

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Historic Acquisition of Former Rail Line and Intent to Create New 9-Mile Linear State Park & Transitway

11/11/2021

Abandoned Rail Line Stretching from Jersey City to Montclair Will be Transformed

BLOOMFIELD – Governor Phil Murphy, joined by state and local officials, today announced the State’s intention to purchase nearly nine miles of property stretching from Jersey City to Montclair, for the creation of New Jersey’s first new state park since 2006. The announcement follows years of advocacy for the acquisition and transformation of the now abandoned former Boonton rail alignment as a multi-modal transit and recreational trail corridor that crosses above both the Passaic and Hackensack Rivers.

Connecting the communities of Montclair, Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Belleville, Newark, Kearny, Secaucus, and Jersey City, the park will also provide a new pedestrian route and protect our environment by providing residents with a new and convenient method to reach their destinations without the use of a car. Projects such as the new park, which encourage car-free transportation, will help the Murphy Administration reach its goals of reducing overall emissions by 50 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050.

“This project has been years in the making, and I am proud to be the Governor to advance this dream to being a reality,” **said Governor Murphy**. “This new park will be a crown jewel of our state park system, providing much-needed recreational space to New Jerseyans and out-of-state visitors, while revitalizing and protecting environmentally-sensitive areas. Residents of our state’s two largest cities, and the suburbs beyond and in-between will benefit from access to a multi-use trail, and the natural beauty of the Meadowlands. I am grateful for our partners across government including in the Legislature, Essex and Hudson counties, and our federal delegation for their efforts in support of this project.”

“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 President Pro Tempore Teresa Ruiz**. “Today’s announcement shows that New Jersey will 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.”

“After years of effort, This vitally important project has reached a historical moment,” **said Assemblymembers Nicholas Chiaravalloti and Eliana Pintor-Marin**. “This project is environmentally friendly, aims to improve water infrastructure and creates recreational opportunities for area residents. It is our sincere hope that JBOC approves the funding for this critical initiative.”

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"My colleagues and I at the Department of Environmental Protection are proud to support the funding, acquisition and development of this new Greenway for the Garden State," **said Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette**. "This is a historic investment that will enrich communities in Essex and Hudson counties, the state and the region—serving as a hub for ecotourism and unlocking the potential for even greater transit and environmental infrastructure improvements. It is exactly the kind of transformative project that New Jersey residents deserve."

"NJ TRANSIT and the Open Space Institute have been working together for more than a year to ensure the Boonton Line will become a wonderful outdoor experience for walkers, runners and bicyclists, while also preserving the potential for environmentally-friendly public transit in the future," **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin S. Corbett**. "Greenways and smart, clean public transit are vital to the quality of life in New Jersey, and I'm proud that our continued partnership will assure that these critical needs, for green space and green transportation, will have the opportunity to be fulfilled together."

"Without question, this deal underscores all the merits of public-private partnerships and strategic land protection in one package. The Greenway project will make it easier for millions of people to enjoy the benefits of being outdoors, completely transform the way communities connect with nature and connect with each other, linking people to parks, waterways, and their neighbors – all while creating alternative transportation options, improving water quality, and spurring economic activity," **said Open Space Institute President and CEO Kim Elliman**. "Thanks to Governor Murphy, this once-in-a-generation opportunity will soon become reality and OSI could not be prouder of the role we played to negotiate the deal, bring stakeholders together, and generate public and private support for the initiative."

"I am happy to see this project moving forward and thank Governor Murphy for his commitment to creating new green space for New Jersey families," **said Senator Bob Menendez**. "The Essex-Hudson Greenway will not only create vital recreational opportunities for many of our communities, but also provide transportation alternatives that go beyond the car and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Utilizing both state and federal funds, this project brings all levels of government together to improve the quality of life for area residents. This recreational space will connect suburban and urban communities and bring families of all backgrounds together, while reducing harmful emissions in the region."

"The Essex Hudson Greenway project is another example of investing in our state's infrastructure to revitalize old, unused sites for the benefit of our state's residents and to advance environmental causes," **said Senator Cory Booker**. "The renovated corridor will help pave the way for future public transportation options between Essex and Hudson counties, lead to the construction of walkways and bike lanes, and crucially, assist with stormwater management. I am glad to see various state funding sources being leveraged to back this project and look forward to seeing the benefits it provides to New Jerseyans."

"I'm thrilled that this abandoned rail line will become a new state park for the people of New Jersey to enjoy," **said Congressman Albio Sires**. "I have long been an advocate for revitalizing old infrastructure and giving it new purpose as parks, trails, and eco-friendly travel routes. I applaud Governor Murphy's commitment to making progress on this project and look forward to visiting our new state park with my fellow New Jerseyans."

"The pandemic has proven the value of open space," **said Congressman Bill Pascrell**. "Thanks to money passed by Congress and signed into law by President Biden, the Greenway can be a stunning park for our North Jersey communities in one of the most densely populated areas in America. I am excited ARP funds are being used to improve, expand and contribute to public spaces. Governor Murphy's commitment to open spaces will be life-changing for our state. I look forward to continued investments in our communities."

"I am so proud of the Essex-Hudson Greenway project and the broad coalition that's come together to support it," **said Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill**. "In this densely populated area of our state, building a bike and hiking trail along out of use rail lines will link together communities, improve quality of life, expand our state park system and revitalize our towns. During COVID, we realized the value of our outdoor spaces. This greenway will allow communities to come together and provide business opportunities along the trail. I can't

wait until this is completed. I know my family and many others in the region will treasure it.”

“This is great news and I applaud Governor Murphy’s leadership in building this park,” **said Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.** “This new park will create walking trails and biking trails to allow my constituents to enjoy nature throughout the 10th Congressional District. As a strong supporter of the environment, I am proud that this park will protect miles of wetlands in northern New Jersey. It is a great project and I look forward to seeing it built.”

“Preserving open space and creating recreation opportunities for our residents has been an ongoing initiative of my administration,” **said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.** “We thank Governor Murphy for supporting the Greenway project and making this longtime vision become a reality. Essex County is one of the most densely populated and developed areas on the East Coast and opening this nine-mile stretch will be a tremendous benefit for our residents.”

“The Greenway represents another critical element of our three-decade-long effort to increase open space, bike and pedestrian pathways, and public waterfront access in the region,” **said Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise.** “I am grateful to Governor Murphy for his leadership on this issue and his commitment to moving the Greenway forward.”

“Governor Murphy’s announcement on the provision of funding for the Essex-Hudson Greenway was a monumental step for the future of Northeastern New Jersey,” **said Essex County Commissioner Brendan Gill, a longtime advocate of the Essex-Hudson Greenway for the last 10 years.** “Upon its completion, the EHG will serve as a blue print for future environmentally friendly infrastructure projects nationwide, while helping our local communities rebound from the financial challenges we experienced due to the pandemic.”

The new park will pass through a diverse landscape of existing parks and wetlands, as well as urban, suburban, and industrial areas. The park will include walking paths, bike lanes, and other recreational uses, allowing visitors to take full advantage of a trail that exhibits the varied landscapes of our state including the scenery of the Meadowlands. Funding for the park will be provided through a collaborative effort by the Murphy Administration, including the support of the Department of Environmental Protection and NJ TRANSIT, the Legislature, and New Jersey’s congressional delegation, utilizing American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. Over the past few years, NJ TRANSIT and the Open Space Institute have been engaged in negotiations with the Norfolk Southern Corporation for the purchase of this land, which will now be possible with the State’s support. The State’s acquisition of the land also allows its potential future use for mass transit purposes, alongside recreational uses.

“On behalf of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition and all our members we want to express how thrilled we are at the announcement today and express our gratitude to the Governor and his staff, for this major step that will lead to the creation of the Greenway,” **said Debra Kagan, Executive Director of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition.** “This is the culmination of over a decade of advocacy and we thank our dedicated coalition partners, the community groups, local leaders, and thousands of grassroots supporters who persevered to get us to this great day. We want to thank you Governor Murphy, for your commitment to what will truly be a transformational project that will enhance the quality-of-life for all our residents throughout the region.”

“We are happy that the State of New Jersey has stepped forward to do their part to make sure that we can bring this valuable Greenway and recreational space to the people,” **said Thomas Baxter, President of the September 11th National Memorial Trail Alliance.** “In addition to its impact at the local level, this project has major national significance as a major New Jersey component of the recently designated 9/11 Memorial Trail. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Governor, representatives of the various state departments, and our own community and elected leaders who help us reach this pivotal point. We continue to appreciate the ongoing support of the community, as well, and the countless members of the public who have been advocates for the project over the years.”

“The League of Women Voters of New Jersey applauds Governor Murphy’s commitment to protecting,

preserving, and investing in open space through funding the Greenway,” said **Jesse Burns, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey**. “This once-in-a-lifetime, transformational project enhances the social, economic, mental and physical welfare of New Jersey residents.”

“Preserving this important 9-mile corridor, and creating a green swath through these densely developed communities is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said **Jay Watson, Senior Director for Statewide Land Protection & Community Relations at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation**. “Keeping this corridor intact will provide enormous opportunities for public recreation and alternatives to automobile-dependent transportation. Once completed, this public asset will have immeasurable public health benefits for future generations and enhance real estate values along its route. We congratulate Governor Murphy and all of the partners and advocates for seizing on this remarkable opportunity.”

“We applaud Governor Murphy for today’s announcement creating a visionary park for the great people of New Jersey. For too long, access to nature has been a mark of privilege instead of a human right to be enjoyed by all,” said **Eric Stiles, President and CEO of New Jersey Audubon**. “**The Keep It Green Coalition, led by NJ Audubon, champions parks as an essential part of a vibrant urban community**. This rails to trails project, a nine-mile transformational linear park from Montclair to Jersey City, represents a huge victory for northern NJ residents who enjoy walking, hiking, birding, cycling and just getting outdoors. Many studies have shown the physical and mental health benefits, economic gains and crime reduction in neighborhoods with parks. We thank the Governor and many partners who have made this vision a reality.”

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy, Brigadier General Dr. Lisa Hou, The Adjutant General of New Jersey and Commissioner of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA), and Acting Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Sarah Adelman today announced the Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families. The initiative will bring together state and federal agencies to combat suicide among members of the military and their families. This work will build on existing suicide prevention efforts across the state and assist with further implementation of best policies and practices using a comprehensive public health approach.

“New Jersey’s veterans and service members are a source of immense pride for our state,” said **Governor Murphy**. “This initiative recognizes the struggles that many of our bravest men and women face and will engage all aspects of government in meeting the challenge of preventing and reducing suicides.”

“Together with 34 other states, New Jersey is engaging at the local, county, and state level to implement best, and evidence-based practices to prevent and reduce suicide among Garden State heroes and their families,” said **Adjutant General and DMAVA Commissioner Brigadier General Hou**. “Purposefully, our effort will advance the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide by enhancing and aligning local and statewide suicide prevention efforts.”

“Suicide is a significant public health concern among veterans and service members. Through these partnerships, and by enacting suicide prevention policies and best practices, we can help save the lives of men and women who have given so much to protect ours,” said **Human Services Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “I urge anyone needing help to call our [24/7](tel:247) suicide prevention help line at [1-855-654-6735](tel:18556546735). No matter what you’re going through or feeling, you are not alone. We are here to listen.”

This initiative establishes a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration with the goal of preventing suicide among New Jersey’s veterans. These efforts will advance the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ *National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide* by enhancing and aligning local and statewide suicide prevention efforts. The New Jersey Departments of Health and Children and Families are additional partners in the initiative, providing expertise and guidance for this critical effort.

The objectives of the Challenge include:

- Convening a state interagency military and civilian team of leaders to develop an implementation plan to prevent suicide among veterans.

- Implementing promising, best, and evidence-based practices to prevent and reduce suicide.
- Engaging with city, county, and state stakeholders to enhance and align local and state-wide suicide prevention efforts.
- Increasing knowledge about the challenges and lessons learned in implementing best policies and practices by using state-to-state and community-to-community sharing.
- Defining and measuring success, including defining assignments, deadlines, and measurable outcomes to be reported.

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