

East Coast Greenway Alliance

135 Main Street, Wakefield RI 02879
401-789-4625 phone/fax
ecga@greenway.org / www.greenway.org

For Immediate Release April 8, 2002
Contact: Eric Weis 401-789-4625

Middlesex Greenway (NJ) Clears Final Hurdle

The Middlesex Greenway Coalition announced on December 19, 2002 that the Middlesex Greenway project cleared its final hurdle, as the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders voted to execute a contract with Conrail to buy the 3.5-mile corridor. The cost of the parcel is \$1.00 plus \$50,000 in closing cost expenses. The Middlesex Greenway Coalition anticipates that the County will quickly complete closing on the property.

The Middlesex Greenway, a n abandoned railroad corridor that runs from Middlesex Ave. in Metuchen to just east of Crows Mill Rd. in the Fords section of Woodbridge, has been identified as a future segment of the larger East Coast Greenway, which runs from Maine to Florida. "We are extremely pleased that the acquisition phase of the Middlesex Greenway project is over," said Walter Stochel Jr., one of the supporters who spearheaded Middlesex Greenway project.

First proposed in the late 1980's by then Metuchen Mayor John Wiley as the Metuchen Greenbelt Project, the idea of a greenway along this abandoned corridor gained the support of environmentalists and activists in Edison and Woodbridge in the early 1990's, resulting in the 1992 creation of the Middlesex Greenway Coalition.

In the mid-1990s the Middlesex Greenway Coalition was able to convince Conrail to sell the property, and the County of Middlesex to buy the property. However, when Conrail merged with Norfolk Southern and CSX in 1998, the railroads decided to halt to the sale while they reviewed this corridor as a potential freight route.

Undaunted, the Middlesex Greenway Coalition researched other options toward acquisition, and lobbied state and Federal officials to see if there was another way of acquiring the corridor for a Greenway.

After legal research by attorneys associated with the Middlesex County Improvement Authority (MCIA), the County began condemnation proceedings against Conrail for this corridor in the summer of 2002. This action resulted in negotiations with Conrail, and eventually, the agreement the Freeholders voted on in December.

"We are at the end of the long road of acquisition, but now begins the new road of cleaning up, and creating the Greenway," added Mr. Stochel. "We look forward to working with the County, and the three communities of Edison, Metuchen, and Woodbridge, in creating an excellent open

space & recreational resource in northern Middlesex County.” Trail supporters hope to extend the Greenway to Perth Amboy on the NJ coast, and South Plainfield to the west.

#