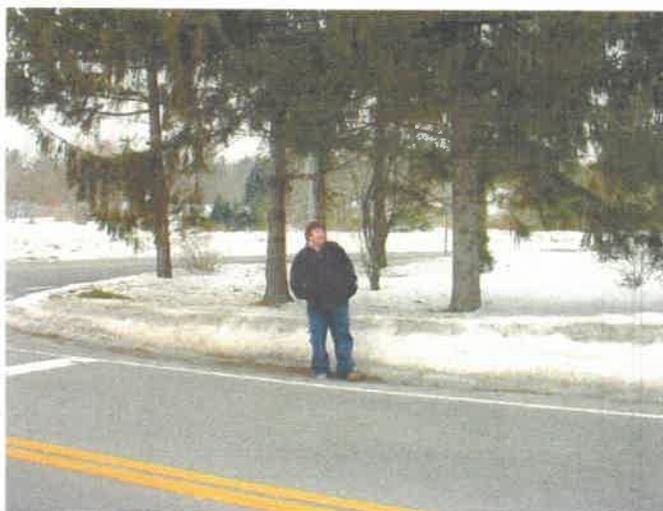


*FINAL REPORT for*

# **Guilderland Pathways Study**

*June 2005*



*Submitted to:*

**Town of Guilderland  
&  
The Hudson River Valley Greenway**



*Submitted by:*  
**Wilbur Smith Associates**



## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. OVERVIEW

In 2001, the Town of Guilderland created the Guilderland Pathways Committee, and charged them with the task of developing recommendations for improving non-motorized pathway throughout the Town. Over the next few years, the Guilderland Pathways Committee (Committee) developed three documents:

- *The Town of Guilderland Preliminary Sidewalk Master Plan*, April 1, 2003;
- *Walkable Destinations in Guilderland*, May 13, 2004; and
- *Biking in Guilderland*, May 18, 2004.

These reports contained detailed recommendations for improving the sidewalk systems, creating footpaths and upgrading certain roadways to improve bicycling opportunities.

Before formally endorsing the recommendations of the lay Committee, the Guilderland Town Board wanted an outside review of the recommendations by someone with professional experience in planning and designing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Town secured a grant from the Hudson River Greenways to conduct such a review. After requesting qualifications from bicycle pedestrian professionals, the Town Board selected Wilbur Smith Associates to undertake the review.

*The purpose of this review summarized in this report is to validate the recommendations made by the Committee and, if they are appropriate, make suggestions, as to how the recommendations can be improved.*

### B. REPORT ORGANIZATION

After this introduction, this report is followed by a short overview of the review, analysis and recommendations for each of the Committee's three reports. Detailed, page by page recommendations are included in the appendices. The last section of the report provides general recommendations applicable to the set of reports. It also includes suggestions on how to continue the work of the Committee.

## II. GENERAL REVIEW

The work that the Committee has done in the past three years forms a very strong basis for an overall comprehensive plan for bicycle and pedestrian travel in Guilderland. The text of the reports makes it clear that the work is based on extensive field analysis of the many roadways, sidewalks and paths in the Town. The reports, especially *Walkable Destinations in Guilderland*, also emphasize the larger connections to the trails and greenways in the region.

While WSA has provided recommendation on how to refine the work, we can readily endorse the Committee's work to date. The following pages contain general comments

on each Committee report, as well as suggestions on how the Committee can continue its work to create an overall bicycling and pedestrian master plan for Guilderland.

### III. TOWN OF GUILDERLAND PRELIMINARY SIDEWALK MASTER PLAN

The *Town of Guilderland Preliminary Sidewalk Master Plan* (the *Sidewalk Plan*) begins with a discussion of the need for sidewalks in Guilderland. It continues with a short description of the process the Committee used in making its recommendations. This is then followed by a detailed, street by street discussion on specific sidewalk recommendations. The recommendations are divided into high, medium or long-term priorities.

The recommendations in the *Sidewalk Plan* are well developed and reasonable. The inclusion of the priority system helps to understand how the sidewalk system can be developed over time and is extremely important.

There are inclusions of some sidewalk sections that may be difficult to implement due to steep grades, mature trees, limited right-of-way, of other physical restrictions but WSA do not see this as a drawback. The plan focuses on where it is logical for pedestrians to walk, not just on where it is easy to develop sidewalks. It may take a long time to actually find the funding or means by which to construct sidewalks in these difficult locations, but adding them to the plan begins the process. Once the recommendation is part of the *Sidewalk Plan*, alternate means of accommodating pedestrian movement in or near the difficult area may become apparent. Without the recommendation in the *Sidewalk Plan*, nothing will most likely ever be done to provide adequate sidewalks in those areas where they may be needed but difficult to install.

WSA has only a few significant recommendations on changes to the *Sidewalk Plan*:

- Extend the sidewalk recommended on Gun Club Road north to the intersection with State Route 397 from the suggested end in the *Sidewalk Plan* at the entrance to Bozenkill Park.
- Add the sidewalks recommended in the *Fort Hunter/Carman Road Neighborhood Transportation Plan*, including a full extension of the East Lydius Street sidewalk to Carman Road.
- Provide sidewalks to Fort Hunter Park, because the new roadway connections are increasing the amount of vehicular traffic on the roadway around the Park.
- Explore the potential of providing a sidewalk on Schoolcraft Road as an alternative to providing a sidewalk on Willow Street (and develop a shared use path connection between Willow Street and Schoolcraft Road).

The *Sidewalk Plan* was accompanied by a hand-drawn map highlighting the recommendations and graphically depicted the priorities for each of the segments. The map also readily shows how the recommendations fit into the existing sidewalk system.

WSA noted a few minor discrepancies between the map and the report, which we discuss in Appendix A with recommendations for how to resolve them.

#### IV. WALKABLE DESTINATIONS IN GUILDERLAND

*Walkable Destinations in Guilderland (Destinations)* provides the basis for many of the recommendations in the *Sidewalk Plan*. *Destinations* consists of two sections. The first section focuses on pathways to be used for transportation as well as recreation; the second section focuses on pathways to be used primarily for recreation.

As part of the discussion in the first section, the report looks at the different types of destinations to which people would like to walk. The list includes the schools, parks, neighborhood shopping areas, churches, and employment centers in Guilderland. Each is examined in detail, with a description of the types of pedestrian facilities that should be provided to allow easy walking to these destinations.

The facilities recommended in the *Sidewalk Plan* are described in *Destinations*. *Destinations* provides a clear rationale for the why the sidewalks in the *Sidewalk Plan* should be included in the system. It also provides a basis for the priority rankings. The reasoning and recommendations are well researched and valid.

WSA has no significant recommendations for changes to the first section of *Destinations*. There are several minor suggestions that are listed in Appendix B.

The second section of the report focuses on the creation of a recreational trail system in Guilderland. The information is organized by the trails, both existing and proposed. It includes short and long trails, although the focus is more on longer trails. This section includes a map which graphically depicts the recommendations.

There is no distinction in *Destinations* between the different types of trail that could be developed. *Destinations* includes recommendations for shared use paths, which are eight- to ten- foot wide paved or hard-packed gravel paths accessible to a wide range of users, as well as recommendations for foot paths, that would only be appropriate for hiking or possibly mountain biking. There are also no priorities given for the various recommended trails.

The trail recommendations vary from those that are highly feasible, such as a trail on top of the sewer line which is already leveled and cleared, to those that are long term endeavors, such as the footpaths along the various watercourses in the Town. WSA believes that it is appropriate to include both in the recommendations in *Destinations*.

The lack of prioritization, however, is a bit harder to address. Due to the overland nature of the various trails, many different easements and/or rights-of-ways are necessary to bring the trails to fruition. WSA believes that having an overall plan serves as a reminder about the ultimate goals of the trail system and the hope to someday develop the trail.

The inclusion of each of the recommended trails in the plan can also help justify special land acquisitions or requests from land developers as individual opportunities arise.

This approach, however, puts the Town in the passive role of waiting for opportunities to arise. If the Town wants to be more proactive in pursuing the development of the trails, we believe that some prioritization can help. Prioritizing the importance of the trails will not eliminate the possibility of pursuing opportunities when they arise, but will provide guidance on where the Town should focus its energy.

In addition to a prioritization system in *Destinations*, WSA recommends that each of the trails included in the report be added to the accompanying plan.

## V. BIKING IN GUILDERLAND

*Biking in Guilderland (Biking)* focuses on on-road bicycling. It begins with a general discussion of the types of cyclists that should be serviced by on-road facilities, as well as the types of appropriate facilities to provide. The report then provides detailed descriptions of the current bicycling conditions on the main roadways in Guilderland. It points out the various good and bad bicycling areas and provides recommendations on how to improve some of the bad conditions. The report covers:

- Route 20 (Western Avenue) from end to end in Guilderland;
- Route 146;
- Route 155;
- Fuller Road;
- Old State Road;
- Johnston Road;
- Veeder Road;
- Church Road; and
- Schoolhouse Road.

The greatest amount of detail is given to the roads at the top of the list, with less detail provided for those at the bottom.

The report also specifically discusses troublesome intersections, including:

- Willow Street and Route 20;
- Witte Street and Route 20;
- Gipp Road and Route 20;
- Church Road and Route 20;
- Old State Road and Route 146;
- Coons Road and Route 146; and
- Lydius Street and Route 146.

The last part of the report discusses bicycling for recreation in Guilderland. This section of the report provides a brief description of the conditions on:

Route 158;  
Route 396 (Dunnsville Road)  
Becker Road;  
Siver Road; and  
Grant Hill Road.

The report also includes Appendices with information on recreational bicycle routes in the Town and on the Capital District Transportation Committee's Priority Bicycle/Pedestrian Network.

The recommendations in *Biking* are based on close scrutiny of each of the roadways examined. They are well developed and appropriate. Most of the recommendations are also very reasonable and not outrageously expensive.

There is no prioritization of the recommendations and WSA recommends that the suggested improvements be prioritized to focus the implementation process on the most appropriate locations. WSA also recommends that the report provide recommended solutions to each of the problems it identifies on the various routes.

The report also includes detailed recommendations on roadways that are not in Guilderland. While it is important to understand how the facilities in Guilderland will connect with those in adjacent communities and the larger region, WSA does not believe that the detailed recommendations are appropriate mixed into the recommendations for roadways in the Town of Guilderland. WSA recommends that these recommendations be placed in a special section discussing the connections to the regional section or in appendix and referenced in the main report.

WSA also has several smaller comments on specific recommendations in *Biking* that are included in Appendix C. These recommendations do not change the full recommendations of the report.

## VI. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The three separate reports provide a good basis for the development of a comprehensive pedestrian and bicyclist system in Guilderland. The lack of cross-referencing between the three separate reports makes it difficult to get a clear picture of the entire system. WSA recommends that the Committee continue its work and focus on developing an overall master plan for pedestrian and bicycle travel within Guilderland. It would be based on the work of the three reports.

When the three separate systems are plotted on the same map, it may modify some specific recommendations on the location of sidewalks or shared use paths. It could also affect the prioritization of the different recommendations, as it becomes possible to see them together. As an example, some of the high priority sidewalk recommendations may drop to medium priority to make room for high priority bicycle improvements.

Creating an overall plan would also help to ensure that a comprehensive system is being proposed, and that there are not obvious gaps in the system that could be easily filled.

The *Sidewalk Plan* and *Destinations* provide an excellent basis for understanding why the sidewalks are recommended as they are. Many of the same pedestrian destinations discussed in *Destinations* are also bicycling destinations, but there is no corresponding information for a bicycle network serving these destinations. WSA recommends that such an analysis be done, resulting in the possible creation of additional recommendations for on- or off-road bicycle facilities.

To help in the creation of this system, WSA suggests dividing the trail discussions in *Destinations* into those that are meant to be foot trails and those that are meant to be shared use paths. The shared use paths can be included with the on-road recommendations in *Biking* to show a complete bicycling system in Guilderland. The shared use paths can then also be seen in conjunction with the sidewalks system to help show the full extent of the paved pedestrian system in the Town.

There are various ways in which the overall plan can be created. We believe, based on the previous work of the Committee, that they will be able to develop an organizational framework for the unified report that is most useful for Guilderland. It may be no more than a summary of the work in the individual reports, with each report serving as an appendix. The overall goal is to create a single guiding document that outlines the Town's policies and goals for its bicycle and pedestrian systems.

The development of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for the Town will serve as a blueprint for the development and maintenance of the system. It shows generally where facilities should ideally be located. Such a master plan can help the Town set priorities within the overall bicycle and pedestrian circulation system and within the larger transportation systems in the Town. Having a bicycle and pedestrian master plan can also assist in securing outside funding sources for specific projects because it shows how each of the projects contributes to the overall system and improvement of bicycle and pedestrian circulation.

A bicycle and pedestrian master plan is not an end product but a guide and the beginning of a longer term commitment to improved bicycle and pedestrian circulation in the Town. In addition to the recommendations for an overall system, the master plan should also outline the process of how projects are advanced, which would include more public involvement to ascertain the specific alignments to be used, when options are available and the specific location of a facility is not clear.

The creation of a Guilderland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan will serve as a highly useful next step to the work of the Guilderland Pathways Committee.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Specific Recommendations for the *Town of Guilderland Preliminary Sidewalk Master Plan* (April 1, 2003)**

## APPENDIX A

### Specific Recommendations for the *Town of Guilderland Preliminary Sidewalk Master Plan (April 1, 2003)*

#### Western Avenue, McCormack's Corners to the CSX tracks

The recommended sidewalk should be considered a long term priority as shown on the map rather than as a medium term priority as listed in the report.

#### Carman Road

The first recommended medium term priority sidewalk infill project as listed in the report should be considered as such rather than as a long term priority project as shown on the map. The second medium term recommended sidewalk in the report should be considered a long term project, as shown on the map.

#### Church Road

The recommended short term sidewalk recommendation should be shown on the map, even if it is small.

#### Crossgates Mall Road and Rapp Road

We recommend that, as much as possible, the Town work with the Mall and use Mall property to develop additional sidewalks in this area.

#### Dr. Shaw Road

The recommendation to construct a sidewalk along one side of Dr. Shaw Road from Route 155 to Veeder Road as a medium priority should be followed, rather than splitting the sidewalk to two sides of the road as a longer term priority as shown on the map.

#### East Lydius Street

At least portions, if not all, of the recommended sidewalk on East Lydius Road should be considered as a medium term priority.

#### East Old State Road near Carman Road

The map classification of this sidewalk as a medium priority is more appropriate than the long term priority classification in the report.

#### East Old State Road east of Lydius Street

The map classification of this sidewalk as a long term priority is more appropriate than the medium term priority classification in the report.

#### West Old State Road

The map classification of this sidewalk as a long term priority is more appropriate than the medium term priority classification in the report.

**APPENDIX B**  
**Specific Recommendations for *Walkable Destinations in Guilderland* (May 13, 2004)**

## APPENDIX B

### Specific Recommendations for *Walkable Destinations in Guilderland* (May 13, 2004)

#### Westmere Elementary School

##### *Kraus Road and the Westlawn neighborhood*

If possible, the use of the existing pedestrian easement between two lots at the end of Chainyk Drive is preferred to other options. The crosswalk should be developed across Johnston Road at the end of Chainyk Drive

#### Guilderland Elementary School

##### *Fairwood Apartments*

More information should be included as to which organization or person has proposed the multi-use path along Winding Brook Drive. Some idea of its status as of the date of the report would also be helpful.

##### *Campus Club Estates & Regency, Brandywine*

The text should indicate which connections are actually recommended rather than suggesting that if links could be found, they would provide good connection.

#### Lynwood Elementary School

##### *Helderview Drive, Brenn-Breit subdivision*

The editorial comments against developer should be removed.

##### *South of Route 20*

A recommendation on how to cross Route 20 should be included.

#### Pine Bush Elementary School

##### *Belleview Drive neighborhood*

The report should clarify whether the existing trail is adequate and whether it should remain as is or be improved.

##### *Lone Pine Neighborhood*

Discuss the long term goal of adding sidewalks to the south side of Lone Pine Road.

#### Altamont Elementary School

The listing for Altamont Elementary School should be removed from the list since it is outside of the jurisdiction of the Town.

#### Farnsworth Middle School

##### *Prescott Woods*

The report should make a recommendation as to whether to improve the primitive path or leave it as it is. (WSA recommends that it be recommended for an upgrade.)

*Vale of Normanskill*

The report should be specific about which path it recommends, or provide more information as to how a decision about which path to develop can be made.

Nott Road Park

*Vale of Normanskill, Kennewyck*

The report should make a recommendation as to which alignment is preferred. (WSA recommends using the sewer alignment.)

Bozenkill Park

The report should focus on what has been recommended. The desirability of a connection between the Park and Schoharie Plank Road can be mentioned but because most of it would be in the Village and outside of Town Jurisdiction, should be described with a recommendation to undertake it, if beneficial.

YMCA/Library Area

*Campus Club*

The "only alternative" discussion should be deleted. The report should discuss whether they recommend a connection or not. The reaction of the neighbors to past efforts can be added as a way of indicating that this particular connection could be along term recommendation.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Specific Recommendations for *Biking in Guilderland***



**APPENDIX C**  
**Specific Recommendations for *Biking in Guilderland***

Route 20 (Western Avenue)

*West of Fuller Road*

The report should also recommend adding a 3-4 foot shoulder to this section.

*West of Route 155*

The report should describe what is desired – a consistent 3-4 foot shoulder and not indicate that the lack of shoulder can not be fixed. If the recommendation is there long enough and gains enough support, a way of adding the shoulder can be found.

*Mall Road to Route 155*

The report should describe what is desired – a consistent 3-4 foot shoulder and not indicate that the lack of shoulder can not be fixed. If the recommendation is there long enough and gains enough support, a way of adding the shoulder can be found.

*East of Route 155, in front of CVS*

The report should again focus on what is recommended, even if no way of achieving it is readily apparent. The report should also suggest fixing the troublesome storm grates.

*East of Johnston Road*

The report should suggest fixing the grates.

*Past the Northway ramp, through McKownville to the city line*

The report may want to suggest creating an adequate 3-4 foot shoulder.

Route 155

The report should not focus on the portions of Route 155 that are not in the Town of Guilderland. References can be made to what may be desirable there, so that the relationship to what is recommended in Guilderland can be understood. The detailed information of recommendations for Route 155 that are now in the report should be in the Appendix if they remain in the report.

Washington Avenue Extension

The discussion should be removed from the report. At most, it can be included in an Appendix.

Fuller Road

The report should recommend fixing the troublesome grates.