

South Hill Recreation Way Open House - November 29, 2016 – Coddington Road Community Center

Frequently Asked Questions

Possible Extension – South Hill Recreation Way

Contact: Tompkins County Planning Department, planning@tompkins-co.org, 607-274-5560

What is being considered?

Whether to extend the South Hill Recreation Way three miles southeast from its eastern terminus at Burns Road to the intersection of Middaugh Road in the Town of Caroline. The extension is being considered in three phases. Phase A would extend the trail from Burns Road to German Cross Road. Phase B would go from German Cross Road to Banks Road. And Phase C would go from Banks Road to Middaugh Road. The surface and character of the proposed extension would be similar to that of the existing South Hill Recreation Way. As a former railroad bed, the terrain and subsurface of the corridor is ideal for the development of a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trail. Eventually, the extended South Hill Recreation Way could be linked up to the Black Diamond Trail and Cayuga Waterfront Trail in the City of Ithaca via the Gateway Trail, and to the East Hill Recreation Way in the Town of Ithaca and Dryden, becoming part of a 51-mile connected network of multi-use trails in Tompkins County.

Who owns the rail corridor?

NYSEG (New York State Electric and Gas Corporation) owns the former rail corridor. NYSEG has offered to license this section of the former rail corridor to Tompkins County for a 25 year initial period. The County would hold the license on behalf of the four Towns through which the trail extension passes (Ithaca, Danby, Dryden and Caroline), and the Towns would be responsible for developing the corridor as a trail.

When could it happen?

The rail/trail corridor in each of the three phases differs in terms of the work required to open it for use as a public trail, so the timing may differ by phase. Phase A would likely require relatively minor brush clearing, grading, surfacing, and trailhead improvement/signage, but no work initially on culverts. This phase could likely be completed within a year or two by town crews once funding is identified. Phase B is currently already in de-facto use as a trail, and would require the least amount of work; as such, this section could potentially be opened as early as sometime in 2017. Completion of the Phase C section would likely be at least a few years out; funding would need to be secured to rebuild crossings at two drainages where the culverts are washed out. This will require consultation and collaboration with adjacent landowners.



Right Image: The section of proposed trail extension between German Cross Road and Banks Road would require very little to formally develop it and is already in de-facto use as a trail.

What is the setting?

The trail corridor parallels Coddington Road and Route 79 and passes through an area with scenic woodlands, numerous woodland streams and charming glens. A woodland buffer parallels the corridor and next to this are private properties with several farms and homes dispersed at low density.

What about impacts on neighbors?

In developing the trail extension, the Towns hosting the trail will work with neighboring landowners to address and mitigate areas of concern, such as the perceived loss of privacy and continued shared use of two sections of the trail as shared driveways. Experience with trails in other areas of Tompkins County and around the State and country has shown that these types of trails generally have a positive impact on adjacent land values, and many neighbors appreciate them for the recreational opportunity and transportation amenity that they add to their property.

What do neighbors of the South Hill Recreation Way think of the impact of the currently existing trail?

A 2009 survey of neighbors to the existing South Hill Recreation Way by the Town of Ithaca found that 81% of the respondents used the trail either daily (54%) or at least once or twice a week (28%), and 85% stated that they were either “Very Satisfied” (59%) or “Satisfied” (26%) with the trail as a neighbor. Further, when asked about their opinion about how the presence of the S. Hill Rec Way effects the “Quality of the Neighborhood”, 90% said it either improved or had no impact on the quality of the neighborhood with 54% stating that it “Much Improved the Quality of the Neighborhood”, 18% saying it improved it, 18% saying it had no impact. Landowners were also asked to compare their initial reaction to the idea of living near the trail to how they feel about living near the trail today. 30% said that they felt the same, 42% felt better than their initial reaction, 22% felt “much better” than they expected, and only 5% felt worse than they expected.

How much would it cost, and who would pay?

Preliminary cost estimates for phases A and B combined likely range from a few tens of thousands of dollars to more, depending on the amount of added surfacing and other elective work to be done, such as trailhead improvements and parking improvements. No specific funding has yet been allocated, but it could be within reach of local municipalities to jointly fund the development of these first two phases without requiring state or federal grants, or even complete some of the work with existing town crews/resources. Phase C on the other hand will likely require state or federal grant funding to advance, which would be matched locally.

Who would manage the trail?

The trail would be managed jointly by the Towns of Ithaca, Dryden, Danby and Caroline through a cooperative inter-municipal agreement. The Town of Ithaca has initially offered to play a lead role in physically maintaining the trail, assuming such an agreement is worked out with the other Towns.

Who would benefit?

Residents and families in the Towns of Ithaca, Dryden, Danby, and Caroline would have an additional trail-based recreation opportunity. Residents of the Hamlet of Brooktondale would have a comfortable non-motorized transportation alternative for commuting to and from the City of Ithaca, including Ithaca College, by connecting to the trail via Brooktondale Road and Banks or Middaugh Roads. Visitors to the region and the \$195 million local tourism industry that they support would benefit from having more trail options.

Useful References

Tompkins County Priority Trails Strategy:

<http://tompkinscountyny.gov/news/legislature-accepts-tompkins-priority-trails-strategy>

Rails to Trails Conservancy:

<http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/>

The Tompkins County Planning Department prepared this FAQ in consultation with local Towns for distribution at an Open House event held on November 29, 2016 at the Coddington Road Community Center. The purpose of the event is to share information with the public about a possible extension to the South Hill Recreation Way, and to answer questions and collect feedback. For further information, please contact:

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**Existing South Hill
Recreation Way**

Possible Extension of the South Hill Recreation Way

Town of Ithaca, Town of Dryden, Town of Danby, Town of Caroline
November 29, 2016

0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 Feet



Town of Ithaca

Town of Dryden

Town of Caroline

Town of Danby



Possible Extension of the South Hill Recreation Way

Slaterville Rd (NYS Route 79)

German Cross Rd

Six Mile Creek

Banks Rd

Brooktondale Rd

Coddington Rd

Middaugh Rd

Burns Rd

Coddington Rd

Coddington Road Community Center

Updike Rd