

BMTS Article Digest
May – June 2020

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

Scott

CenterLines e-Newsletter Merges with the PBIC Messenger

The next generation PBIC Messenger will become a free monthly enewsletter produced by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center News Brief

April 29, 2020

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CHAPEL HILL, NC — [The Project for Public Spaces \(PPS\)](#) and the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center \(PBIC\)](#) at the University of North Carolina are pleased to announce that the CenterLines enewsletter will merge with the PBIC Messenger to create the next generation of the PBIC Messenger. PBIC will begin distributing this free monthly enewsletter in late May.

This new partnership between PBIC and CenterLines will engage its combined audience with relevant, timely information they can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities. "PBIC is committed to helping transportation professionals prioritize mobility, access, equity, and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists," says Laura Sandt, director of PBIC. "Our partnership with CenterLines will help scale our collective impact by diversifying and expanding the information we can offer at more frequent intervals and respond to practitioners' needs." "We have been proud to publish CenterLines for the past decade," says Nate Storrington, Director of Communications at Project for Public

Spaces, "And we are excited to see it take its next step with such a longstanding resource for the walking and bicycling community at PBIC."

After nearly 20 years and over 500 issues every other week, the CenterLines newsletter will continue the evolution begun by its founding editor, John Williams. Williams created CenterLines as the next generation of [Bicycle Forum](#), a print journal he also edited that the Bicycle Federation of America published from 1978 until the Internet Age brought enough crucial bicycling and walking resources online. CenterLines editor for over 10 years, Linda Tracy, will become part of the editorial team of the next generation of the PBIC Messenger.

[Subscribe](#) to the new monthly PBIC Messenger. Send news for future issues to editorial team member [Linda Tracy](#).

Come out and play in Broome County

Go All Out Broome County is your simple guide to hundreds of places and thousands of acres in your own backyard or just down the road. Easily locate hidden gems and local favorites then map your next outdoor adventure in Broome County. Go to www.GoAllOutBroome.com.



Explore more than a dozen state forests, 78 parks or 77 miles of paddle friendly waters. Give our antique carousels a go-round or enjoy a round of golf on courses worthy of professional competition. From challenging trails to hike or bike to riverside strolls or picnics, you can go all out in any way, in every season, in Broome County.

Now you're just a few clicks away from an awesome day.

Are you in? Then go all out in Broome County!

CORRECTIVE WORK UNDERWAY AT DOWNTOWN BINGHAMTON GATEWAY

BOB JOSEPH

MAY 19, 2020

PHOTO: BOB JOSEPH/WNBF NEWS



Several new sidewalk sections put in as part of Binghamton's state street gateway project are being torn up by construction crews.

Workers this week have been using heavy equipment to rip out portions of sidewalks that were installed last summer.

Some people who have noticed the activity have wondered why new sidewalks were being removed.

Jared Kraham, executive assistant to the mayor, said the work is being done to ensure all elements of the project are in compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

The problems were discovered during the final punch list review of the \$2.2 million improvement project near the downtown governmental plaza and the arena.

Part of this new sidewalk near Binghamton city hall is being replaced. (photo: bob joseph/WNBF news)

Barrett Paving Materials of Liverpool oversaw construction on the gateway project. State and federal funds covered about half of the costs of the project.

Kraham said the contractor will bear the cost of the remedial work that's now underway.





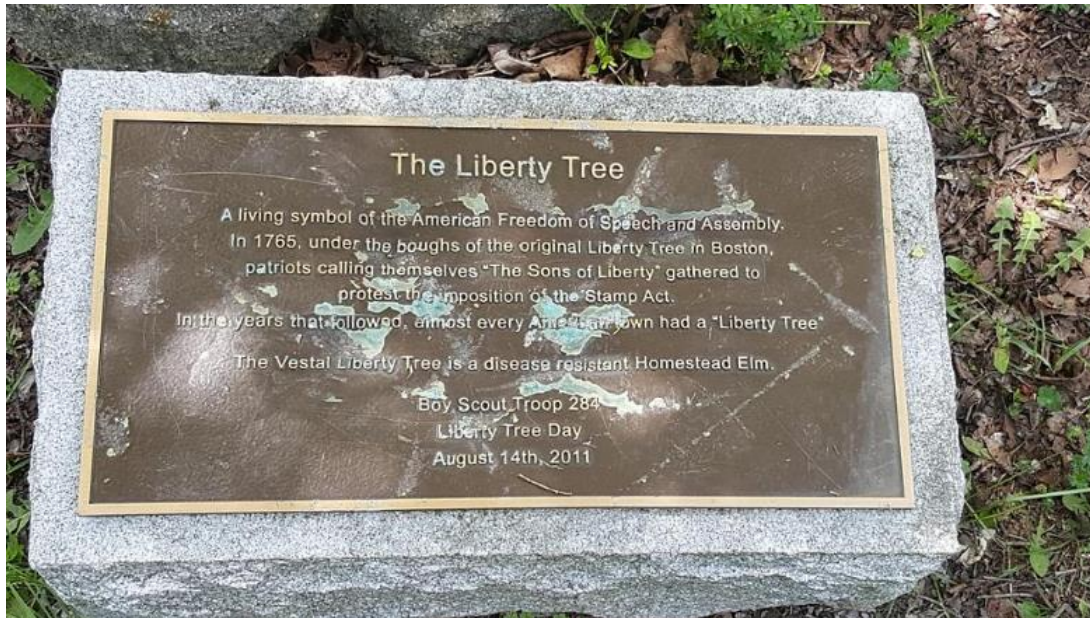
A new sidewalk on state street near the arena has been removed by workers. Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF news.

Contact WNBF news reporter Bob Joseph: bob@wnbf.com

Read more: [Corrective Work Underway At Downtown Binghamton Gateway](#) |

VESTAL RAIL TRAIL OFFERS PLENTY TO SEE

ROGER NEEL
May 20, 2020
WNBF News/Roger Neel Photo



The Liberty Tree off the Vestal Rail Trail



**Scene on
the Vestal
Rail Trail**

WNBF
News/Roger
Neel Photo

Scene from the Vestal Rail Trail



Vestal Rail Trail

WNBF News/Roger Neel
Photo

Vestal Rail Trail

The Vestal Rail Trail has thousands of visitors over the course of a month. People of all ages visit. Families walk together. Couples walk or run on the trail. Many ride bicycles or walk their dogs in a pleasant atmosphere.

Along with those who exercise there on a regular basis the Vestal Rail Trail is the site for numerous charitable fund-raising walks and runs. The Vestal Coal House is the real hub of the Rail Trail. Refreshments are often available there in warm weather months and the Coal House is the site of many non-athletic events like concerts or other presentations.



The Vestal Rail Trail is a total of 3.8 miles in length. The first portion of the trail runs from the Coal House to African Road and is 2 miles long. The newer portion runs from Castle Gardens Road to Vestal Road and is 1.8 miles long.

Just off the Rail Trail visitors can take a short walk to see the Wetlands, complete with an elevated deck to get a better view. Part of that view includes The Liberty Tree, planted on August 11, 2011. You can often see various forms of wildlife along sides of the Trail. Ground hogs, turtles and all kinds of bird species especially near the marshy area not far from the Coal House. A black bear was spotted a few times on the Trail several years ago.



Take a look at the scenic beauty that you find when you visit the Vestal Rail Trail. Scroll through a collection of scenery that you can see when you visit the Vestal Rail Trail.

WNBF News/Roger Neel Photo

Read More: Vestal Rail Trail Offers Scenic Recreational Venue | https://wnbf.com/vestal-rail-trail-offers-plenty-to-see/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral

How staying indoors affects your immune system



By Linda Geddes 21st May 2020

While staying inside our homes is helping to shield us from the pandemic, missing out on time outdoors might alter our risk of catching diseases in other ways.

For the past two months, a sizable chunk of the world's population has been shuttered inside their homes, only stepping out for essential supplies. Although this may have reduced our chances of being exposed to coronavirus, it may have had a less obvious effect on our immune systems by leaving us more vulnerable to other infections.

Humans evolved on a planet with a 24-hour cycle of light and dark, and our bodies are set up to work in partnership with sunlight. One of the most obvious examples of this is the production of vitamin D in the skin in response to UVB exposure. This daily dose of vitamin D can help to strengthen our bones and teeth, but it also has an effect on our immune cells.

Vitamin D enables the macrophages in our lungs – a first line of defense against respiratory infections – to spew out an antimicrobial peptide called cathelicidin, killing bacteria and viruses directly. It also tweaks the **activity of other immune cells, such as B and T cells**, which orchestrate longer-term responses. People with low levels of vitamin D are at greater risk of viral respiratory tract infections such as influenza.

Researchers are now investigating whether vitamin D supplements could even reduce the risk of some of the severe complications associated with Covid-19. Earlier this month, Rose Kenny, a gerontologist at Trinity College Dublin, and her colleagues published data suggesting that European populations with the highest death rates from Covid-19, including Spain and Italy, **have the lowest levels of vitamin D**. This may sound counterintuitive, given their sunny climates, but it is thought that changes in lifestyle have **led people to spend more time**

indoors, which combined with greater use of sunscreen in these countries, may be responsible for the lower levels of vitamin D.



*For those without access to a garden it has been hard to get enough natural sunlight during the pandemic lockdown
(Credit: Getty Images)*

Although other factors may also help to explain the high death rates from Covid-19 in these countries,

“there’s strong circumstantial evidence for an association between vitamin D and the immune pathways that we know are implicated in Covid and particularly the severe Covid response,” says Kenny. First, vitamin D appears to reduce levels of a biochemical that causes inflammation called interleukin-6, which is associated with the severe breathing difficulties seen in the disease. Vitamin D also changes the availability of the same ACE2 receptor on lung cells that Sars-CoV-2 – the virus that causes the disease Covid-19 – uses to gain entry to these cells and establish an infection. If vitamin D has already altered these receptors, then it may make it harder for the virus to gain a foothold in the body.

Although randomized controlled trials are needed to confirm this protective effect, Kenny suggests all adults should consider vitamin D supplements during the current crisis. But there is a strong argument for getting a dose of vitamin D by spending more time outdoors as some of the restriction measures in many countries ease – particularly as it can bring other benefits.

Although there is no scientific data proving that regular exercise makes us less susceptible to catching Covid-19, various studies have suggested that it **bolsters our defenses against other viral infections** including influenza and the common cold, as well as increasing the immune response to vaccination.

Several studies have suggested that spending a few days in a forest results in an increase in the number and activity of our natural killer cells

One explanation for these benefits is stress reduction. “We know that people use exercise as a buffer for stress, and it’s very clear that high levels of chronic stress are not good for the immune system,” says Neil Walsh, who studies the impact of exercise on the immune system at Liverpool John Moores University in the UK. “So, if you can reduce your stress levels by being active, then that will have a positive impact on your health.”

If you can do that by exercising in a park, woodland or other green space, then so much the better. Numerous studies have found that getting outdoors in nature – even to an urban park – lowers people’s **heart rates and blood pressure**, as well as normalizing secretion of the stress hormone, cortisol. Longer-term, living close to, and engaging with, nature is linked to a **reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and early death**.

Besides higher levels of physical exercise and vitamin D, various theories have been put forward to explain these findings. One is that spending time outdoors may help to counter stress and loneliness, by bringing us into contact with other people. Then there’s the **Attention Restoration Theory**, which suggests that natural patterns and movement effortlessly engage our attention, providing our overstretched brains with an opportunity to rest and recover.

Millions of people have not been able to get the exercise and vitamin D they would normally get while walking to work or school (Credit: Getty Images)



It’s also possible, however, that trees are affecting our immune systems

more directly – several studies have suggested that spending a few days in a forest results in an increase in the number and activity of our natural killer cells – immune cells that help to detect and destroy viruses and cancer cells – in our blood. Scientists in Japan have proposed that the inhalation of substances called phytoncides, which are released by trees, may be a contributing factor. These have been shown to **alter the activity of human natural killer cells** when they’re grown outside the body, although further work is needed to confirm whether inhaling them has a similar effect.

“In practice, I think these various pathways probably work in synergy,” says Catharine Ward Thompson, director of the OPENSpace research centre at the University of Edinburgh, and co-author of a World Health Organization **report on urban green spaces and health**.

“Phytoncides may be important, but you probably need to be fully immersed in the natural environment for some time to get these benefits, whereas psychological benefits such as relaxation and lowering of stress might be easier to obtain.”

Office workers who are exposed to more bright light during the morning by walking to work find it easier to fall asleep at night

Getting outdoors can also improve the quality of our sleep. Our time shut inside during lockdown could have disrupted our circadian rhythms – internally generated, close-to-24-hour cycles in the activity of numerous biological processes, including sleep. Our circadian rhythms are usually kept synchronized, or entrained, to the time of day when we are outdoors through

the action of bright light hitting a set of light-sensitive cells at the back of the eye. These eye cells communicate with a patch of brain tissue called the suprachiasmatic nucleus, which functions as the body's master clock.

"Indoor light is typically too low to promote entrainment, so if one does not go outdoors all week, these rhythms may become disrupted, resulting in disturbed sleep," says Mariana Figueiro at the Lighting Research Center in Troy, New York. Her research has shown that office workers who are exposed to more bright light during the morning, by walking to work, for example, **find it easier to fall asleep at night**, and experience less disrupted sleep, compared to those who are exposed to dimmer light.



While stuck indoors during the pandemic, many people have had to get creative with how they get their exercise but getting outside brings other benefits too (Credit: Reuters)

"Circadian disruption and sleep curtailment have been linked to a reduced immune system response," Figueiro says. "So, while light may not have a direct impact on immune function, it can have a strong indirect impact via its ability to entrain the circadian system and improve sleep." Exposure to bright light during the morning also has a positive impact on people's mood and may help to guard against depression.

As for how much time you need to spend outdoors to reap these benefits, it is difficult to say. Although morning light is particularly important for keeping our circadian rhythms synchronized, optimal vitamin D synthesis occurs around noon, when the UVB rays in sunlight are at their peak.

So, if lockdown conditions allow, you should strive to get outdoors at least once a day, whilst taking steps to maintain social distancing and sunburn. Sunlight and nature are great healers, and they also come for free.

Linda Geddes is the author of Chasing The Sun: The new science of sunlight and how it shapes our bodies and minds.



Construction is underway on long-planned enhancements at two parks in western Broome County.

Scenic overlooks are being built at Roundtop Picnic Area in Endicott and at Grippen Park in West Endicott.

State funding was awarded for the work at the two facilities which are operated by Broome County government.

A partially-completed overlook project at Roundtop Picnic Area on May 27, 2020. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

In recent years, a once-spectacular view of the valley along the Susquehanna River looking to the east from Roundtop was obscured by trees and brush. But workers now have cleared much of the growth, permitting visitors to see a wide section of Endicott and Vestal.

An enhanced boat launch also is being constructed at Grippen Park.

A future scenic overlook along the Susquehanna River at Grippen Park on May 28, 2020. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

In the future, new trails are to be constructed near both parks. A federal grant will cover the cost of a trail west of Grippen Park. Another trail is planned to connect Grippen and Roundtop parks.



Read More: [Scenic Overlooks Being Added at Roundtop and Grippen Parks](https://wnbf.com/scenic-overlooks-being-added-at-roundtop-and-grippen-parks/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral) | https://wnbf.com/scenic-overlooks-being-added-at-roundtop-and-grippen-parks/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral



Restaurants and taverns in Binghamton may find it easier to obtain approval for outdoor seating as they prepare to reopen their businesses.

Mayor Richard David says the city will expedite the permitting process for outdoor areas and drop application fees.

The mayor said steps will be taken to support the establishments in developing safe reopening plans following the COVID-19 shutdown.

David said the city plans to expand the availability of outdoor restaurant seating in areas that may include sidewalks, streets, public parking lots and green spaces.

Binghamton officials will work with restaurant owners "to reimagine outdoor dining and public event policies."

Representatives of several city restaurants and bars will be part of a working group to discuss ideas with the mayor's office and other departments.

Restaurants are expected to be able to provide some dine-in services under the third phase of the state's reopening guidelines. The Southern Tier may enter that phase in mid-June.

Read More: [Binghamton Moves to Encourage Outdoor Restaurant Seating](https://wnbf.com/binghamton-moves-to-encourage-outdoor-restaurant-seating/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral) | https://wnbf.com/binghamton-moves-to-encourage-outdoor-restaurant-seating/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral



The agency that sets local transportation policy is looking for input from residents on how to spend federal transportation dollars with the sudden change in lifestyles due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



ThinkStock

The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study says the coronavirus has changed lives in profound ways, including how people make their voices heard on policy issues.

In order to allow residents to weigh in on what they believe are the most important transportation needs to be addressed in a new long-range plan, the BMTS has created an online survey.

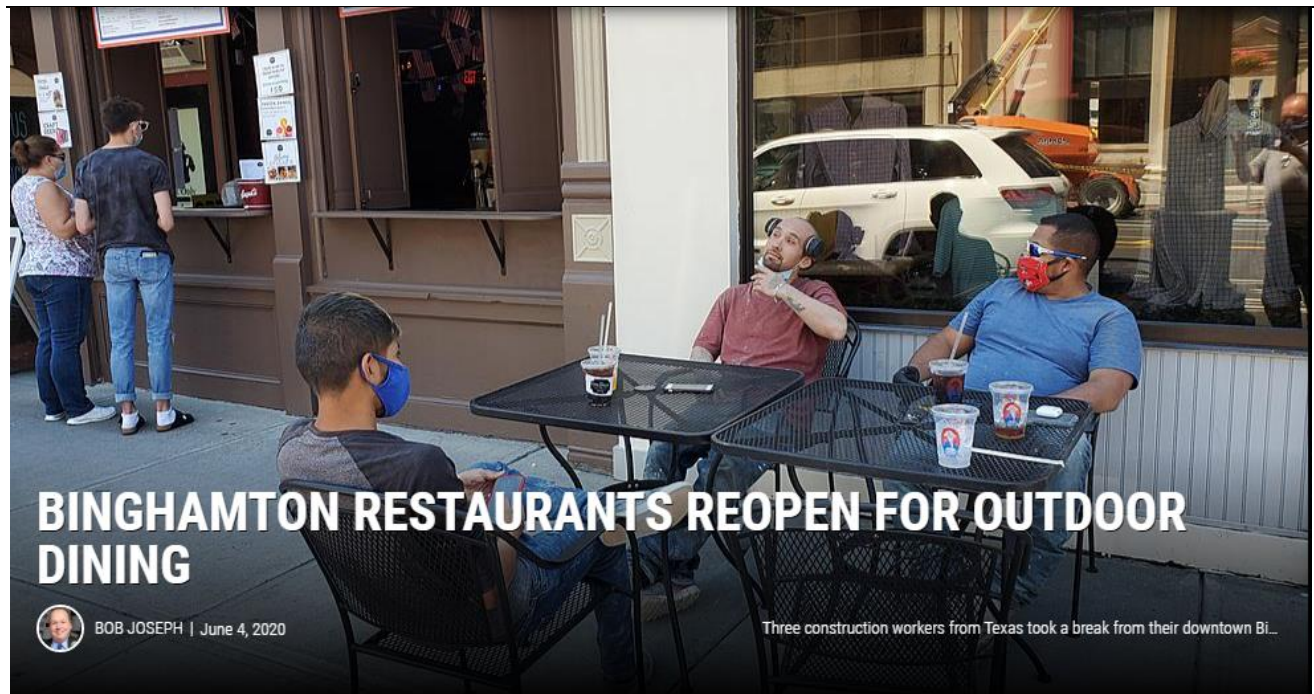
Bob Joseph/WNBF News

The study weighs importance of all modes of travel including cars, transit, bicycle and even on foot.

The survey is available at surveymonkey.com/r/BMTSLongRangePlan.

Information on the plan can be found at bmtsmovingforward.com and at the BMTS facebook page. People without internet access call the BMTS at (607) 778-2443.

Read More: [BMTS Tweaks Transportation Plans to Reflect Coronavirus Lifestyle](https://wnbf.com/bmts-tweaks-transportation-plans-to-reflect-coronavirus-lifestyle-changes/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral) | https://wnbf.com/bmts-tweaks-transportation-plans-to-reflect-coronavirus-lifestyle-changes/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral



Diners are flocking back to restaurants in the Southern Tier and in several other regions of New York state after a COVID-19 pandemic closing of more than two months.

Eateries in regions where Phase Two reopening has been approved now are able to set up tables for customers outside their establishments.

At midday Thursday, several people were taking advantage of the opportunity for a sit-down meal at The Colonial in downtown Binghamton.

Yaron Kwellner, a partner in the restaurant and the neighboring Dos Rios Cantina, said "we're ecstatic" as he observed lunchtime customers seated along Court Street.

Kweller said restaurant operators and patrons had waited a long time for the go-ahead for outdoor dining with spacing restrictions.

The city of Binghamton is permitting the Court Street restaurants to utilize much more space than they previously used for outdoor seating.

City officials have been working to find new seating options for restaurants as they resume operations following the shutdown.

Read More: [Binghamton Restaurants Reopen for Outdoor Dining](https://wnbf.com/binghamton-restaurants-reopen-for-outdoor-dining/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral) | https://wnbf.com/binghamton-restaurants-reopen-for-outdoor-dining/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral