



South Shore Blueway Trail Public Forum Summary

Thursday, November 14, 2013 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Freeport Village Hall



South Shore Blueway Advisory Committee members in attendance: Kyle Rabin, Nora Sudars, Mike Fehling, Steve McDonald, and Brian Vander Veer and Sean Jordan from the Town of Oyster Bay.

Consulting Team: Going Coastal - Barbara La Rocco, Zhennya Slootskin, Bea Santiago; Cameron Engineering – David Berg.

Interest Groups: Citizens Campaign for the Environment – Maureen Dolan Murphy; LI Paddlers – Alan Mindlin; Sirens of Standup – Deborah DiVirglio; North Atlantic Canoe & Kayak – Bob, Freeport Historian – Cynthia Kreig; Operation Splash – Capt. Don Harris; Harbor Isle – Theresa Balsamo; Empire Kayaks – Gabby Fehling

Media: LI Herald – Mark Treske

The stakeholder meeting, held at Freeport Village Hall, began at 6:00 pm with 40 people in attendance. Kyle Rabin, Blueway Trail Advisory Committee Chairperson welcomes attendees and opened the forum by thanking the Village of Freeport and Nora Sudars for hosting and arranging for the event in the village conference room. Kyle Rabin recognized the New York State Department of State and project funders and acknowledged the members of the Advisory Committee for their commitment to the project. He reminded attendees that the Draft Blueway Plan review process continues through November 21 and people can comment and make suggestions through the project website www.southshoreblueway.com.

Kyle introduced Wayne Edwards representing State Senator Charles Fuschillo's office and Nassau County Legislator David Denenberg, who addressed the group and spoke about his early support for the Blueway Trail.

Barbara La Rocco gave a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the benefits of water trails, the blueway planning and site selection process, plan recommendations and brand identity communications and other issues addressed in the Draft Blueway Plan as well as the current state of the blueway and next steps.

The South Shore Blueway Plan and PowerPoint presentation are available for viewing and download on the project website <http://www.southshoreblueway.com>, along with all maps and planning documents.

Funding for the South Shore Blueway Trail has been made possible by the Village of Freeport, a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant from the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund, and the Nassau County Environmental Bond Act Program.



CAMERON ENGINEERING & ASSOCIATES, LLP

Barbara announced that the South Shore Blueway Trail had been awarded staff support through the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Program, which will provide technical assistance that can help bridge Blueway planning to the implementation stage.

The presentation was followed by a one-hour comment session led by Barbara La Rocco and David Berg, where questions about the Blueway Plan and Site Concept Plans were addressed. A summary of questions, concerns, and comments follows:

- Who will be responsible for maintaining the Blueway Trail access points? Does the National Park Service grant mean the Blueway trailheads would be taken over by the National Park Service? ANSWER: Trail access points are on parkland and will continue to be managed by the landowner, whether it is owned by the state, county, town or village. The National Park Service grant provides technical support only, which is specific to our trail needs and very valuable in helping develop a sustainable trail. More information can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>.
- Where can non-motorized sailboaters launch on the Blueway Trail? ANSWER: If the sailboat is car-topped and carried or carted to the water to hand-launch, it should be able to launch at any trail access point. However, if the sailboat is trailered where it needs to launch by a boat ramp, it would likely fall under trailered permitting rules at the particular boat ramp. It was noted that many ramps do not allow non-motorized sailboat access. An issue that needs to be addressed with the ramp's permitting jurisdiction. The Blueway Trail Plan recommends non-motorized access at all project area boat ramps.
- What about restrictions to access like resident-only parking? ANSWER: The plan addresses parking restrictions in a couple of ways. First, completion of priority launch sites at Seamans Neck and Cedar Creek improves access to South Oyster Bay and offers both new Town of Hempstead access and Nassau County access. Newbridge Park adds new Town of Hempstead access on East Bay. Secondly, the plan recommends reciprocity at project area boat ramps. If a boater purchases a cartop launch permit to Nassau County ramps, the plan recommends that it be honored at ramps in other jurisdictions and visa-versa. It was noted that Village of Freeport has no restrictions or launch permit requirement.
- What about permits? ANSWER: The plan recommends reducing Nassau County ramp fees for cartop non-motorized boats, which could result in increasing the number of paddlers buying permits. At this stage, these and other permit recommendations effect administrative actions and changes, so may have to be implemented over time. For visitors, a short-term pass or other mechanism is needed so they can travel the bays.
- What about storms? Will this infrastructure hold up in another Sandy-type hurricane? ANSWER: The Blueway Plan recommends beach matting at sandy shores to designate the entry-point and allow ADA compliant access. This matting can be easily laid and removed seasonally and taken up as a pre-storm precaution. It is constructed of recycled plastics and extremely resilient. The matting is currently in use

at Nickerson Beach and Beach 6 at Jones Beach State Park. The kayak-friendly modular docking systems recommended for boat ramp floats and floating docks are very durable. One docking system, EZ Dock, reported that their docks in Atlantic Beach withstood Sandy.

- How much funding is needed? ANSWER: The Blueway Plan and site improvements are cost-effective. The cost of a pre-fab modular dock meeting the American Disability Act standards that would be fitted to an existing float is about \$25,000. Costs are much lower for the beach matting or portable dock systems added to transient boat slips. The budget for all eight Site Concept Plans is \$2 million, with one site – Cedar Creek, with its extensive boardwalk over wetland, taking half the budget. The Blueway Plan provides several alternative dock types with costs and an itemized budget for the eight phased Site Concept Plans.
- Where should supporters and groups submit Letters of Support to help with grant funding for the Blueway Trail? ANSWER: Letters of Support can be addressed to South Shore Blueway Trail and emailed to info@southshoreblueway.com. Groups sending letters are asked to please do so on organization letterhead.
- What will be ready 2014? ANSWER: There are 18 launch sites that will be trail-ready “as is” in unimproved condition. The phased improvements meet ADA guidelines and greatly enhance access.
- What is really new here? What does the trail offer that wasn’t already there? ANSWER: The Blueway Trail formalizes safe, legal access for car-topped non-motorized boaters. Though some trailheads are already informally used by paddlers, the Blueway Trail makes them official. The addition of new access points and improvements to many others ensures safety, adequate connections between access points and links to upland activities. The Blueway Trail itself becomes a single entity – a corridor and catalyst for economic, recreational and educational activity. The Blueway Plan recommends several improvements at each trailhead that will not only enhance the trail experience for all users, but can lead to additional investment such as community boathouses, esplanades, wildlife viewing platforms and added upland economic growth to serve trail users.

One comparison is a Greenway – though people already ride bikes on streets, but the inclusion and improvements by formalizing those places into a greenway trail provides additional safety and a mechanism for improving, enhancing and expanding the trail. Take a highway, another community infrastructure, that is its own entity and as a cohesive unit ensures its maintenance, improvement and sustainability, as well as creating the potential of further development along the highway.

The NYC Water Trail, all they did was map the places people were already launching their kayaks, under 20 sites. Five years later, there were 45 launch sites and millions of dollars in new infrastructure improvements to meet the growth of non-motorized boating. \$5.5 million in grants to the North Brooklyn Boathouse project alone, \$10 million in funds across the city to construct new launches, State Senators in Queens brought home funding for several new access points on the north shore. And the cycle, which began with mapping a route and naming a trail, continues to expand.

- Is there an actual trail? What about links and upland connections? ANSWER: Yes, there is a 40-mile trail loop linking 22 suggested access points and 7 stopovers, rest stops and destinations, like the Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area and the Nautical Mile. An interactive trail map on the project website displays attractions, nature centers, dining, bike rentals, and other upland activities for trail users. Those linkages require a place to securely store your boat and even a rinse off or shower, amenities recommended in the Blueway Plan.

FUNDING SUGGESTIONS:

- Conduct tallies of trail users at each trailhead to demonstrate need and help in grant funding.
- COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTION ZONE (CRZ) PLANS part of NY Rising funding might help to implement Blueway Plan recommendations as part of rebuilding efforts. Examples include the need for new boat ramp boarding floats at Albany Avenue and Milburn Creek ramps, where kayaker-friendly improvements could be added without additional costs. At Waterfront Park, the seawall needs rebuilding and the addition of a human-powered boating dock could be part of that process.
- Cynthia Krieg announced that the Village of Freeport CRZ meeting will be on Tuesday from 7:00 to 9:00pm and it offered an opportunity to bring up funding needs.
- Theresa Balsamo stated that Harbor Isle would be instituting many improvements through CRZ funding that included bettering non-motorized access.

At the conclusion of the comment period, Beatriz Santiago presented a brief synopsis by PowerPoint on the benefits of branding to the process of developing, implementing and sustaining the South Shore Blueway Trail. The Blueway Brand Identity Plan is available on the project website.

The meeting let out at 7:30 pm.