



Signals

*News and notes from the
Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association
Highland, NY 12528
www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net*

Volume 7 Number 1

Winter 2010

Rail Trail To Reach The Walkway By End-2010

by Rafael Díaz

Well, it is about to happen. The long-dreamed of extension of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail eastward to the Hudson River will be taking its first firm steps when you are reading this article. It will gallop along over the coming months and be completed by the end of this year. When finished the project will be no small accomplishment and will have a profound effect on the hamlet of Highland and the people who use the rail trail.

Looking back at the development of the current stretch of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail one is struck by what a difference a dozen years can make. The original rail trail had enormous obstacles when first conceived of by Ray Costantino (see *Signals* Fall 2009, page 3). It faced vocal local opposition and political hurdles. Funding came piecemeal with a fortu-

INSIDE: Winterfest page 3
"If the weather has gotten cold, then it must be time for the Hudson Valley Rail Trail's annual WinterFest!"

nate infusion of some \$400,000, the result of a timely commercial need for using its right of way to economically run a crucial fiber optic cable. The original rail trail developed with donations of time and money from private citizens and organizations such as the Highland Rotary, which backed the exercise stations and the Rotary Pavilion at the trail's half-way point complete with rest rooms and other amenities. These have been placed over about a half dozen years.

Now comes the Eastern Expansion of the Rail Trail to the Hudson River. It too languished, just a dotted line on a map stretching from the hamlet of

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Looking Eastward From Commercial Avenue

President's Message

This past year has been one of monumental accomplishments for the Hudson Valley Rail Trail and the Town of Lloyd with more to come:

The opening of our own waterfront park and two new New York State Parks. The Bob Shepard Highland Landing Park had its official opening on June 27th on the banks of the Hudson River. In early October, the colossal Walkway Over the Hudson opened with great fanfare as a State Historic Park, towering 212 feet over the Hudson River. Joining it as a new state park is Franny Reese Park located just south of the Mid-Hudson Bridge offering outstanding views of the Hudson River and surroundings.

The Walkway Loop Trail. This is an initiative of Scenic Hudson in conjunction with the Town of Lloyd, City of Poughkeepsie, NYS Bridge Authority, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Walkway Over the Hudson, celebrated its official opening on October 16. The Walkway Loop Trail connects the Walkway Over the Hudson to the Mid-Hudson Bridge via trails on both sides of the river for a 3.6 mile loop.

Upcoming in early spring is the start of construction of the eastward expansion of the Rail Trail to the Walkway. When this project is completed, the Rail Trail will extend 3.8 miles from the Hudson to Tony Williams Park with easy access to the Highland Hamlet business center.

Great recreational and leisure activities are being created in and around our community. I hope you take advantage of all these offer.

It's so hard to believe that it's time for the 2010 WinterFest!! I hope every one of you will join us - Saturday, January 16 - 11 am. to 2 pm.

See you there.

Claire

*Claire R. Costantino, President
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Gift Shop Open At WinterFest

WinterFest will also have the Rail Trail's Gift Shop open for business. There are items for adults and children alike.

On sale will be Rail Trail scarves and sweat shirts. The supply is limited.

For kids there are all sorts of railroad related items. These include signal buttons, caboose pencil sharpeners, poppers, RR engineer caps. The Gift Shop will also have as a draw for kids, a train set that delighted kids when on display at the MoonWalk.

WinterFest Is Here Again For the 13th Year!

by Rafael Díaz

If the weather has gotten cold, then it must be time for the Hudson Valley Rail Trail's annual WinterFest! This event, now its 13th year, will feature old favorites plus the return of the highly successful kids' program launched last year that kept the little ones busy and likely to want to come back for more this year. Plan to bundle up and drop by on Saturday January 16th to enjoy the winter scene at the Rail Trail Depot.

Chili Tastings

This mid-Winter event has continued to attract crowds not only from Highland but also from neighboring towns, villages and even as far as New York City. The main draw is the Chili Tasting contest that involves some one dozen local area restaurants, deli's, caterers, etc. who cook up their favorite recipes. At stake is the coveted "Best of Fest" prize for the finest tasting chili as judged by attendees at the event. The vote is on a blind basis: each of the pots of chili is identified with a coded number not known to the provider nor the Highland Rotarians dishing out the chili. The chili itself varies greatly. Some are spicy, some are exotic, some are, well, come and taste the array yourself.

Other Things To Do

WinterFest is much more than just the chili, although that itself would be good reason to come. One highlight is the ice carving demonstration in which experts make figures such as eagles and bears. Not to be missed are the free tractor drawn hayrides through the winter wonderland of the Rail Trail at



this time of year. You can also warm yourself by the huge bonfire and enjoy free roasted chestnuts and toast free marshmallow to your individual taste from light to charred. On sale hot dogs, hot beverages and chili tasting tickets. The Rail Trail Gift Shop will also be open (*see box on page 2*).

As if that was not enough, bring the kids to take part in the number of activities expressly for them that were added last year. Look at the text box below for what kids have in store for them and also will be able to walk away with numerous prizes to be awarded as part of the games. There will be a heated tent for some of the kid activities. ●

WinterFest is on Saturday, January 16th, 11am to 2pm. The site is the Rail Trail Depot in Highland at 101 New Paltz Road. Admission is \$2 for adults; children six years of age and under are admitted free. The fees go toward maintenance of the Rail Trail and its amenities.

WinterFest Games For Kids

Last year, WinterFest designed a number of activities and games especially for kids that were a huge hit and will be back again. The special program is being organized by two Rail Trail board members, Susan Van De Bogart and Lauriann Marion.

One of the biggest hits is the Lowe's Project Tent. This takes place in a heated tent where kids, under the supervision of Lowe's staff, will have simple projects for kids to do. Lowe's is donating all the materials and tools needed for this activity.

Next to the Rail Trail Depot will be a number of outdoor games. These include ring toss, beanbag toss, knock-the-hat off *Frosty the Snowman* and a super duper snowball launcher. These games are being supervised by the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and the Rotary Interact Club from the Highland High School. Members of the Southern Ulster Chamber of Commerce will also be helping out.

Another activity is a form of scavenger hunt at around noon on the Rail Trail that will get kids out walking a bit. It involves each kid being handed a sheet of photos of things on the trail and check off each one that he or she finds. Prizes will be awarded. Some gift certificates to local toy stores are being donated among the prizes.

RAIL TRAIL EASTWARD (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Highland to an old abandoned railroad bridge on the Hudson. Its anticipated price tag was first estimated at around \$800,000 but grew with the years as costs of materials and labor escalated. Currently its estimated costs are around \$3 million.

But guess what? Everyone now wants that expansion. Who in their right mind would oppose something that connects to the celebrated old RR bridge that: has morphed into the world-celebrated Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park; has drawn almost half a million visits by people from near and far; and is on everyone's tongue in communities on both sides of the river?

As a result, the \$3 million cost will be fully funded by grants. Instead of being built piecemeal, the expansion will be under one contract to be completed this year. It will emerge pretty much with full amenities including information kiosks, benches and signage.

Originally the \$3 million costs were going to be split 80/20 with the Town to provide the 20 percent match. That is no longer the case as 100 percent is coming from Federal Stimulus Funds, saving the taxpayers of the Town of Lloyd some \$600,000.

The Process

The \$3 million project to take the rail trail to Walkway Over The Hudson had a mandatory pre-bid meeting on December 22nd for prospective bidders at the Town of Lloyd Hall. Its purpose was to clarify the scale of the project and target dates and to answer questions of which there were many. Over 40 people showed up filling the room representing a number of companies. Bids had to be submitted by January 5 of this year. The Town is now entertaining the resulting bids.

When completed the expansion will run some 1.2 miles from the Walkway Over the Hudson to the Commercial Avenue terminus of the current rail trail. The project is massive in scale. It includes three major construction components: place a pre-fabricated steel bridge over Route 44/55 (Vineyard Avenue) that once had a bridge with two sets of RR tracks; re-establish the tunnel under 9W; and place a pre-cast concrete structure under Mile Hill Road to take the rail trail to the Walkway Over the Hudson.

Many operations are needed to keep the trail on what was the train track level with grade elevation no greater than 3 per cent. This involves excavation

and drainage work, with the latter very much necessary in some spots that tend to retain water. Embankments need to be reinforced where the rail trail goes through a deep cut in the vicinity of Route 9W. Sewer and water lines need to be re-routed. The surface of the rail trail will be asphalted as is the existing section of the trail to assure all-weather use and access.

Speaking of access, the expansion will create a gradual ramp alongside one embankment to take a spur trail up to 9W. This will give trail users a way up to the restaurants and other food establishments along 9W. It will also create another way of getting on to the trail. ●

Makeover For Caboose

In case you haven't noticed, the caboose at the Rail Trail Depot has been spruced up. So has the one that sits on the eastern end of the Walkway Over the Hudson. Both belong to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association. (The one at the Depot was donated by Ethan Jackman; the one at Walkway by Ray and Claire Costantino.)

The work done was very thorough on both cabooses. All of the costs were paid for by the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association from its own funds. The amount including labor and materials was around \$4,500. The work was done by Jim Hoch, a local Highland painter.

First, loose paint was removed by a wet-strip process that involved no airborne particles. The removed material was carefully collected and properly disposed of as required. Then an industrial grade oil paint especially intended for use on metal was applied on the cabooses using two coats. The color of the paint was carefully researched to match the color that was used historically for this vintage of caboose.

Work remains to be done on the caboose at the Depot, which has been the victim of vandals. Broken windows need to be replaced or otherwise protected. The damage is shameful. The caboose is a major attraction for young kids to enjoy. Hardly a child passes without wanting to climb aboard.

The caboose at the Walkway is in more pristine shape. Although there is the possibility to move it to the actual Eastern terminus of the Rail Trail, it is likely to remain where it is since it is such a focus of attention for Walkway goers and in an attractive setting.

You Can Learn To Run

by Rafael Díaz

The Learn-To-Run Program is one of the benefits of being a member of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association. This coming April the 10-week program will enter its 8th season of helping individuals of all ages and body shapes reach a goal of being able to run 20 minutes non-stop.

The Fall 2009 Class graduated 14 runners bringing the total the number of individuals who have learned to run to over 60. The Fall 2009 class had very nice things to say about our program, which they put in a thank you card to me, Donna and Alan & Susan Van De Bogart who help with the classes. Here are some of their comments:

“What a gift you gave to all of us.”—Jan

“Your support, inspiration and can-do attitude have made it possible for all of us to achieve.”—Jody

“What a wonderful coach you are—never thought I had it in me.”—Angela

“You have changed my life. Thank you!”—Johna

“I am forever a runner, thanks to you.”— Carol

“Thanks for your generous gift to the community.”—Dan

“I’ve used the word ‘shocking’ more times in the last 10 weeks than in all my life, thanks for everything!”—Linda

Our Spring Class will start at 9am on Saturday, April 17th at the Rail Trail Depot at 101 New Paltz Road next to the red caboose. It will go for 10 weeks, rain or shine, with graduation scheduled for June 19th when the group will run 20 minutes non-stop. We begin the first lesson with sets of 1 minute running & 2 minutes walking for a total of 21 minutes. Each week we add a bit to the running portion and, later, reduce the walking portion.

All you need to participate is be comfortable walking briskly for 20 minutes and be a member of HVRTA, which you can join at the first lesson. If you have questions or want to be in contact with past graduates to get a real-life view of what it is like, contact me at:

rafaeldiaz2@optonline.net or at (845) 255-7742

Rail Trail Events In 2010

Winterfest January 16, 11am to 2pm

Enjoy the chili cook-off by various restaurants. Vote for the Best in Chili. There will be tractor drawn hayrides, ice carving, roasted chestnuts and toasted marshmallows. Coffee, hot dogs and chili can be purchased. This year we have more activities for children. Admission is \$2; children under 6 are free.

Learn-To-Run Program Begins April 17, 9am

Start something that will make you a runner in 10 weeks and have some fun in fellowship with others.

Breakfast on Black Creek and the Annual Membership Meeting June 5, 9am

June 5th is also National Trails Day. We will have free breakfast and music on the trail at the Black Creek. The Annual Membership meeting will give those attending an opportunity to learn about the future expansion of the Rail Trail. All members will vote for new or incumbent Board members of the Rail Trail Association.

Harvest Moon Walk September 24, 7:30pm

The Harvest Moon Walk begins at the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Depot. This is the only time you are allowed to walk the trail after nightfall.

A Very Special Thanks To:

Keith Garbounoff for mowing events parking area

Tim Marion for setup of Caboose security cameras

Baker Brothers for mowing the lawn at Rail Trail Depot

Greg Saso for cleaning rest-rooms at Depot

Our Silver Spike Program Sponsors--



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Tips For Enjoying The Rail Trail In The Winter

by Rafael Díaz

It is cold and blustery. The days are short. Yes, it is winter. But that is no reason not to get out on the Hudson Valley Rail Trail. In fact, it is one of the better ways to enjoy being outside (the other is the Walkway Over the Hudson). There are things you can do to make the experience more tolerable, even enjoyable.

To start off, the Rail Trail is an all weather trail with a good even asphalt surface. The Town of Lloyd Water Department, thanks to Dave Compala, is religious about plowing it as soon as possible after any snowfall. The two parking lots, at the Rail Trail Depot and Tony Williams Park, are also plowed early. If you are a person who likes running or walking on roads, the Rail Trail is a safer alternative especially in winter where cars will splash you with slush and shoulders are covered with ice and snow.

But the Rail Trail is not totally immune from hazard. At times it can be icy, the result of melting snowing running across its surface. Too, the parking lot at the Rail Trail Depot can be slippery. So be careful. Better yet, consider getting a neat device for your shoes, which is discussed below.

Why Be Out In Winter?

That's a good question. Most people think of winter as a time to snuggle in warmly at home. They are missing one of the best seasons for enjoying nature at its purest and clearest. The atmosphere is lower in humidity and, as a result, the sky is often at its bluest. While trees are denuded of their leafy finery, this also means that more of the world is open to view. You will have vistas not ordinarily seen through the thick foliage of warmer months.

Winter also brings you closer to wildlife. They are evident in the tracks they make in the snow. You will see where a rabbit has crossed the trail or a deer leaving you to ponder where are they going. Birds are more visible as they perch on naked branches.

Winter also bolsters camaraderie on the trail. People in all seasons tend to greet each other as they pass. Rail trails and phenomena such as the Walkway foster a sense of community. In winter, you get an even great sense of this when there are fewer of you sharing the experience.

Improving The Experience

There is no question that winter conditions can be more challenging but the rewards are worthwhile. Here are several steps for safety and comfort:

Change your schedule. The days are shorter with the Sun coming up later and departing earlier. If you are person who ordinarily likes getting out at 8am change that to 9am or even mid-day. The temperatures will have inched up a bit to more tolerable levels.



Cut back on your outing times. If you like walking for an hour or running a half hour, reduce those times, say, to a 40 minute walk or a 20 minute run. Or at least start off with that as your goal. If you are feeling fine, warmed up by the exercise, then stay out longer.

Layer up your clothing. Wear several layers of clothing. Generally think in terms of three. A thin layer next to your skin that will absorb sweat (yes, you will sweat) and pass it on to the middle insulating layer. The outermost layer should be windproof if running and both windproof and insulated if walking. Vests are a good investment as what you need most is to keep your core warm. Obviously wear knit caps and gloves.

Test your system out. Try to wear less than you think you need. For running the rule of thumb is that if you are cozy warmly dressed when ready to start out, you are definitely overdressed.

Carry emergency items. You should have a cellphone with you in case you have an emergency or come across someone in need of help. Also have a whistle: most of the Rail Trail is within hearing distance of homes. Have an emergency space blanket. They are small. If you are running and get a cramp that reduces you to a walk, the space blanket will keep you warm.

Use special grippers for your shoes. These are meant to slip over your shoes and consists of a half dozen tiny spikes the size of a ballpoint tip. Some are light enough to wear when running and not slow or weigh you down. The simplest run around \$15 to \$18 a pair and can be found at hardware stores or on-line. Get-A-Grip is one brand name. Get the lightest version and you should do just fine. If you are having trouble finding these locally do a Google search. ●

Our New Web Page Offers More Features

by Rafael Díaz

The newly opened Walkway over the Hudson and immediate plans for expansion of the Rail Trail eastward to meet it are not the only new happenings for Rail Trail users. We now have a revamped website as well. And it is not just a great, new look that introduces our new logo. The website is packed with useful information, an up-to-date calendar, archives of recent newsletters and other things to help maximize your enjoyment of this wonderful asset that Highland has to offer.

The new website is the product of much thinking by the Rail Trail board and officers, especially Claire Costantino who worked closely with Chris Johnson of Unisyn Design. It has been made possible by support from Parks & Trails, New York under its "capacity building" grant program.

The new website also shows off our new logo, a more modern version of the one we started with some



years ago. The logo melds tracks, i.e. the railroad origins, with green that suggests the natural setting of the trail. The blue is for sky but also can be seen as part of one of the bridges the trail passes under.

The website offers a downloadable, up-to-date history of development from its beginnings to what is currently in store. It tells the story of how a thirst for high technology needed for high speed Internet access fueled the funding necessary to convert the abandoned railway into a paved, all weather walking trail. In that history section is also a detailed description of features, natural and man made, that you will see as you leave the current eastern terminus at Commercial Avenue in Highland and head westward toward the current end in Tony Williams Park.

You will also find on the website a map showing how to get to the Rail Trail and its various access points. Brief descriptions of these points are also given. Upcoming events are also given in detail and will be updated regularly for any last minute changes or additional information. The website will also be a place where we hope to keep you abreast of progress on the eastward expansion of the Rail Trail to The Walkway Over the Hudson.

The website has an updated photo gallery. The images include many scenes of the Rail Trail in all its glory that will make you anxious to be out there and be a reminder of the experiences you have had while walking, running or biking it. There are also useful links to other trail organizations and tourism sources. ●

The website is: www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

Membership Form

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating, maintaining, promoting, and improving the Hudson Valley Rail Trail for the benefit of the public. Please help by becoming a member and volunteering your talents.

\$15 Individual \$20 Family \$50-\$99 Patron \$100-499 Supporting \$500 Benefactor

Name _____

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I'd like to volunteer for:

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Please send form and check payable: Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, Inc.
12 Church Street, Highland, New York 12528
www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

Signals



...from the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association

Don't miss!

WinterFest 2010

on the

Hudson Valley Rail Trail

Hudson Valley Rail Trail Depot

101 New Paltz Road

January 16, 2010 from 11am to 2pm

www.hudsonvalleyrailtrail.net

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Highland, New York 12528

12 Church Street

Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association, Inc.

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