

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Greenway Acquisition, Expanded Open Space for New Jersey Communities

09/15/2022

NEWARK – Governor Phil Murphy today announced the acquisition of a nine-mile former rail line, which will be converted into a new State park connecting eight Essex and Hudson County communities – Jersey City, Secaucus, Kearny, Newark, Belleville, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, and Montclair. As a result of this once-in-a-generation project, these communities will benefit from expanded access to green, open space; increased transportation and recreation opportunities; and improved air filtration and stormwater management. Governor Murphy was joined by state and local elected officials, environmental advocates, and critical project partners who helped bring the acquisition to fruition.

"For far too long, many of New Jersey's most diverse communities have not enjoyed equitable access to our state's open spaces and their accompanying health benefits," **said Governor Murphy**. "While connecting these communities to our natural environment and economic opportunity, the Greenway will also bolster resilience in one of the state's most densely populated regions. Its acquisition testifies to my Administration's dedicated work and the shared vision of the partners who are making this new destination a reality."

The Fiscal Year 2023 budget agreement includes \$20 million in federal American Rescue Plan funds to begin the remedial and structural work necessary to transform the abandoned rail line into a usable transportation corridor and recreational space. The entire line will remain closed to the public for an initial period of 6-12 months, after which the line will be opened to the public segment by segment as work on individual sections is completed over the next several years.

The sequence of the development and opening of the Greenway, as well as the design for amenities, transportation options, and connections to local community resources, will be informed by a strategic master plan for the Greenway. The DEP is currently procuring a consultant to support the development of the master plan and is leading an interagency working group and engagement with local elected officials, community members, and other stakeholders.

"In this old, abandoned rail line, the Murphy Administration sees an opportunity to improve the quality of life, environment, and economy of the region—and we are seizing it," **said Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette**. "Alongside Governor Murphy and our many partners, the DEP is excited to continue the work of delivering a transformative Greenway that better connects our communities, provides innovative recreation and transit options, and contributes to the dynamic towns and cities all along its course."

"NJ TRANSIT is pleased to have helped facilitate this important bi-county initiative," **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin S. Corbett**. "The Essex-Hudson Greenway will offer complementary and environmentally-friendly mobility spanning two counties and eight municipalities in one of the most densely populated regions in northern New Jersey."

"For far too long our families have had to deal with the negative impact of an abandoned rail line. From illegal dumping to being an inviting space for negative activities, the rail line has tainted homeownership, backyards, new developments, new elementary schools and the first countywide park system in the country," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "It is truly historic to see this project finally coming to fruition, which will bring an end to a decades long public nuisance. Today's announcement shows that New Jersey will continue to fight for environmental justice. I am grateful Governor Murphy sees the value in this project and I look forward to being a partner in this endeavor, which will be a game changer for open space."

"Repurposing an abandoned rail line into a state park and a multimodal transit corridor for walking, hiking, and biking will be good for the environment, good for public safety, good for the small businesses in these densely populated communities and for our regional economy, and good for our constituents' physical and mental well-being," **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, a longtime advocate for our state's park system**. "The pandemic illustrated the importance of preserving and expanding our open spaces, especially in urban areas. I am grateful to the Governor for making this critical step happen, which will ensure the Essex-Hudson Greenway finally becomes a reality that will be cherished by our children and their children."

"I want to thank Governor Murphy for putting the State's resources behind the initiative to preserve this nine-mile ribbon as open space," **said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.** "The greenway has unlimited potential to enhance our quality of life, create new recreation opportunities and spur economic development. As someone who is dedicated to making our County parks as best as they can be, I look forward to creating this wonderful resource."

"Residents of underserved communities adjacent to the line will now have more access to recreational areas, which will foster an appreciation for the outdoors, encourage exercise, and improve the overall health and quality of life for future generations," **said Essex County Commissioner Brendan Gill, a leading advocate for the Greenway since its inception nearly 15 years ago**. "I believe, upon its completion, the Essex-Hudson Greenway will serve as a blueprint for future projects nationwide. It will demonstrate the positive effects large-scale environmentally friendly transportation projects can have on our community."

"I thank Governor Murphy for having the foresight to realize this project was worthy of his support at the State level," **said Essex County Commissioner President Wayne Richardson**. "I also thank Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, and extend special congratulations to my friend and colleague on the Board, Commissioner Brendan Gill who has been a leading advocate for the Essex-Hudson Greenway since its inception."

"We're so pleased that this project will become a reality and provide a much needed East-West connection for multi-modal transportation that is unique, healthy, and environmentally conscious," **said Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise**. "This is a historic moment for our State and Hudson County is proud to be a leader in this effort. We thank Governor Murphy and his team for their efforts."

"This acquisition by Governor Murphy and the state of New Jersey brings us one step closer to creating much-needed green space to the most densely populated and diverse region in the entire nation," **said Kim Elliman, President and CEO of the Open Space Institute, which secured the purchase agreement for the 135-acre**

former rail property and provided extensive transactional support for the acquisition. "OSI is proud to have played a role in bringing this transformative project to today's announcement and looks forward to building on our public-private partnership and fulfilling the promise to create a world-class linear park that will greatly enhance local communities and be enjoyed for generations to come."

"The Essex-Hudson Greenway will be one of the crown jewels of the New Jersey Park system. For far too long, urban communities in the state were largely ignored by land preservation efforts. This historic investment will help close that gap, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation for hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans," said **Ed Potosnak, Executive Director, New Jersey LCV**. "It's not easy to get this level of cooperation from so many different sectors, but this project highlights all the merits of public-private partnerships and strategic land protection in one package. We look forward to working with the Murphy administration and our environmental partners to make this important regional recreational park a reality."

"Today's announcement, of the acquisition of the land for the greenway, is a historic step on the path to transforming our region with equitable and safe active transportation options and much needed open space," said **Debra Kagan, Executive Director, New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**. "We want to thank the many advocates who persevered over so many years to fulfill this dream and to thank Governor Murphy for securing this land and his commitment to creating it as New Jersey's next state park."

"The Essex-Hudson Greenway will be a game-changer for the East Coast Greenway and equitable transportation in northern New Jersey," said **East Coast Greenway Alliance Executive Director Dennis Markatos-Soriano**. "Its development will greatly improve one of the most treacherous stretches of our Maine-to-Florida route. This new greenway will provide an equitable and safe path for commuters and recreational use, as well as countless economic, environmental and health benefits for the region. We are so grateful for the hard work of our many partners in the region, including Governor Murphy, the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition, Open Space Institute and the September 11 National Memorial Trail, for making this project a reality."

"The September 11th National Memorial Trail thanks Governor Murphy, the state of New Jersey, Essex and Hudson County, New Jersey Bike Walk Coalition, Open Space Institute along with Norfolk Southern and Northeast Track Solution for their efforts to secure the Old Boonton Line from Montclair to Jersey City for the future of the people of New Jersey," said **September Eleventh National Memorial Trail Board Chair Andrew Hamilton**. "The Essex-Hudson Greenway is a very significant development for non-motorized transportation. Imagine the opportunities for passive and active recreation, connections to nature and the connection of communities along the 9 mile corridor! The September 11th National Memorial Trail is a 1,300 mile trail that connects the National September 11th Memorial and Museum in New York to the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Arlington VA, to the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville PA. The trail received unanimous federal legislation in 2021. We are pleased that the Essex-Hudson Greenway will be part of the September 11th National Memorial Trail."

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