

# 16 Myths about the Putnam Trail

Myths	The Facts
<p><b>MYTH #1 – federal funding requires asphalt pavement</b></p>	<p>Funding does not require asphalt pavement. The Federal Highway Administration has admitted that pavement was not a funding requirement and that ADA-compliant surfaces include stone-dust and woodchips.</p> <p>The NYC Parks Department has been claiming in meetings that pavement is required by federal funding. They never made a case for a non-asphalt surface protective of wildlife and pedestrians through a nature area.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #2 -- Bike speeds will be managed by slight curves and "varied surfaces."</b></p>	<p>The "varied surfaces" are concrete and asphalt, 8 or 10 ft wide. The narrow area of the trail may not allow for meaningful curves that would affect bike speeds. A Public Safety study was never conducted by agencies, and a recent court decision suggests that it is needed.</p> <p>Asphalt surfaces allow for speeds of 20 mph, according to DOT's own specifications.</p> <p><b>The park speed limit is 5–10 mph.</b></p> <p>The current natural surface allows users to move at a harmonious pace that is similar to one another and promotes safety.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #3 -- Asphalt is cheaper and the parks department has no maintenance money</b></p>	<p>Directly contradicted by a Rails-to-Trail Research 2015 Study.</p> <p>A) Asphalt trails cost twice as much as stone-dust trails to build</p> <p>B) the Rails-to-Trail Conservancy has done two recent studies and among issues was cost comparisons between nonpaved and paved trail: 1) their mid-2000s study said that asphalt and stone-dust cost the same per mile/per year to maintain, and 2) in their more recent 2015 study they</p>

	found that among responders to their surveys, nonpaved trails cost significantly less to maintain than paved trails. See Table 1, pg. 28, in the Study. <a href="https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=6336">https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?id=6336</a>
<b>MYTH #4 -- Asphalt will last 20 years</b>	Asphalt is subject to a) the freeze-thaw cycle, which means eventual crumbling b) potholes, and c) tree roots in forested settings eventually cause damage.  Repairs to asphalt are costly and create an eyesore.
<b>MYTH #5 -- The area is already impaired so impairing it more is okay</b>	It's against city policy and federal law to impair wetlands, streams, lakes and rivers.
<b>MYTH #6 -- A natural path will "wash away"</b>	No natural trail in the park has "washed away." Neither did Putnam Trail when it was a rail line.  Rail trails are designed to drain stormwater and are converted to trails throughout the country using FHWA funds.
<b>MYTH #7 -- The Parks Department says their pavement design with bioswales will manage a 2" rain storm.</b>	The 1-2" rain design is inadequate. Heavy rainstorms are increasing in frequency and severity. Examples: Hurricane Florence, 13 to 17" of rain in North Carolina, Sept. 2018. A 13" storm on Long Island in 2014. The Houston floods (2015-16) due to loss of wetlands. Bronx storms can be 2" and more. Natural areas, soil, and green infrastructure soak up and manage flooding in urban areas. Adding more pavement to an urban environment causes more flooding, CSOs (or raw sewage & wastewater) discharged into our riverways, and a condition called the Urban Stream Syndrome. UC Berkeley's description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A flashier hydrograph (flash floods, quick pulses of water in creeks)</li> <li>• High concentrations of nutrients and contaminants</li> <li>• Altered channel morphology and stability</li> <li>• Reduced biotic richness, with increased dominance of invasive tolerant species</li> </ul>
<b>MYTH #8 -- "I know how to pave in wetlands" - claim made by the Parks Commissioner</b>	This is a dense urban city environment. Few people have experience in improving the few wetlands the city has remaining; assuring their good health; or being aware of wider city dynamics.

<p><b>MYTH #9 -- You're stopping thousands of commuters from coming down from the north</b></p>	<p>Whittling down nature areas and wildlife habitat further, and the user experience of them, for another paved N-S transportation corridor is unnecessary: 1) People don't cycle in rain, snow, ice, cold. 2) Most people don't have the stamina or interest to bike hours to and from work 3) it may be better to focus on <u>protected</u> bike lanes on streetscapes, which have East-West/North-South connections using other streets and modalities.</p> <p>The city was not correct when it said in their documents that there was an East-West connection to the Putnam Trail at the Bronx/Yonkers border. They named Forest Avenue/Parkway North which actually curve northward well before reaching the Putnam Trail.</p> <p>There are several paved bike trails in the park already used by commuters. They include the Deegan trail (north-south) and the East Coast Greenway (east-west). And there's a protected bike lane on the park's western edge that goes from Yonkers to 242nd.</p> <p>Air pollution needs to be reduced substantially for biking during rush hours to be considered healthy.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #10 -- People support paving this trail because there will be more commuters on bikes and fewer cars on the road which will reduce air pollution.</b></p>	<p><b>67% of greenhouse gas emissions in NYC come from buildings, 30% come from transportation. 3% from other sources<sup>1</sup>.</b></p> <p>While we support commuting by bike, and biking (with current cautions), we don't support destroying the ambience and depth of a nature area to create another <u>paved</u> N/S transportation corridor. From their public slide shows, the Parks Department considers the paving primarily a "bike trail." Real solutions to air pollution: a) convert to renewables far faster than politicians are advocating for - the public needs to push politicians who will push agencies and their officials to enact effective policies, or the public needs to vote for other politicians to ensure these things get done for them, their children, grandchildren, etc, b) eliminate natural gas, which produces methane during production and transportation. Methane is far more polluting than other greenhouse gases. The public has been</p>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/nycghg.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/nycghg.pdf)  
<https://archpaper.com/2019/04/new-york-city-climate-mobilization-act/>

	<p>misled, c) electric vehicles, c) a coal ban, with just transition pay d) carbon-capture technology, e) carbon sinks f) a carbon tax (not cap-and-trade which is easily manipulated)</p> <p>Trees and soil are carbon sinks that "capture" pollution from the air. Once captured, microbes break down pollution into harmless substances.</p> <p>Asphalt contributes to the greenhouse gas effect which results in the Urban Heat Island effect - harmful to human health, climate, energy consumption and energy costs.</p> <p>Paving may violate the Public Trust Doctrine which states that parkland cannot be dedicated for nonpark use. A regional paved greenway with "a continuous surface" has been touted as primarily for nonpark use. Also relevant to the "Empire State Trail" discussions that have been going on.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #11 -- People are more important than nature. Maximum human convenience is best.</b></p>	<p>What is good for nature is good for people.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #12 -- "There are over 32 miles of nature trails in the park, so more paved bike trails is just being fair."</b></p>	<p>There is no lack of dedicated bike trails available to NYC residents, including 3,000 miles of the East Coast Greenway from Maine to Florida. A segment of that greenway, the ECG, runs through the park. There is also the Mosholu Greenway that runs through the park and further south. And there are miles of paved bike trails to the north that include the North and South County Trails.</p> <p>The outside perimeter of VCP is about 6 miles. Central Park is about 6.4 miles.</p> <p>The Super-Hike led by park rangers from the Mansion to the park's NE edge and back is only 8 miles long. Not 32 miles. See a map of the Super-Hike <a href="#">here</a></p> <p>Central Park, another flagship park, confines cycling to the Drives, bikes are not allowed on other paths.</p>
<p><b>MYTH #13 -- Sedimentation/turbidity in the lake is caused by the Putnam Trail</b></p>	<p>Turbidity comes from the 3-4 wide highways that run through the park,</p>

	<p>other hard surfaces in the park, and Tibbetts Brook.</p> <p>In heavy rains, hard surfaces push stormwater, pollutants, contaminants, into the lake. Paving the trail exacerbates this process. Currently the trail around the mineral soil areas filters this stormwater and dries out quickly after rains</p>
<b>MYTH #14 -- Cycling is healthy commuting</b>	Levels of carbon dioxide, monoxide and ozone need to be reduced significantly.
<b>MYTH #15 -- Cycling relieves traffic congestion</b>	Further whittling down a nature area, and a rare one, isn't necessary to reducing traffic congestion. Also there is no evidence we can find that the Manhattan Greenway has reduced traffic congestion in Manhattan.
<b>MYTH #16 -- All you need is some powerful politician to yank funding.</b>	Plants and wildlife don't vote. More officeholders and others need to push back against real estate and development interests. Officeholders need to be better educated, and the public as well, about best practices to gain clean air and water and less climate change.