimizing the need for easements or the use of private property
- Implementation - Reviews feasibility, sustainability and cost-efficiency

### Committee Discussion

- The committee challenged whether accessibility was a true need or simply a “want” of the project. It was explained that accessibility is both a very important goal of the project for HHFT and a legal need for new improvements for state parks.

- The committee emphasized the importance of considering both the visitor and community resident experiences in the project. HHFT assured the committee that we are looking at both and that our focus is on managing visitation to protect local quality of life.
- A member questioned whether the criteria are heavily weighted toward the design requirements of the Fjord Trail. SLR considered a range of criteria and the scoring is a balance of multiple scores. This is an alternatives analysis for a specific, defined project. The criteria are therefore directly linked to the goal of determining which route best achieves the proposed project (an accessible shared use path seeking to achieve project vision and goals). The question is not simply how could pedestrians reach point A from point B regardless of accessibility or user experience. Those connections may be important, but it does not necessarily mean they are the best route for achieving the project goals.
- The committee questioned if the project criteria takes into consideration the operation and maintenance costs. HHFT will be responsible for operating and maintaining the trail and the trail will be owned by OPRHP. Costs of construction and maintenance are defined and quantified as the design is developed into actual construction drawings. This is a master plan and does not (and should not) contain advanced design details. That is later work, after the environmental review.
- The committee acknowledged a broader design phase of each sub-project will be conducted to further develop the design and gain a clearer understanding of the project's requirements.

#### **Next Steps:**

- The committee will be sent the presentation, meeting minutes and full report pdf.
- The meeting was recorded for those who could not attend.
- The team will distribute the notes from previous meetings.
- Notes and materials will also be uploaded to the HHFT website for public access and transparency.
- HHFT is targeting meeting minutes and presentation distribution within a week of meetings.

#### **Committee Consultant Updates**

AtW received proposals from Stantec and BFJ Planning. AtW will reach out to prospective consultants and committee members to schedule interviews during the week of October 30, 2023.



The meeting adjourned at 7:52pm.

The next meeting of the Visitation Data Committee is scheduled for November 13, 2023 pending consultant onboarding and material review.

Respectfully submitted,

Name: Amy Kacala

Title: Executive Director

HUDSON HIGHLANDS FJORD TRAIL, INC.

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