



## City of Beacon, New York

Office of the Mayor  
Lee Kyriacou, Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 16, 2025

845.838.5011 | [mayor@beaconny.gov](mailto:mayor@beaconny.gov)

### **MAYOR KYRIACOU VOICES SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED HUDSON HIGHLANDS FJORD TRAIL DURING NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORICAL PRESERVATION PUBLIC HEARING**

**Beacon, NY:** On January 14, 2025, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historical Preservation held a public hearing on the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail. Mayor Kyriacou spoke during the hearing and submitted written remarks in support of the project. The comments summarized the important benefits that residents of and visitors to the City of Beacon alike can expect to result from completion of the transformational project, and voiced unqualified support for both the trail itself, and the leadership team behind it.

A full copy of Mayor Kyriacou's written comments is attached.

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One Municipal Plaza | Beacon NY 12508  
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**Mayor Lee Kyriacou, City of Beacon**  
**Comments Re: Proposed Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail**  
**NYS OPRHP Public Hearing – 14 January 2025**

Good day, and thank you for holding this public hearing on the proposed Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.

I am Lee Kyriacou, serving my sixth year as Mayor of the City of Beacon, and previously as a Beacon City Councilmember for 18 years, first elected in 1993. I helped reset the vision, zoning and direction of our small city, which has gone from a tired factory town with much of its Main Street boarded up, to the vibrant and attractive community that it is today.

Allow me to offer **my enthusiastic, unqualified support for the proposed Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail** – which will take a heavily used trailhead desperately in need of improvement, and transform it and a 7.5-mile stretch on the Hudson River into a beautiful and unique linear park – linking Beacon and Cold Spring, and eventually, connecting to the future Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail and 750-mile Empire State Trail.

The recreational benefits of this project are myriad: the unsafe and overcrowded roadside trailhead at Breakneck will see a vast improvement for all. There will be greater access, not only to the Hudson Highlands, but for the first time to large sections of the Hudson River that previously were inaccessible due to the railroad tracks. Along the Hudson will be flat trail sections, broadening access to those who cannot easily do mountain hikes – including seniors, persons with disabilities, cyclists, runners, and those simply wanting less strenuous options. I, for one, am past the age that I regularly hike the Highlands, but my entire family would take frequent walks on the Fjord Trail, as we do today on the Walkway Over the Hudson and Beacon’s Klara Sauer Trail.

The City of Beacon is already partnering with the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail Inc. (“HHFT”) and looking for additional ways to work together. We are negotiating for HHFT to build its maintenance facility adjacent to the Trail at the City’s Wastewater Treatment Plant. The City was excited when HHFT moved forward its proposed timetable for construction in Beacon, and we encourage them to build sooner – their trailhead restrooms, connection to the future Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail, and the pedestrian bridge over Fishkill Creek.

Another major benefit for Beacon is that the Fjord Trail will connect to Dennings Point State Park, Madame Brett Park, our future rail trail, Klara Sauer Trail, Long Dock Park and Seeger Riverfront Park, and then to the Beacon train station. That will add another train station with greater capacity for Fjord Trail visitors, with nearby public restrooms at the trail head. HHFT will help with shuttles to various parts of its trail and between communities. The Beacon station is regularly served by buses and ferries, and the Trail will provide another means for

pedestrians and cyclists to get to and from the train station and beyond, boosting Metro North ridership and decreasing car usage. Metro North also recently proposed sustainable residential development on one of its station parking lots – and waterfront trails like these will make those residences even more attractive.

Beacon has a very long Main Street, the result of two villages becoming one city more than a century ago. That long street fell into deep decline and disuse by the 1970s, and has taken a couple of generations to re-envision and rebuild our community and its Main Street to the bustling center it is today. Because of its length, and despite its current vibrancy, our Main Street's success is in large part dependent on visitors, and the City's Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of increased density near Main Street, strong connections to our preserved natural environment, and tourism. The Fjord Trail helps Beacon far more than any ancillary problems that it may create, and that we will manage.

A critical benefit for the City of Beacon as well as the Fjord Trail is that it will serve as a catalyst for the building of a rail trail on the abandoned Beacon-Hopewell rail spur. Running from Beacon's train station and along our Main Street, this future rail trail will connect the heart of Beacon to Dutchess County trails, to the Walkway over the Hudson, and to New York's Empire State Trail that runs from New York City to Buffalo and Canada.

As for visitor counts and traffic, I appointed data-versant Beacon residents to the Visitation Data Committee. I trust the committee's visitor and traffic estimates. I note that a large share of the added visits would be repeat local users – exactly what I am expecting myself, my family and our community to do – use it regularly. That means that we local residents will benefit the most. And if visitor counts exceed expectations, I trust HHFT can consider how other popular parks manage visitation, and adapt accordingly.

Finally, regarding environmental topics covered in the Draft GEIS, I need provide only this general comment: Virtually the entire length of the east bank of the Hudson River has been a rail line and industrial site for close to two centuries, and transformation to a recreational use will improve the environment and provide long-denied public access to the some of the most iconic viewsheds along the Hudson River. And, as we have seen with other public trails accessible to users of all ages and abilities, the Fjord Trail will offer significant public health benefits, by providing a safe and enjoyable public facility on which to walk, run, and cycle, as well as non-car commuting options.

Again, I offer my full support for the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, thank its leadership for their vision and thoroughness, and encourage them to continue the strong partnership started with the City of Beacon to bring the project to fruition, and to extend it to the Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail and beyond.

Thank you for listening.