

January 19, 2021

402 Kearny Ave.
Kearny, NJ 07032

Dear Mayor Santos and Town Council,

The Advisory Committee on the Environment and Sustainability (ACES) would like to formally submit our recommendation to the Mayor and Town Council to support the project proposed by the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition with additional consideration given to our concerns outlined below.

Brief Summary

A nine mile long greenway/linear park is being proposed that will run through eight communities in Essex and Hudson Counties- Montclair, Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Belleville, Newark, Kearny, Secaucus and Jersey City. This greenway will provide a shared use path for walking and biking and will also provide space for additional parks (including rain gardens), seating areas and space for art installations. Kearny will be able to participate in the greenway's design as the project moves forward. NJ Bike & Walk Coalition have met with residents in surrounding areas regarding the project and are actively working to address their concerns, which relate primarily to security. Our concerns and request for additional considerations are discussed below.

The Open Space Institute has reached a preliminary purchase and sale agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway Company for the property. There is a sense of urgency as the plan has a purchase deadline which is within the next year or so. If the deal falls through, there is a chance that the property will be broken up and sold off to different developers. This would make it difficult to repurpose or develop the railway line into any type of uniform public space, potentially impacting neighboring properties and the greater community. ACES believes this scenario would be a lost opportunity for open space in town. Furthermore, Hudson County has already passed a resolution of support, as well as Glen Ridge, Belleville, Newark and Jersey City.

ACES Review

The Committee supports the project based on the following propositions:

The Greenway will:

- bring economic activity to local business districts in Kearny, specifically Midland Ave which we are trying to develop into the "Arts District"
- ease traffic and air pollution by offering alternate transportation options (biking and walking)
- will create new greenspace (135 acres in total- more trees!)
- develop abandoned NJ transit tracks and give police access to these areas

- increase property values in surrounding areas
- provide potential stormwater runoff solutions (via rain gardens)
- provide credit for green infrastructure improvement; CSO storage (under pathway)
- help restoration of salt marsh and wildlife habitats
- expanded broadband capabilities (5G under the pathway)
- not place a burden on taxpayers as Kearny does not have to pay for the project or upkeep as it will be funded by the State (via grants and other funding sources)

Although we fully support the project, ACES does have concerns which we believe will need to be addressed for the Greenway Project to be successful in the Town of Kearny and to lessen the impact on the residents and businesses whose properties are alongside the proposed trail. Specifically, those concerns are:

- The project be funded and maintained without cost to the Town of Kearny.
- Providing either by staffing through County Sheriff's Department and/or funding to the Town of Kearny for public safety services for the residents abutting the Greenway as well as the users of the Greenway, including equipment such as security cameras.
- EMS vehicle and police car access points to the Greenway.
- Keeping bicycles in separate lanes from pedestrians for safety.
- Prohibit motorcycles, motorized skateboards, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles.
- Traffic signage and signals at cross streets with heavy traffic (i.e. Devon, Elm).

In conclusion, the Committee recommends that the Mayor and Town Council vote to support this project for the reasons outlined in this letter subject to addressing the concerns as set forth above. ACES is committed to improving Kearny's quality life and we believe that the Greenway will substantially benefit our residents and surrounding communities.

Respectfully,

ACES Committee