

FOOTE'S BRIDGE ROAD
Preserve our Natural and Historical Heritage in Guilford



(View of the tidal salt marshes from the old wooden bridge)

This proposal has been prepared by a group of concerned Guilford residents and taxpayers who feel that the town planner, the town engineer, and the Board of Selectmen need to consider all possible alternatives for road development before an irrevocable decision is made that could negatively affect all future generations.

The issue at hand is the careful planning and selection of an access road connecting the latest residential development of the Goss property (north-west section) to town roads.

In order to move forward with the next phase of property development (approximately 110 houses on this site), the Goss development plan requests approval from the town to build an access road from the Goss property across a section of the town stump dump to connect with the town road, Sullivan Drive. The town has recently improved Sullivan Drive by installing a new concrete bridge capable of sustaining the existing heavy truck traffic to the stump dump, and wide enough to accommodate any increase in traffic.

The Goss family has offered to pay all costs for building the Sullivan Drive access road, including all work on the east side of the new town bridge (stump dump), as well as improvements to the paving and grading of Sullivan Drive up to Goose Lane. Because the Goss development plan proposes to cross a small section of town property (currently used as an access road to the stump dump), the board of Selectmen must approve the use of town property for this plan. In consideration for the use of town land, the Goss family has offered in return to donate the open meadow boarding the East River between Foote's Bridge Road and Sullivan Drive to the Town of Guilford for recreational use.

At a recent site walk on 11AUG05, the town engineer outlined his concerns with the Sullivan Drive access road, citing pros and cons, and expressing his disappointment that this plan does not provide a direct east-west road through to Nut Plains Road. As an alternative to the Sullivan Drive plan, the town engineer, himself a Madison resident, has suggested as an alternative the destruction of Guilford's historical Foote's Bridge Road to accommodate a 2-lane east-west highway for through traffic from Madison to Route 1, following the route of Foote's Bridge Road, Half Mile Road, Nut Plains Roads, and State Street. Since the town currently has no immediate or viable east-west traffic plan going west beyond Nut Plains Road and State Street, this is essentially a plan for improving Madison residents' access to Wall Mart and the already heavily congested section of Guilford's Boston Post Road (Route 1). Aside from the loss of an irreplaceable natural resource, the town engineer's proposal to destroy historic Foote's Bridge and the surrounding environment would only make the current traffic congestion on Route 1 worse, not better.

The Guilford Planning and Zoning Committee in its meeting of 22APR05, unanimously agreed that using Foote's Bridge Road as an access road to the Goss development was not an acceptable alternative to the proposed Sullivan Drive access. In the minutes of the Planning and Zoning Committee meeting of 01JUN05, the PZC indicated that they were officially "happy that all [are] open and on record that Sullivan Drive will be widened and be a Town road," supporting the Goss development plan.

The reasons for this decision to preserve and protect Foote's Bridge Road are important:

- **Historical:** Foote's Bridge Road represents one of the last unpaved sections of the original New York to Boston carriage road. The current bridge itself dates from the 1800's, and the East River ford crossing there is as old as the town itself. This area of town was home to Guilford's historical families: the Foote's and the Evert's, and the historic houses front Foote's Bridge Road. The Foote family home was the girlhood residence of Harriet Beecher Stowe. The Foote Cemetery dating from the 1700's is the resting place of Guilford's historic Foote and Ward families, and is still in use today. Additionally the town historian points to this road and surrounding area as the camping ground of the Sachem and her tribe after the original sale of land to the Guilford settlers in 1639.
- **Rural Town Character:** Foote's Bridge Road is without a doubt one of the most exceptionally beautiful areas of all Guilford, owing largely to the unpaved nature

of the road, the ancient trees, and the historic buildings and sites that surround this East River setting.

- **Environmental:** Foote's Bridge Road and Bridge form the focal point for viewing the abundant wildlife found in these tidal wetlands. This area is already designated an environmental Salt Marsh Sanctuary for Plants and Wildlife, protected by both State and Federal law, and the Connecticut Audubon Society.
- **Recreational:** in spring of 2005 the Board of Selectmen presided over the dedication and opening of first Guilford section of the Shoreline Greenway Trail for non-motorized hiking and biking. The trailhead starts at Foote's Bridge Road and continues through historic farmland and forest via the original Bearhouse Hill Road. The Goss family has actively supported the Shoreline Greenway Trail, and has made access to the trail from Foote's Bridge Road over the fields and through the forest to Podunk Road open and available to the Guilford public for walking and recreation.

While the Sullivan Drive plan is not ideal, (as it does not fulfill the town engineer's desire to build a clear-cut east-west highway through heavily populated residential districts), it is certainly a better alternative to destroying the historical, rural, environmental and recreational benefits that Foote's Bridge Road currently offers this community. However the Sullivan Drive proposal still does represent some extensive engineering requirements to bring the road to the town planning department's desired standards (heavy filling, grading, and tree removal).

Since Foote's Bridge Road is not a desired alternative, and Sullivan Drive presents engineering obstacles, we would like to suggest a 3rd alternative that has none of the engineering problems of the other two, and avoids any wanton destruction of Guilford's heritage. The third and best alternative uses the existing town road (currently unpaved) on the south side of the Nut Plains playing fields as the new access road and east-west connector to the Goss property development. This abandoned road, which we shall refer to as 'Playing Fields Road,' provided access to the town garden allotments which are no longer used. The road runs from Nut Plains Road at the entrance to the playing fields directly to the East River, and the river can be crossed with an inexpensive concrete bridge similar to the one just installed on Sullivan Drive.

The benefits of this proposal will satisfy all concerned:

1. Access to Nut Plains Road is provided on a level grade with good sightlines, and requires no radical engineering initiatives. (No grading, no road cuts, no invasive roads suddenly pouring traffic onto residents' driveways.)
2. Access to the mid-point of Nut Plains Road provides drivers with a three-way choice of traffic flow: north to the schools (Guilford Lakes Elementary, Guilford High School, Baldwin Middle School); south to I-95 over Goose Lane, and west into town via State Street. By meeting Nut Plains Road on the north side of the Goose Lane/Nut Plains junction, this option is in fact the BEST solution for the Town Planner's desire to share the traffic burden of the new Goss development.

3. Access to Nut Plains Road over the existing town road ('Playing Fields Road') avoids the need to appropriate any resident's private property for road improvements. (Appropriation of private property would be required by either Sullivan Drive or Foote's Bridge proposals).
4. The route over 'Playing Fields Road' will be unseen by any current home owners, and will carry the most intense traffic flow to/from the Goss development without any disruption to local residents.
5. The route over 'Playing Fields Road' could possibly provide a new access to the stump dump, providing residents on Sullivan Drive with relief from heavy truck traffic.
6. Foote's Bridge Road and the surrounding rural and historical environment is preserved intact, serving as the main link of the Shoreline Greenway Trail.
7. No destruction of ancient trees is envisioned with this 3rd alternative.
8. The town has a clean and clear road link to residential areas east of the East River, and can link this to further 'east-west' developments at Hubbard Lane if that ever comes to the light of day.
9. This proposal will require Wetlands approval. However all three proposals involve wetlands. Foote's Bridge Road in its current natural state is already designated as a State and Federal wetlands sanctuary, and the Audubon Society as well as the State Environmental Protection Agency will certainly be involved in opposition to any suggestion to destroy this sanctuary with major road building. Sullivan Drive and the town stump dump sit in wetlands today, and any major engineering modifications of this roadway will also require Wetlands approvals. Applying for Wetlands approval will be a part of any proposal, and should not be accepted as a reason for inaction or rejection.

We ask that all Guilford residents join us in this proposal to use 'Playing Fields Road' as access to the Goss development. With your support, all that is required on the part of the town is some vision, creativity, and common sense. You may register your support by calling any of the numbers below.

Thank you.

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