

## Trail Will Provide Bicyclists & Pedestrians With Alternative To Route 208; Serve As Recreational Resource

*Walden, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that he has secured final approval of \$351,000 in federal funds to help surface and complete a 3.5-mile paved rail-trail connecting the Village of Walden, Town of Montgomery in Orange County with the hamlet of Wallkill, Town of Shawangunk in Ulster County. Hinchey used his position on the House Appropriations Committee to secure the funds, which are included in the Fiscal Year 2008 spending bill that funds the U.S. Department of Transportation among other agencies.

"These funds literally pave the way for the completion of an exciting trail-way for commuters, bikers, runners, walkers, and everyone else to travel between Walden and Wallkill without having to drive on Route 208," Hinchey said. "As we've seen in other areas of the Hudson Valley, trails like these serve to improve the quality of life in our region, expand recreational opportunities for our residents, and help to attract tourism and economic development to our towns and villages. I'm so proud to have secured federal funds for a project that is such a terrific example of cooperation and collaboration between separate municipalities, community groups and local businesses. I'm also pleased that these new federal funds will spare local taxpayers the full cost of this projects."

Along with \$600,000 in Transportation Enhancement Program funding, the new funds Hinchey secured will enable the Towns and Village to finish upgrades to a 3.5-mile stretch of unpaved rail trail between the Village of Walden and the hamlet of Wallkill in the Town of Shawangunk. The originally projected costs of this trail project were significantly reduced by the diligent efforts of the highway and public works departments of the two towns and village, as well as the generous contributions of time and services by Watchtower Farms, Taylor Recycling and other local businesses. A substantial amount of work has already been completed by these entities including grading, drainage work and clearing, saving taxpayers approximately \$500,000.

Hinchey said he expects bids for the project to go out this spring. The federal funds will enable the Village of Walden, Town of Shawangunk, and Town of Montgomery to finish upgrades to the trail, which include: trail paving, installation of signage at road crossings, construction of safety fencing in "drop off" areas, access improvements for disabled individuals, and upgrades to the trail shoulders.

"By early autumn of this year, residents in this area will be able to enjoy a ten foot wide, paved multi-use trail that is accessible for everyone, including individuals with disabilities and the elderly," Hinchey said. "This trail way will provide a safe and enjoyable alternative route for bicyclists, runners, rollerbladers and pedestrians going to and from the Village of Walden to the hamlet of Walkkill. As traffic levels continue to rise on local roads in this area, this trail will provides local residents with a safe and enjoyable alternative to using a car."

The funds were included in the final spending bill that Congress passed at the end of December. The funds are expected to be administered sometime in the next several months.