



**M E M O R A N D U M**

To: Members of the East Greenbush Town Board  
From: Andy Beers, Director, Empire State Trail  
Date: September 8, 2017  
Re: **Albany-Hudson Electric Trail:  
Initial Responses to Questions Regarding Berkshire Drive**

Per your request, attached are initial responses to questions regarding the Hudson Greenway’s planning for the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail (AHET) section proposed on Berkshire Drive. We look forward to discussing these questions with members of the board and interested residents at our upcoming Berkshire Drive site visit and board meeting.

**Overview**

Where feasible, the AHET Trail route in East Greenbush will be an off-road trail located on the former trolley bed (now owned by National Grid). However, in certain locations the ROW is not usable for development of a shared-used path. The National Grid ROW adjacent to Berkshire Drive is one of these sections: a section of the trolley bed has been removed and a series of drainage ditches, pipes, and drains have been installed on the ROW. Accordingly, the AHET Draft Concept Plan proposes that the AHET Trail will be located on Berkshire Drive.

The AHET Plan contemplates that Berkshire Drive will be a “shared roadway”, meaning pedestrian, bicyclists and vehicles will share the road. Berkshire Drive will remain in its current condition. You have our assurance that there is no plan to widen Berkshire Drive.

Signage will be installed at appropriate locations on Berkshire Drive, informing motorists to be alert for bicyclists and walkers. While creation of the AHET Trail will increase the number of users, bicyclists and pedestrians will continue to utilize Berkshire Drive in the same way they do today.

In further studying this location, we are considering a hybrid approach, under which the AHET Trail would be located on Berkshire Drive from Point View Drive to approximately the Holy Spirit School parking lot. At this location, the Trail would be routed onto the National Grid ROW running southwest to Greenwood Drive. This approach would avoid the need to utilize Highland Drive, and would provide a direct perpendicular trail crossing at Greenwood Drive.

## **Response to Questions: Berkshire Drive Trail Segment**

*What are the reasons Berkshire Drive was chosen in the proposed plan? Did the plan consider the street's width (18.6 to 20 ft. wide), the crest of the hill, on-street parking, and proximity to the Holy Spirit School parking lot?*

Berkshire Drive was chosen as the most direct route to connect the AHET Trail from Point View Drive to Greenwood Drive, by-passing the section of the National Grid ROW that is not usable for the trail due to the existence of storm water drainage facilities. The planning considered Berkshire Drive's width and topography, including on street parking use. We have completed an additional site visit, which confirmed Berkshire Drive is the preferred route, considering its current configuration, its very low traffic volume, and that the western half of the road is undeveloped on the north side. While bicyclists and pedestrians will need to pass cars parked on the side of the road, parked vehicles have a traffic calming effect, reducing motorists speed. The Holy Spirit parking lot does not pose a safety concern – it generates vehicle traffic on an infrequent basis (Sunday church services, school day and occasional evening use).

*Does the technical information collected regarding the selection of Berkshire Drive include consideration for compliance with AASHTO Guidelines, the American for Disabilities Act (ADA), and passage of fire trucks, ambulances, snow plows and other large vehicles?*

The detailed engineering designs for all sections of the AHET Trail, including on-road segments, will be consistent with the American Association for State Highway and Transportation Official (AASHTO) Guidelines, which are the national recognized standard for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The trail will also will comply with application ADA requirements. Preliminary analysis indicates use of Berkshire Drive is consistent with AASHTO and ADA requirements. Compliance will be verified in the formal engineering design phase. We do not anticipate that the AHET Trail will create added concerns for access by emergency vehicles, snow plows, or large vehicles.

*What analysis was completed for alternative roadways adjacent to Berkshire Drive?*

The following alternatives were evaluated but not selected as the preferred AHET Trail route:

- Evergreen Way & Tamarack Lane. Although these streets are wider, they have a larger number of intersections and are more winding, which makes them less desirable for the trail route (particularly if the hybrid alignment using the National Grid ROW west of the Holy Spirit School parking lot is feasible).
- Columbia Turnpike/Route 20. Columbia Turnpike's high traffic volumes, high vehicle speeds, and lack of shoulders preclude its use for the AHET Trail (bicycles would need to ride in traffic in the curbed right-hand lane, which has no shoulder). Any proposal to widen Route 20 to better accommodate bicycles would be extremely complex and very

expensive, and is outside the scope of the AHET Trail project.

- Park Drive. The use of Park Drive would not provide significant trail improvements and would require a circuitous detour for trail users, approximately doubling the length of on-road trail in this area (many users would simply use Berkshire Drive).

*When will a detailed map and explanation of the plans be available for the proposed shared roadways on Greenwood, Highland, Berkshire and Point View roads? How can residents have input in the detailed plan?*

The Hudson Greenway has engaged the engineering firm Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) to develop detailed designs for the AHET Trail, including the proposed Berkshire Road section. Preliminary plans will be completed in the spring of 2018. Over the coming months, Greenway staff will continue the dialog with the East Greenbush Town Board and interested residents as planning is refined.

**In summary, we have carefully reviewed Berkshire Drive and are confident it can be safely utilized by pedestrians and bicyclists as part of the Empire State Trail.**