

## **Sterling-Fair Haven Community Connection Trail Stakeholder Interview Summary**

### **Overview**

The following qualitative data reveals a community interested in enhancing accessibility, recreational amenities, small town charm, while balancing concerns over landowner rights, traffic congestion, and infrastructure limitations. There is a strong attachment to the family-friendly, vibrant atmosphere in Cayuga County and in particular Fair Haven, Sterling, and the Bay that residents wish to retain.

The qualitative research data in this summary report reveals an engaged community with both a vision and concerns about the future of the project.

Addressing landowner and traffic concerns, and infrastructure limitations, while expanding amenities and accessibility in a sustainable way, should be the goal. Preserving the essence of what makes the community beloved by residents should guide all decisions.

### **Process**

Alliway Marketing conducted virtual interviews via phone and Google Meets with a variety of key stakeholders in Fair Haven between October 2023 and January 2024 that range from residents along the corridor to local organization leaders to local businesses. Interviews were conducted early in the trail planning process to gain insights and learn of concerns for consideration. Feedback will be incorporated into the plan development so the trail alignment and programming can fully realize the recreational potential while addressing locality-specific needs.

### **Who Was Interviewed**

Ron Alexander, President, Little Sodus Bay Betterment Association  
Barb Longley, Long Time Resident  
Chris Colloca/Monica Colloca, Colloca Winery  
Jim Basile, Former Mayor of Fair Haven  
Rich Palmieri, Fair Haven Marine

## Partial and Full Quotes

*"The (current sections of) trail is not the easiest to walk on..... people don't really have room in their yards (for trail access) and there is a concern about maintenance."*

*"Benefits the community with safety for recreation. West Bay Road is a busy road. People who live in the community are active and like to be out and about. There is no shoulder on the road so the trail is needed."*

*"Connecting the village to West Barrier Park and Sterling Nature Center, the State Park trails will benefit the village as a central point near the water.... a healthy addition to expanding tourism they already have."*

*"(Planners need to focus on) finishing it properly and maintenance."*

*"(Trail is) a liability concern for being on anyone's property. If it's in the right of way, it will be a municipality road and not a private road."*

*"(Owners) don't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry coming across your yard. The right of way should be used, whatever is in the public domain."*

## Key Themes

### Improving Accessibility & Recreation

- Top priority should be improving non-vehicle transport access for groups like walkers/hikers, bikers, disabled residents, and seniors without cars.
- Specific suggestions include ramps for bikers, wheelchair accessible trails/infrastructure, wider road shoulders for bikes. Boat tours were also raised as an idea.
- There is interest in expanding recreational options - trails, fishing areas, golf cart/ATV pathways, recreation for both summer and winter.

### Infrastructure & Development Needs

- To support increased amenities and tourism, more housing options, lodging infrastructure, parking, rest stops/benches, shops and restaurants are needed.

### Preserving Small Town Charm

- Strong desire to nurture Fair Haven's charming, family-friendly, vibrant community feel.
- Suggestions for seasonal events, farmer's markets, artisan fairs, cafes, etc that residents deeply connect with and want to maintain.

### Concerns Over Trail Expansion

- Feasibility concerns due to objections over trail easements from landowners along busy streets.
- Insurance liability for landowners.

### Opportunities

- Improved accessibility and recreation for a population that includes many older established residents.
- Provide mindful development that retains small town character
- Fair Haven can become an even more vibrant four-season destination with a stronger economy and quality of life.

### Recommendations

- Prioritize accessibility infrastructure and non-vehicle transport options.
- Work closely with landowners to find agreeable trail expansion options.
- Develop housing, parking, wayfinding signage, and rest areas concurrently with recreation improvements.
- Enhance family-friendly community events and amenities.

### Summary

Enhanced pedestrian and recreational connectivity via the trail will serve to improve access and link these activities in addition to enhancing year-round recreational access for walkers, bikers, movers, and shakers.

Strategic outreach and integration planning around the trail will involve stakeholders represented by the subjects of this research study. Accommodating trail wayfinding, parking, business permitting and requirements, and interfacing with existing recreational infrastructure will be imperative.

Residents and tourists will benefit greatly from safer, car-free transportation connecting Fair Haven's recreational opportunities and the lakeside charm that makes the area so beloved to West Barrier Bar Park and the Lake along West Bay Road.

## **Our Response**

Overall, communications will center on transparency about intentions for growth, emphasizing how current residents and local businesses stand to benefit, and repeatedly communicating how community engagement will inform every planning decision. We will provide clear goals and objectives for residents and businesses in the plan.

### **For residents:**

- The CCT is an opportunity to shape the future of our community and share what you view as most useful and important, and have your voice heard.
- Accessibility, walkability, bikeability, and recreation for all ages and mobility levels are priorities in the plan.
- Development will be focused on maintaining the vibrant, small-town feel we value, while making more connections and access for all.
- We hear your concerns about preservation of green spaces, traffic congestion, and landowner rights will all be taken into consideration. The committee aims to find a middle path (or “balanced solutions”). We will work with landowners and municipal leadership to fully vet and explore using public rights-of-way and how to protect landowner liability.

### **For existing and prospective businesses:**

- Increased amenities like trails, recreational spaces, and accessibility have potential to bring more visitors to the area, which means more customers for local businesses.
- The plan aims support small businesses and maintain a vibrant and entrepreneur-friendly area to extend foot traffic and prevent seasonality limitations for your venture.
- Business owners will be consulted to ensure development meets infrastructure needs like parking and transportation.