

GREENWAY RESOLUTION TO COME BEFORE MONTCLAIR COUNCIL ON FEB. 6

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A rendering shows what the proposed Ice and Iron Greenway, also known as the Essex-Hudson Greenway, could look like. PHOTO COURTESY BIKE AND WALK MONTCLAIR

By ERIN ROLL

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A long-discussed greenway project may be taking another step forward Tuesday night.

Advocacy groups in the Montclair area have pushed to have a recreational trail built alongside the now out-of-service Boonton Line. Now, a resolution officially declaring Montclair’s support for the greenway project is set to come up before the township council during its meeting this Tuesday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m.

The greenway is known by two names: the Ice and Iron Greenway, which refers to the rail line's early days as a freight railroad, and the Essex-Hudson Greenway.

The Boonton Line was closed in 2002 after NJ Transit built the Montclair Connection, which merged the two Montclair-area rail lines into one route. The tracks and related property currently belong to Virginia-based freight railroad Norfolk Southern.

The greenway project has garnered support from most of the towns along the route, Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Belleville and Kearny. Montclair is the only town that has not yet passed a resolution voicing its support.

The [New Jersey Bike Walk Coalition](#) has been overseeing the greenway project on the regional level for the past year. The group's work has included reaching out to regional and national officials to get their support for a greenway in Essex County.

"I think people are very hopeful," said Cyndi Steiner, the executive director of NJBWC. "There's certainly a broad degree of support from the community."

If the council approves the resolution Tuesday night, Steiner said that the next step will be to reach out to County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo and ask for his support.

Steiner said that there was a possibility that the greenway, if built, could be connected to longer trail networks in the area. These include the September 11th National Memorial Trail, a series of parks and trails connecting the 9/11 disaster sites; and the East Coast Greenway, an interstate multi-use trail that runs from the United States-Canada border in Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. The Liberty Water Gap trail between New York and Pennsylvania also runs through the Meadowlands, near the proposed greenway route.

"So there's a lot of regional and national interest in this corridor," Steiner said.

Debra Kagan is the president of Bike and Walk Montclair. "We've been supporting this effort for quite a while," Kagan said on Friday. "We're very excited that this is coming before

Montclair. This greenway really fulfills many of the missions of Bike and Walk Montclair.”

She said that a large number of area residents have expressed a wish to have a place that allows bike riding away from highways. Additionally, she said, there is a likelihood that commuters could ride the greenway from Montclair to Jersey City and catch a train to New York or Hoboken from there, which in turn would cut down on highway congestion and air pollution.

Kagan said that in other towns that have greenways, the greenway brings in tourism dollars and generates revenue for local businesses. “So it becomes a destination.”

Kagan said that Bike and Walk Montclair’s own role will involve educating the public about the greenway project. The outreach campaign is in its very early stages, she said, and the group has been sharing information about the project on social media. Other plans, including public events about the greenway, may be coming soon.

The Boonton Line splits off from the active rail line in Montclair, between Pine Street and the Bay Street train station, and continues east into Glen Ridge.