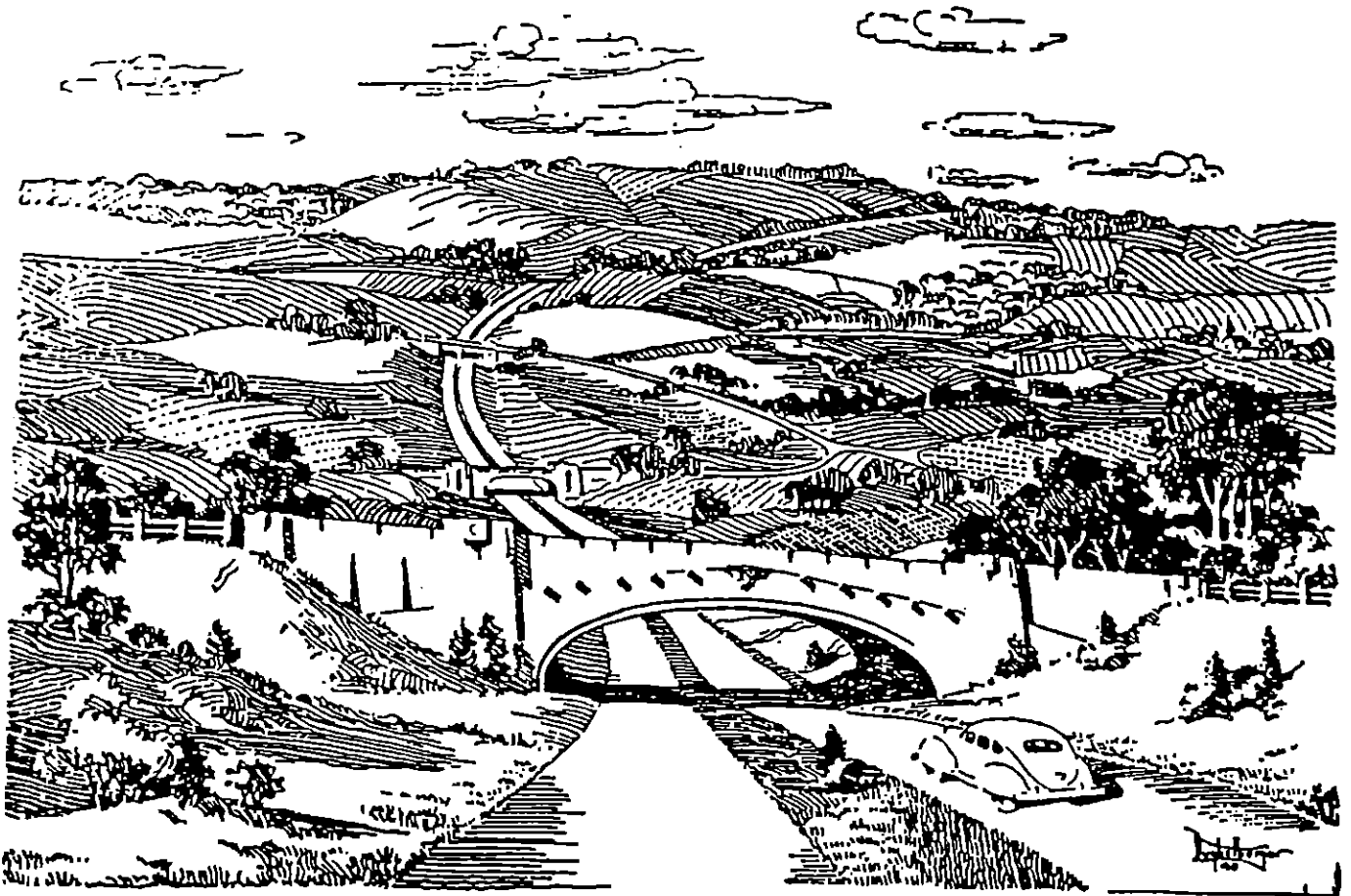


MERRITT PARKWAY TRAIL STUDY

Preliminary Feasibility Study of the Potential for Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths

- REVISED -



Regional Plan Association
Connecticut Office
April, 1994

Jennifer Aley
Mary Neustadter

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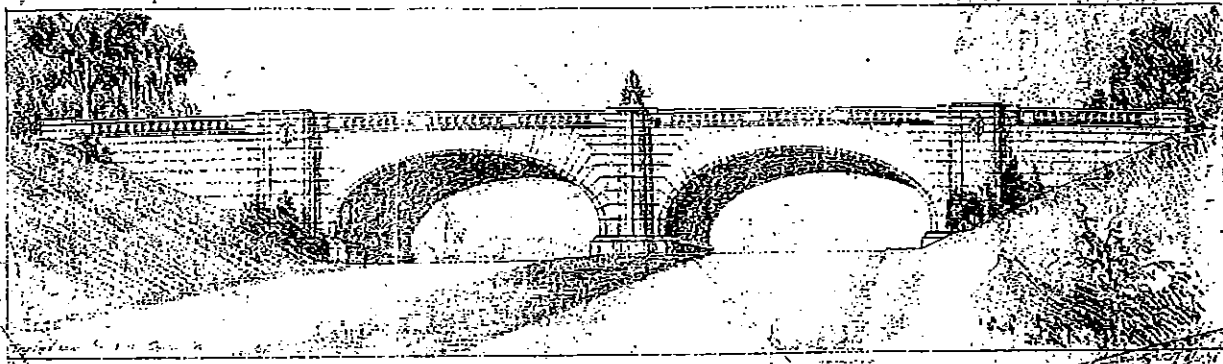
**Physical Characteristics,
Adjacent Land Use and
Potential Trail Use**

**Regional Plan Association
Connecticut Office**

April 1994

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MISSION STATEMENT

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Cover drawing by George Dunkelberger, an architect and designer of the Merritt Parkway bridges. The 1940 sketch is of the Merritt Parkway at the Bridgeport Park Avenue Bridge.

Inside cover drawing by George Dunkelberger, date unknown.

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I. Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Merritt Parkway, a limited-access expressway, stretches 37.5 miles from the Connecticut/New York border along lower Fairfield County until it connects with the Wilbur Cross Parkway at the Housatonic River. Most people experience its beauty through the windshield of their car as they travel at high speeds past gently rolling hills, dramatic rock outcrops and forests that, in the springtime, are dotted with the blossoms of cherry, dogwood and mountain laurel. As commuters travel along, they pass under many historic bridges, each with a distinctive design, ranging from abstract art deco patterns and pilgrim and Native American motifs in cast concrete, to vines and flowers in wrought metal.

This study of a trail system along the Merritt Parkway is part of an effort to get people to pull over, turn off their engines and, eventually, leave their cars at home in order to enjoy the naturalistic beauty and historic charm of this important cultural resource and transportation corridor. It is also part of an ongoing effort by Regional Plan Association to protect and link regional open spaces through the creation of a network of greenways. Such a trail would provide a multitude of benefits including recreation and commuting opportunities. Encouraging alternative forms of transportation is particularly important in densely populated Fairfield County, whose residents suffer from the third worst air quality in the nation.

When the Merritt Parkway was constructed by the Connecticut Highway Department (now the Connecticut Department of Transportation) a swath of land approximately 300 feet wide was purchased. For the most part, the Merritt Parkway was constructed in the northern one-third or one-half of the right-of-way, leaving the southern part free of development.

Despite the numerous rock outcrops one observes while driving along the Merritt Parkway, much of the undeveloped portion of the land along the right-of-way is level to gently sloping, making it suitable for a pedestrian and/or bicycle trail. Because the existing road uses only a portion of the three-hundred foot right-of-way, a trail would be surrounded by a wide buffer, allowing continued privacy for neighborhood residents, and presenting minimal conflicts with possible future improvements to the Parkway.

Some Benefits of the Proposed Trail

A trail along the parkway would encourage bicycling and walking--alternative forms of transportation--between residential, commercial and recreational areas, employment centers, shopping, a university and schools, all located along the length of the Merritt Parkway.

As the only continuous inland trail running in an east-west direction the length of Fairfield County, it would provide a link to the numerous bicycle routes that cross the Merritt Parkway on roads that parallel the natural ridge lines that extend from the northern interior southward to Long Island Sound. It would also provide an east-west link between several proposed trails including the Housatonic River Greenway, the Route 7 Linear Park, and the Norwalk River Trail. Furthermore, a continuous Merritt Parkway trail system would provide a major missing link in the East Coast Greenway -- a planned bicycle and pedestrian path that will eventually

connect all of the eastern states from Maine to Florida. Parts of the East Coast Greenway are already in place or are under construction.

The Parkway trail could become an important recreational resource as well by providing opportunities for cycling, walking, jogging and cross country skiing as it passes through many scenic areas with lakes, reservoirs, open woodlands and dramatic vistas. A continuous trail along the entire length of the Parkway would also link 41 parks and protected open spaces that are already its neighbors.

At least fifteen percent of the Parkway right-of-way that was examined during field investigations already has informal trail systems ranging from barely perceptible to well-traveled and obvious. This indicates that a well planned bicycle and pedestrian trail would, in fact, be both useful and an asset to the adjacent communities.

Field investigations have determined that occasional steep slopes may require that the trail be routed onto local roads. Other constraints include some of the larger wetlands and the eight largest rivers and streams that would require bridge crossings (similar to those used on parkway trails in other states). Although the Parkway trail would be hilly in some areas, it would avoid the more dense development and the often congested roads of the coastal areas that lie to the south. State Routes 7, 8 and 25 are major impediments to a continuous trail and would have to be bypassed using local roads. The trail could successfully cross the less traveled roads using crosswalks, stop signs, yield signs, pedestrian and bicycle crossing signs, rumble strips, or stop lights to ensure safety. These are commonly-used methods at other parkway trails. However, because the Parkway trail would be within the right-of-way for most of its length, the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, who would otherwise use local roads for their trips, would be improved.

First Steps

To create a continuous trail along the 37.5 mile stretch will take time and the concerted effort of dedicated people to build consensus and acquire the necessary funds. As a result, a long-term approach is required. This study suggests routes for demonstration trails along the Parkway. At least one trail segment is described for each town. They were selected based on the relative ease of implementation, the potential to link origin and destination points, landscape characteristics and multiple use potential.

The construction of one or more of these trails would demonstrate the benefits of such a trail and help build support for additional trails. Over time, as support increases, connecting trails can be constructed until a continuous trail is achieved. Gaps in the trail due to physical impediments or continued local resistance can be connected by routing it along parallel roads.

This approach has been used successfully, for example, in Rhode Island. The 14.5 mile East Bay Bicycle Path that extends from Bristol to Providence began as a short segment in one of the towns. When the popularity of the path was demonstrated, support for it grew in the other towns until now it is a continuous trail that winds from Bristol to Providence through five towns similar to some of those along the Parkway.

Study Recommendations

1. Distribute copies of the study to ConnDOT, the Connecticut Greenways Committee, regional planning agencies, first selectmen, planning and conservation departments, local land trusts, bicycle, hiking and riding clubs, and neighborhood and other potential interest groups in towns along the Merritt Parkway.
2. Meet with officials and agency members at South Western Regional Planning Agency, the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency, and ConnDOT to ensure that a Merritt Parkway bicycle and pedestrian path is included in the appropriate planning documents so that the construction of demonstration trails will be eligible for ISTEA funding.
3. Meet with the engineering firm developing the Merritt Parkway management plan and a ConnDOT representative to discuss the merits of the trail and to ensure that the management plan does not exclude the future possibility of creating a trail along the right-of-way.
4. Meet with representatives of the planning and conservation departments, local land trusts, bicycle and riding clubs, and neighborhood and other potential interest groups to discuss the trail and the merits of specific demonstration trails and to gauge local interest and support for the concept.
5. Conduct a potential user's study to determine specific interest groups that would use the trail and individual leaders who would spearhead the effort to build consensus for local demonstration projects.
6. Publish a map to publicize the potential trail system and its advantages. It should include information such as the location of the potential trail, access points, car and bicycle parking areas, turnouts and rest areas, nearby rest room facilities, and use regulations. The map might also include major destination points, intersecting state bicycle routes, nearby recreational facilities, scenic areas and points of interest.
7. Conduct a summer 1994 event as part of the East Coast Greenway Summer Tour to highlight the potential for a Merritt Parkway Trail as part of this national trail system.

Conclusion

Now is an excellent time to create a bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Parkway. New sources of funding for such projects are available from the federal government through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). This is a program that seeks to shift transportation policy from strictly highway construction towards a more balanced approach to travel that includes mass transit and alternative forms of mobility such as walking or cycling. The federal Clean Air Act also places constraints on new highway construction. A bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Parkway would provide alternative methods of transportation as well as an opportunity for Connecticut's residents to more fully experience one of the state's most picturesque landscapes.

**II. Physical Characteristics,
Adjacent Land Use
and Potential Trail Use**

THE MERRITT PARKWAY TRAIL STUDY

Physical Characteristics, Adjacent Land Use and Potential Trail Use

1. Introduction

The Merritt Parkway traverses some of Connecticut's most scenic landscapes. It begins at the western border of Connecticut, in Greenwich, and extends for thirty-seven and a half miles to the Housatonic River. It passes through eight towns and cities: Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan, Norwalk, Westport, Fairfield, Trumbull and Stratford. Completed in 1940, the Parkway was named after Schuyler Merritt, a Fairfield County congressman. In 1991 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the height of parkway design in the United States, and in 1993 it was designated a state scenic road. It is considered by many to be the gateway to New England.

In the spring the forestlands along the Parkway are punctuated by the bright flowers of cherri and dogwoods. The delicate blossoms of mountain laurel, Connecticut's state flower, highlight the rock outcrops, hilltops and slopes of the of the right-of-way. Gently rolling hills, level bottomlands and dramatic rock outcrops create a varied landscape that supports many different types of vegetation and wildlife. The Parkway winds through this naturalistic landscape, passing over or under crossroads via individually designed historic bridges. The decorative motifs of the bridges express a wide range of themes, including pilgrims and native Americans, abstract art deco designs, monumental sculptured wings, griffins and wrought metal vines and flowers.

The parkway right-of-way is approximately three hundred feet wide along most of its length. Generally, only the northern half or third of the right-of-way has been used for the existing parkway road. The land remaining in the south side of the right-of-way provides more than ample space for a trail.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act encourages the use of alternative form of transportation such as cycling and walking. A bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Merritt could help to meet the need for transportation alternatives, providing links between residential, commercial and recreational areas, employment centers, shopping, a university and local schools, all of which are located along the Parkway. It would also provide recreational opportunities for cycling and walking. Its route would pass scenic areas (such as lakes, reservoirs, open woodlands, historic bridges and scenic vistas), and would provide opportunities for watching birds and wildlife. It might also be used for cross country skiing during the winter months, environmental education, horseback riding (in Greenwich and New Canaan) and as a place for employees at adjacent offices to take a lunchtime or after-work stroll.

The proposed trail could eventually extend along the entire length of the Parkway, from Greenwich to Stratford, linking the major parks and protected open space lands that are adjacent or near to the right-of-way. The trail would serve as the only inland east-west connector between the state bicycle routes that run from north to south along state roads that cross the Parkway. It could also provide an east-west link between the proposed Housatonic River Greenway, proposed Route Seven Linear Park and proposed Norwalk River Trail System, all of which run from north to south. If the existing trails along the Hutchinson River Parkway were extended to meet the proposed Merritt Parkway trail system at the

Connecticut border, this would create a bi-state trail system*. Finally, a Merritt Parkway trail could help to complete the East Coast Greenway by providing a major missing link in this traffic free, multi-use trail system. The East Coast Greenway is currently being planned and developed along a route that will eventually extend from Maine to Florida. Figure 1 shows a schematic of the location of the proposed parkway trail and some of the major origin and destination points along its route.

Because the existing road uses only a small portion of the three hundred foot wide right-of-way, the trail would be surrounded by a wide buffer, allowing continued privacy for neighboring residential areas, and presenting minimal conflicts with possible future improvements to the parkway. Much of the land in the undeveloped portion of the right-of-way is level to gently sloping, and does not pose major constraints to trail construction. Constraints include specific areas with very steep topography, and wetlands and streams that would require bridge crossings similar to those used on parkway trails in other states. In addition, since crossing State Routes 7, 8 and 25 would be difficult, bypasses using local roads should be considered.

The Parkway's National Register status will help ensure that any plans for changes to the Parkway consider the impacts to its historic character. Potential trail locations have been selected with this and other factors in mind. The original Parkway design crossed existing bridle trails in Greenwich, many of which still run parallel to, or cross under the Parkway, without any apparent use conflicts. During the period that the Parkway was being designed, proposals were made for both bicycle and equestrian trails within the right-of-way, although these were not included in the final designs (Radde, B., 1993). A special underpass was constructed that currently allows connection between the north and south sections of a Boy Scout camp that is on property that was bisected by the Parkway. More recent regional plans by both public and private nonprofit planning organizations have also suggested the possibility of trails along the Parkway. This suggests that the concept of trails along the Parkway has been of interest for many years. In fact, unofficial pedestrian trails already exist in many areas within the right-of-way, without apparent use conflicts. If sensitively designed, the proposed trail should have little or no impact on the historic character of the Parkway and will, in fact, increase opportunities for people to enjoy its beauty and historic charm in many new ways.

The intent of this report is to serve as an initial investigation of the feasibility of establishing Merritt Parkway bicycle and pedestrian trail system. The report will be circulated to communities along the parkway for review and discussion in the hopes of developing a trail system that will provide the greatest benefits.

The following sections will discuss some of the opportunities and constraints related to establishing a bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Merritt Parkway.

2. Project Elements

In order to select an appropriate potential trail alignment, a preliminary examination of the following physical characteristics, issues, benefits, constraints and opportunities has been conducted as part of this project:

* Both Westchester County and New York City are exploring the Hutchinson River Parkway route as a possible trail corridor. It would provide the best link in the East Coast Greenway trail through the lower New York region (Personal communication, Karen Votava, April, 1994).

Physical characteristics:

Water Resources	Wetlands	Topography
Bedrock Outcrops	Slopes	Vegetation
Wildlife		

Adjacent land uses:

Parks and Open Space	Residential	Commercial
Office	Industrial	Institutional

Access issues:

Bicycle Access	Automobile Parking	Pedestrian Access
Bicycle Parking	Adjacent Roads	Adjacent Trails
Safety	Trail Maps	Signs
Education	Public Transportation Links	

Analyses conducted:

Trail Location Potential	Environmental Benefits and Constraints
Access Potential	Origin and Destination Points
Interest Points	Alternative Transportation Opportunities
Educational Uses	Connections With Other Trails
Recreational Uses	Constraints to Trail Continuity
Potential Demonstration Sites	

3. Research and Key Information Sources

Research for this project was conducted using information from maps of the Parkway right-of-way (Connecticut Department of Transportation, 1989), USGS topographic maps, USDA Soil Conservation Service maps (1981), aerial photographs (Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, 1990), and town land use and open space maps. A list of references appears in the appendices to this study. Information derived from these sources was supplemented by field investigations in order to provide more detailed assessments. Based on the above, a preliminary potential trail alignment has been delineated.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (AASHTO, 1991) has been relied on for guidance during the development of this report.

A generalized discussion of some of the major characteristics and potential uses of the right-of-way is provided below.

4. Topography, Geology and Soils

Driving along the Parkway, one can observe numerous rock outcrops. This gives the impression that the land lying beyond these outcrops and behind the trees is predominantly rugged. The southern part of the right-of-way actually includes many relatively level or gently rolling areas that are suitable for a trail. These are interspersed with moderate slopes and occasional steep areas. Most of the steep slopes can be traversed by pedestrians with little

difficulty. However, some specific areas may require that cyclists dismount and walk their bicycles for short distances, or may prove too steep for the disabled to use. Thus, the main issue is effectively dealing with traversing the steep slopes, or finding alternate routes on local roads that can be used to link together the level or gently sloped areas.

The topography of the Parkway right-of-way varies from town to town and within towns. In some towns, such as Stratford, Trumbull, Fairfield and New Canaan there are long stretches of land that are either level or gently sloped, with only occasional steep slopes or bedrock knobs. In most cases, the trail can be relatively easily routed around or across these steep areas. In other towns, such as Greenwich, Stamford, Norwalk and Westport, there are specific areas where the topography is more rugged and therefore more constraints to trail construction.

Because of the width of the right-of-way, it would be possible in many cases to run the trail diagonally across the face of the steep slopes, so that the grade of the trail is more gentle than the grade of the slope. Areas where this approach would be appropriate are delineated on the maps produced as part of this project*. It is also possible, in most cases, to route the trail around bedrock outcrops. Relocation of small, loose boulders may be necessary in some areas. Selective use of fill may also be needed in some areas, to provide a trail-bed grade that is suitable for cyclists or the disabled.

Steeply graded roadbeds leading up to the abutments of some of the bridges that cross the parkway present another form of topographic impediment. Some specific sites where this is a problem are listed in the appendices. These areas can be dealt with either by routing the trail to the lowest part of the graded roadbed, routing the trail onto adjacent private or public lands (which might necessitate acquisition of easements or the purchase of small amounts of land) or routing the trail temporarily onto adjacent roads. In the few places, where the topography is extremely steep and no alternative route is available, use of fill may be necessary.

Field investigations indicate that, with few exceptions, low-tech methods for traversing difficult areas can be applied or alternative routes are available. For instance, low-impact structures such as boardwalk bridges, similar to those used on the George Washington Memorial Parkway trails in Virginia and on other National Park trails, could be used at steep ravines, wetlands and stream crossings. In places where topography makes trail construction too difficult, the alignment could temporarily traverse local roads. Alternatively, if the topography in specific areas is too difficult for most cyclists to use, but is suitable for a pedestrian trail, the pedestrian trail could continue within the right-of-way and the bicycle trail could loop out onto local roads or into an adjacent park, re-entering the right-of-way to rejoin the pedestrian trail where the topography is less difficult.

Soils in the right-of-way range from the thin, dry material covering parts of the rock outcrops that border the Parkway road to the wet, highly organic deposits of wetlands. Analyses of potential trail locations in the Parkway right-of-way have been based in part on maps of soils produced by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1976). In general, the best soils for supporting a trail have a generally level or moderately sloped character and are neither too wet nor too erodible. Highlighted copies of Soil Conservation Service maps showing different types of soils along the Parkway are on file at the Connecticut office of Regional Plan Association.

* Reduced copies of these maps at 1" to 400' scale are on file at the Connecticut Office of the Regional Plan Association (RPA).

Both Soil Conservation Service maps (1981) and maps showing topography that have been produced by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (1989) show many areas in the right-of-way that are relatively level, where topography provides minimal or no constraints to establishment of a trail. These include areas where slopes range from 0% to 8%. Highlighted copies of Soil Conservation Service maps showing different degrees of slope are on file at the Connecticut Office of Regional Plan Association. Categorization of slopes and other highlighted areas on these maps follows the system developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (USDA, Soil Conservation Service, 1976).

Bedrock outcrops line the existing roadway and are scattered throughout the unused portions of the right-of-way. Constructing a trail on a bedrock outcrop can be difficult, and can fortunately be avoided along most of the potential trail alignment. Maps showing the location of known bedrock outcrops within the right-of-way (based on USGS and Connecticut Department of Transportation maps, and spot surveys conducted during this study) are also on file at the Connecticut Office of RPA.

5. Wetlands and Water Features

Wetlands and water features along the Parkway are a constraint that must be carefully dealt with in order to avoid creating adverse environmental impacts. Fortunately, the right-of-way is wide enough in most places that it is possible to route the trail around lakes, ponds or wetlands, or across relatively narrow sections of wetlands, rivers or streams. Wetland and water course crossings can be appropriately achieved by using boardwalk bridges similar to those used on the George Washington Parkway in Virginia. It may also be possible to route the trail over existing culverts or impoundment structures.

Rivers that may prove difficult or expensive to cross because of their width or the configuration of their banks include the Rippowam River in Stamford, the Norwalk River in Norwalk and the Saugatuck River in Westport. Highlighted copies of Soil Conservation Service Maps showing the location of wetland soils in the right-of-way are on file at the Regional Plan Association offices. Potential Trail Location maps produced for this project show the approximate locations of wetlands within the right-of-way that have been delineated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation or were observed during the preliminary field investigations conducted for this project.

6. Vegetation

The original landscaping of the Parkway relied on the use of native vegetation to create a carefully designed, naturalistic landscape. Today, many of the original native and ornamental plantings have matured, declined or been replaced. In many areas, native hardwood plantings have matured and filled in, or spread to formerly open areas, creating the series of young to mid-successional hardwood forests that dominate most of the undeveloped areas within the Parkway right-of-way.

In addition to young and mid-successional mesic hardwood forests, major vegetation types along the Parkway right-of-way include forested wetlands, shrub swamps, herbaceous wetlands, edge, grassland (old field or managed turf), and ornamental plantings. Some species commonly occurring within the vegetation groups mentioned above are listed in the appendices .

It is not within the scope of this project to map the various vegetation types present in the right-of-way. However, existing maps produced by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (1989) show the boundaries of forested and open areas, while existing United States Soil Conservation Service maps (1981) show the location of wetland, mesic and dry soil. These two sources, in conjunction, provide a general guide to some of the basic vegetation types. More specific information on vegetation distribution patterns is available in the form of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) 1990 aerial photographs. A number of these sources have been relied on during the preliminary selection of potential trail routes. The DEP should be consulted prior to final trail design to ensure that the trail is routed around any endangered or threatened plant species that may grow in the right-of-way.

The forests and shrubs that cover much of the right-of-way will screen the view of the trail from the road. This vegetation also can serve, in many places, both to decrease the amount of noise heard from the potential trail locations, and to form a natural safety barrier between trail users, the highway, and the adjacent neighborhoods.

Vegetation, ranging from thick undergrowth to mature trees, will need to be cleared from the trail alignment before trail construction can begin. However, the availability of modern trail building equipment such as small sized bulldozers and pavers means that in most cases it will only be necessary to remove a strip of vegetation that is slightly wider than the width of the trail alignment. This would not create major changes to the character of the right-of-way. In many open woodland areas, it will probably be possible to route the trail around larger trees as opposed to cutting them down.

7. Wildlife

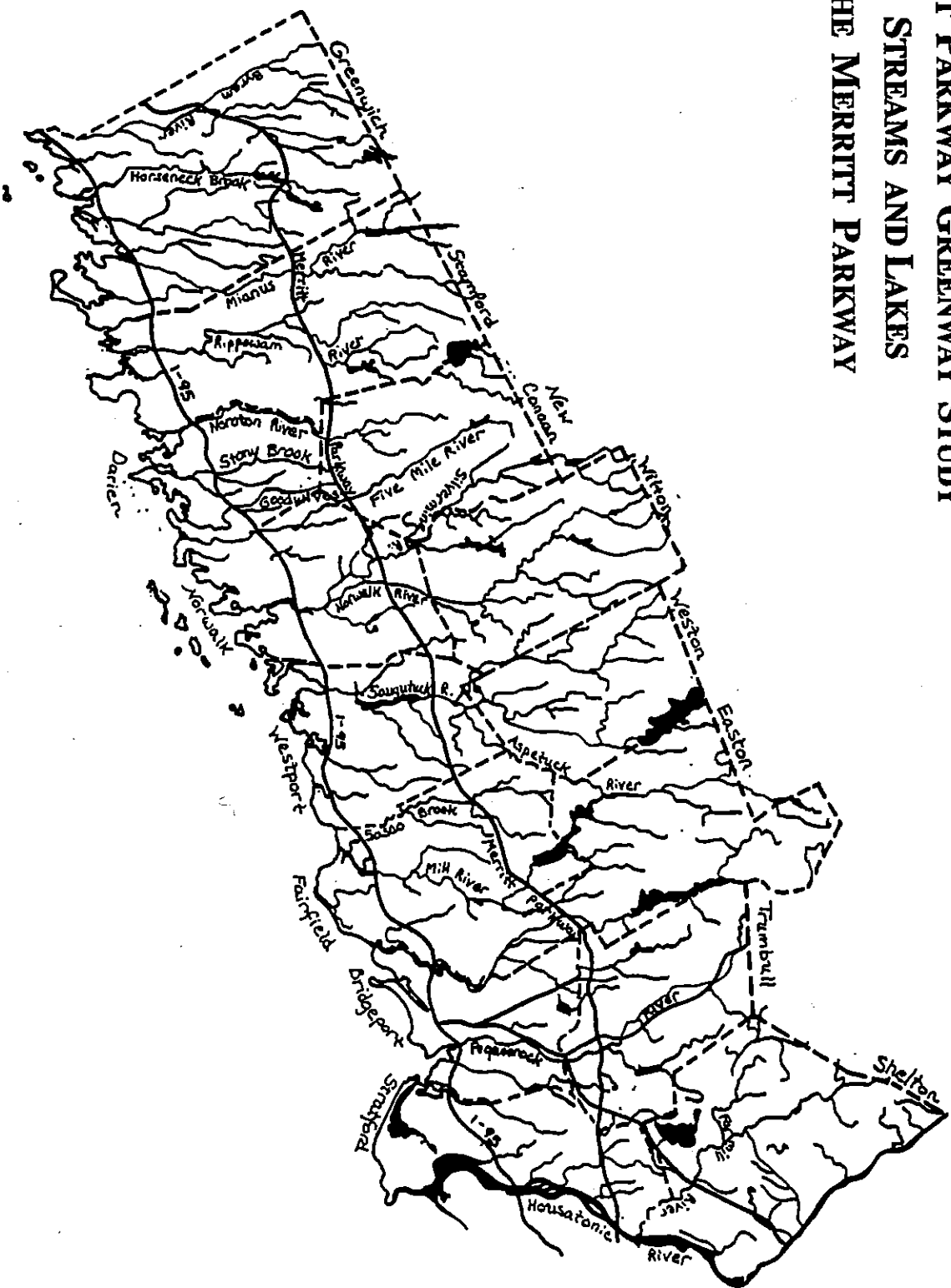
The varied ecosystems of the Parkway right-of-way support many common wildlife species. Frequently observed species include deer, raccoons, rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, opossums, mice, crows, robins, sparrows, chickadees, blue jays, cardinals, ducks, Canada geese, starlings, frogs, turtles, fish and various invertebrates. Hawks were observed twice in Norwalk. Discarded fishing line indicates that fishermen currently fish from the banks of streams that pass through the right-of-way. The trail will provide increased opportunities to observe wildlife for both recreational and educational purposes. Prior to final trail design, the Connecticut DEP should be consulted to ensure that the trail is routed around the habitat of any endangered or threatened species that may live or forage in the right-of-way.

8. Scenic Areas and Visual Impacts

The Parkway's role as a "Gateway to New England" is greatly enhanced by the beauty of the spring flowers characteristic of Connecticut woodlands. In the summer, the forests along the Parkway form a rich green canopy. During autumn, the woodlands are ablaze with the reds and golds of the sugar maples, red maples, oaks and beeches. Winter snowfall creates a lacy tracery of frosted branches. Year-round the forests of the right-of-way provide a magnificent setting for the Parkway's historic bridges and scenic views. A greenway trail would provide additional opportunities for both Connecticut residents and tourists to enjoy the beauty of the Parkway in all seasons.

The visual impact of the trail system on the Parkway would be minimal due to both the generally thick buffer of vegetation that would remain between the road and the proposed trail, and the distance of the proposed trail from the Parkway road. In places that the trail would be visible, natural vegetation can be supplemented with plantings of indigenous species if better visual screening is desired. These plantings should be designed to prevent or

MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY STUDY RIVERS, STREAMS AND LAKES NEAR THE MERRITT PARKWAY



CARTOGRAPHY: BY JENNIFER ALEY, 1994.

SOURCE: CONNECTICUT NATURAL RESOURCES ATLAS SERIES, WATER QUALITY CLASSIFICATIONS MAP OF CONNECTICUT, 1987, COMPILED BY JAMES E. MURPHY, STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

minimize visual impacts to the historic character of the Merritt Parkway, and, if possible, should enhance the visual qualities of this scenic road.

The trail would provide many scenic views of landscapes characteristic of Connecticut. They include rivers, lakes, ponds and reservoirs, woodlands, wetlands, fields, rolling hills, seasonal flowers, wildlife and the Parkway's unique historic bridges. All of the towns through which right-of-way passes include scenic woodlands.

Three examples of major scenic areas along the potential trail are found in Greenwich. The Tollgate Ponds are located near the site of the former Parkway toll booths and were created at the time the Parkway was constructed (Radde, 1993). East of the ponds lies the Thunder Mountain area with its dramatic topography and open woodlands. Further east are Lake Putnam and Rockwood Lake Reservoir, large expanses of water fringed by woodlands. The varied landscape of the Parkway right-of-way provides numerous interest points in the form of both scenic areas and destinations where specific activities might take place. Important scenic areas that are within, or near to, the parkway are also listed below. The appendices list additional scenic areas and points of interest.

Rivers and Streams

- Greenwich:** Byram River, Converse and Pond Brooks, Rockwood Lake Brook
- Stamford:** Mianus River, Rippowam River
- New Canaan:** Noroton River
- Norwalk:** Silvermine River, Norwalk River
- Westport:** Saugatuck River
- Fairfield:** Sasco Brook, Mill River
- Trumbull:** Island Brook, Pequonnock River, Twin Brooks
- Stratford:** Ground Brook, Housatonic River

Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs

- Greenwich:** Tollgate Ponds, Lake Putnam Reservoir, Rockwood Lake Reservoir
- Stamford:** Holt's Ice Ponds, Wire Mill Ponds, North Stamford Reservoir, Dzamba Grove Ponds
- New Canaan:** Jelliff Mill Ponds
- Norwalk:** Ham's Pond, Davis Pond, Nottingham Pond
- Westport:** Lee's Pond
- Fairfield:** Patterson Club Pond, Lakewood Pond, Lake Mohegan, Hemlock Reservoir

Bridgeport: Island Brook Reservoir

Trumbull: Pinewood Lake

Stratford: Beaver Dam Lake

Three of the rivers that cross the Parkway right-of-way have steep banks. Although this creates impediments to trail construction and use it also provides opportunities for scenic overlooks. Scenic overlooks might be appropriate at the Mianus River and the Rippowam River in Stamford, and at the Saugatuck River in Westport.

Parks and Open Space

The parks and open space described below either are directly adjacent to the Parkway right-of-way or are important preserves or recreational facilities that are located within one mile of the Parkway. Some are owned and managed by private, nonprofit conservation organizations or institutions such as the Boy Scouts of America or the YMCA. Others are private clubs open only to paying members. Finally, many are public parks that provide recreational opportunities ranging from ballfields to hiking trails to scenic views.

Greenwich:

Round Hill Country Club

Wildflower Sanctuary

Burning Tree Country Club

The Nature Conservancy (Wilcox Pond and Hycliff Road Preserves)

Boy Scouts of America

Babcock Preserve

Mianus River Park

Stamford:

Mianus River Park

Bartlett Arboretum

Woodway Park

Riverbank Park

Stamford Nature Museum

Darien:

Woodway Country Club

New Canaan:

Waveny Park

Kiwanis Park

Norwalk:

Main Avenue Park

Cranbury Park

Honey Hill Road Park

Westport:

Town Farm

Aspetuck Land Trust-Wolfson Preserve
and Leonard Schine Arboretum

Camp Mahackeno (YMCA)

Fairfield:

Patterson Club

Larsen Sanctuary

Lake Mohegan Park

Brett Woods

H. Smith Richardson Golf Club

Aspetuck Land Trust-

Hillman & Lobdell Calf Pasture Preserves

Bridgeport:

Ninety Acres Park
 Elton Rogers Woodland Park

Puglio Park
 Beardsley Park

Trumbull:

Island Brook Park
 Unity Park
 Robert G. Beach Memorial Park

Fairchild Memorial Park
 Twin Brooks Park
 Abraham Nichols Park

Stratford:

Oronoque Hills Golf Club
 Far Mill River Park
 Boothe Memorial Park

Veterans Park
 North End Park
 Roosevelt Forest

Historic or Cultural Sites

In addition to being a nationally recognized historic site itself, the Parkway passes near many other local historic and cultural sites. This will provide not only points of interest, but also educational opportunities for those using the proposed trail. Some sites located adjacent to, within one mile of, the Parkway are listed below. The names of roads on which historic cemeteries are located have been provided as a number of the cemeteries do not have names

Greenwich:

Hebrew Cemetery (Riversville Road)
 Greenwich Civic Center

Stamford:

Stamford Arboretum

Stamford Historical Society

Darien:

Mather House

New Canaan:

Waveny Park

Talmadge Hill Historic Church

Norwalk:

Cemetery (Broad Street)
 White Barn Theater

Cherry Chapel

Westport:

Historic Revolutionary War Cemetery (Wilton Road)
 Keene Cemetery (Wilton Road)

Trumbull:

Brinsmade Cemetery (White Plains Road)
 Unity Cemetery (Unity Road)
 Nichols Farm Cemetery (Cemetery Drive)
 Nichols Historic Cemetery (Unity Road)

Stratford:

Saint John Cemetery (Nichols Avenue)

Visual Impacts of Fencing

Where it is not already in place, it may be appropriate to erect fences along the boundary between their property and the Parkway right-of-way, in order to prevent people from leaving the trail and entering private lands. If fences are called for, care should be taken to select a type that does not provide a surface for graffiti. Handsome wooden fences that were recently erected along the Hutchinson River Parkway have been disfigured by graffiti. This problem can be avoided along the Merritt. Generally, fences with uneven surfaces or wire fences (painted green or brown to meld into the surrounding woodlands) do not have a surface suitable for graffiti. Encouraging vines or shrubs to grow around or over a fence helps it to become part of the scenery while still effectively performing its desired function.

Fences should only be used where they are absolutely necessary. Barrier plantings, using species with thick or thorny growth patterns can be even more effective than fences and if carefully designed and maintained should not affect the historic character of the Parkway. They would probably not be visible from the road due to the existing thick vegetation that already covers much of the right-of-way. Flowering species might even be selected to enhance the appearance of the right-of-way. Any plans for barrier plantings should be reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office to ensure that they are in keeping with the historic character of the Parkway.

9. Historic Land Uses

In order to acquire the land necessary to construct the Parkway, the former Connecticut Highway Department (now the Connecticut Department of Transportation) began buying up land in a 300 foot wide swath along the planned alignment in 1931 (Radde, Bruce, 1993). Existing land uses in this area at the time consisted of estates, farms, residential areas and roads. Vestiges of these former land uses can still be seen in the right-of-way in the form of stone walls, stone gates and stone building foundations. The presence of young to mid-successional regrowth in many of the areas bounded by stone walls suggests the areas' former use as pasture or cropland. There are also occasional patches of escaped ornamental plantings such as myrtle and pachysandra that have colonized small patches of land that were once yards. Apple trees, either in groups or singly, also grow in the right-of-way. These may be survivors of small orchards or remnants of residential plantings. These relics of former land uses may be interesting to trail users and students of local history.

There were many roads in the area that predated the construction of the Parkway. Bridges or underpasses were built to allow continued use of many of these roads after the construction of the parkway. However, other roads were simply cut off. These cut-off roads either became dead ends or are now no longer used. For example, Turn of River Road in Stamford is no longer used on the north side of the Parkway and has become a dead end on the south side of the Parkway. Butternut Hollow Road in Greenwich is now a dead end on the south side and appears to be used only by the water company on the north side.

The presence of old road beds in the right-of-way will facilitate trail construction as, in many cases, much of the road bed is in good enough condition that with comparatively minor amounts of bed preparation work the trail can be laid on top of it. The old road beds and bridges that run across rivers, lakes or wetlands are particularly valuable in this respect. For instance, there is a small historic bridge on the abandoned section of Turn of River Road in Stamford that crosses the Rippowam River. In some cases old roads are still very evident as a packed dirt track or as a grassy lane used only by occasional unofficial pedestrians. The dirt road running along the north side of the General Electric Company offices from the Parkway rest stop to the north side of Lake Mohegan in Fairfield is a perfect example of this type of

situation. In Greenwich, the now abandoned section of Butternut Hollow Road that runs across the north end of Lake Putnam Reservoir provides a good location for a trail that would afford scenic views of the Lake.

The locations of old roads that are overgrown are often delineated by long, double rows of sugar maples or other commonly used native plantings. Some of these trees appear to be over 100 years old. In other cases, the location of old roads can be discerned by observing the pattern of younger vegetation on the road bed and older vegetation on either side. Double rows of old stone walls, running parallel, generally about ten to 25 feet apart, are also sometimes an indication of a former road or farm lane. Built-up, graded road beds can also be easily spotted, even when they are covered with trees or shrubs. In some cases, one has only to scrape off a thin layer of leaves and other detritus to find the asphalt or packed earth surface of an old road.

A number of bridle trails are also located in the vicinity of the Parkway. In Greenwich, many of the Greenwich Riding and Trails Association's equestrian paths were located on land that was acquired by the Connecticut Highway Department in order to build the Parkway. Underpasses used by equestrians are still generally passable, although one is sometimes temporarily impassable due to wet soils and another suffers from erosion. If the riding association is interested in a cooperative effort, underpasses could be rehabilitated to allow use not only by equestrians, but also by pedestrians and cyclists, and maintenance costs could be shared. There are also trails on either side of the Parkway in New Canaan. While these trails are used primarily by pedestrians, they are also occasionally used by equestrians. Sections of these trails lie within the boundaries of Waveny Park. Additional, informal trails are located within the right-of-way both to the east and west of the park.

10. Adjacent Land Uses and Potential Trail Use

Major land uses abutting the Parkway include residential neighborhoods, office and commercial uses, parks, water company lands, conservation areas, state highway equipment and supply areas, and undeveloped lands. The Parkway right-of-way also abuts or is near a number of public and private schools and Sacred Heart University (see Section 14 of this report). The trail can form an important link between these different areas. Of particular importance is the possibility of decreasing automobile use by increasing opportunities for people to commute to work by cycling or walking. Figure 1 shows the location of office complexes and other employment centers relative to the Merritt Parkway. Additional congestion reduction and air quality benefits can be achieved by encouraging people to travel to parks and recreation sites by foot or cycle instead of by car.

A Parkway trail could become an important recreational resource as well as an opportunity for alternative forms of transportation. This greenway trail would connect land trust preserves, parks and recreational facilities. In addition to cycling and walking, the trail may afford opportunities for cross country skiing during the winter. Other potential uses include educational field trips, bird watching, wildlife observation and scenic enjoyment. There are also a number of areas along rivers that pass across or adjacent to the right-of-way where small boat or canoe launches might be appropriate.

In many areas the Parkway right-of-way abuts power line or underground gas line rights-of-way. These rights-of-way provide additional buffers between the neighborhoods and the trail, or potential access corridors to the proposed trail system. Vegetation in the right-of-way will also serve as a buffer. In many cases the boundary of the right-of-way is directly adjacent to state and local roads.

During field investigations very little evidence of "trouble areas" was observed. No abandoned cars, only two camp fire rings and very few beer bottles or cans were observed. There are scattered areas directly adjacent to the Parkway lanes where trash, old pallets and old tires have been dumped. As is often the case on unused public lands bordering developed areas, the practice of dumping yard waste in the right-of-way (such as grass clippings, branches and leaves) is fairly common, particularly in the areas directly bordering small-lot housing developments. A number of neighborhood residents appear to have extended either their yards or their storage areas into the Parkway right-of-way. One particularly creative neighbor has dealt with an intact section of boundary fence by placing a step ladder on one side of the fence and erecting a steplike pile of boxes on the other side. This allows access to an informal garden material storage area on the right-of-way. Another neighbor was observed hauling yard waste into the right-of-way on a small tractor cart. Others store piles of logs for the fireplace or dump leftover home improvement materials in the right-of-way. Establishing officially sanctioned trails could help to discourage these types of unsanctioned activities, since their perpetrators generally prefer not to be observed.

Parkway boundary fencing has been cut or torn down in many places. In others, fencing has fallen down simply as a result of the passing of time. In areas where informal trails already exist in the right-of-way, the boundary fence has been cut or torn, providing access to the trails from the adjacent neighborhoods.

The nature of the adjacent land uses suggests that those who might use the Parkway trail could include the following:

Neighborhood residents	Park visitors
Employees of offices and commercial businesses	Commuters
Public and private grade-school students	College students
Teachers	Bird watchers
Science and nature students	Fishermen
Cycling, walking and jogging enthusiasts	Tourists
Cross country skiers	Picnickers
Shoppers	

At least fifteen percent of the parkway right-of-way that was examined during field investigations already includes informal trail systems. These include children's paths that lead from neighborhoods or schools to various destinations such as swamps, rivers, tree houses and informal play areas, as well as paths that lead from one neighborhood to another or to existing parks. Informal paths were also observed adjacent to office complexes. Where paths led to rivers, used fishing line could sometimes be found along the banks. These existing paths show evidence of use not only by pedestrians but also by equestrians. Mountain bike tracks were evident at only one location in Fairfield, although this type of use has also been reported in one section of New Canaan. Informal paths within the right-of-way were observed in Stratford, Trumbull, Fairfield, New Canaan and Greenwich.

Paths ranged from being barely perceptible to well-traveled and obvious. This suggests that a well planned bicycle and pedestrian trail would, in fact, be both useful and an asset to the adjacent communities. Indeed, part of the potential constituency appears to have already selected and informally established sections of a Parkway trail system.

Figure 1 shows the approximate location of the proposed Merritt Parkway bicycle and pedestrian trail alignment, and the locations of parks, open space, water company lands, and areas with significant commercial and office development within the four mile zone (two miles on either side) surrounding the Parkway. A more detailed presentation of the potential trail

location and adjacent land uses, including residential areas, is shown on the 1" equals 400' scale Potential Trail Segment maps produced as part of this project. These maps are on file at the Connecticut Office of RPA.

11. Access Potential

There are numerous potential access points to the proposed trail, many of which also have parking areas. They can be broken down into the following major categories:

- Commuter parking lots
- Parkway rest stops
- Schools and school parking lots (weekend use only)
- Commercial and office parking lots (with permission of owner)
- Parks and park parking lots (with permission of municipality)
- Abutting or intersecting state and local roads, and street ends
- State designated bicycle trails
- Public transportation facilities (train stations and bus routes)

The proposed Merritt Parkway trails would intersect many existing state designated bicycle routes that are located on state and town roads. Since all of these routes except one run on a north-south axis, the Parkway trails would serve as an effective east-west connector. The only other state designated bicycle route that runs from east to west lies approximately four miles to the south along roads in the shore area.

Existing state designated bicycle routes are shown on Figure 1. A list of access points from local or state roads, by town, is included in the appendices. The locations of state-owned rest stops and commuter lots that could provide car parking areas and access for trail users are listed below:

State Commuter Lots

Stamford - High Ridge Road
New Canaan - Route 123
Westport - Weston Road
Westport - Wilton Road
Fairfield - Black Rock Turnpike
Fairfield - Easton Tpke./Jefferson St.
Stratford - River Road

State Parkway Rest Stops

Greenwich - Near Glen Ridge Road
New Canaan - Near South Avenue
Fairfield - Near Easton Turnpike

Cyclists who use the trails for commuting to work or school, shopping, or to reach specific destination points such as parks or museums will need safe bicycle parking areas. Many of the schools adjacent to the right-of-way already provide bicycle racks or other bicycle parking facilities. Employers, shopping plazas, train stations, multi-family dwellings, parks and other origin and destination points that do not already have bicycle parking should be encouraged to provide bicycle parking areas in order to facilitate use of the trail as an alternative form of transportation.

The New Canaan train station (Metro North) is located directly adjacent to the Parkway right-of-way. The Wilton train station is located approximately one mile north of the Parkway, just west of Danbury Road. Public bus routes would cross the proposed trail in Stamford, Norwalk, and Trumbull, providing access to and from the trail for pedestrians. Maps showing the

locations of intersecting public bus routes are on file at the Connecticut office of the Regional Plan Association.

An issue of potential concern is the possible impact to a Parkway trail from future improvements to the Parkway road. In neighboring Westchester County, this issue was dealt with by a cooperative effort between the New York State Department of Transportation (NYDOT) and Westchester County. In places where improvements of the road would have blocked access or use of the Hutchinson River Parkway Trail, NYDOT re-aligned the trail. Both NYDOT and the County cooperated on improving the entire length of the trail. Although originally intended for use by equestrians, the Hutchinson River trail system is also currently used by pedestrians.

In order to publicize and provide a guide to the trail system, a map should be developed. This map could include information such as the location of the trail, access points, car and bicycle parking areas, turnouts and rest areas, nearby restroom facilities, and use regulations. The map could also include the location of major destination points, intersecting state bicycle routes, nearby recreational facilities, scenic areas and points of interest. Finally, a map could include information on rules of the road, safety tips and the location of mass transit stops or stations (AASHTO, 1991).

12. Physical Characteristics of Potential Trails

The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (1991) has developed recommended standards for bicycle paths on separated rights-of-way. The following section provides a summary of some pertinent sections of these standards with excerpts appropriate to the proposed Parkway trails.

Trail Widths:

The recommended paved width for a two directional bicycle path is 10 feet. In some cases a minimum of eight feet can be adequate.

Under certain conditions it may be desirable to increase the width of the path:

- If high volumes of bicycle use are anticipated
- The path is shared with pedestrians or joggers
- Cyclists are likely to ride two abreast
- There are steep grades
- There will be use by large maintenance vehicles

A graded shoulder should be included on both sides of the path. A wider graded shoulder area on either side of the bicycle path can serve as a separate jogging path.

Widths and Clearances:

A wide separation between the bicycle path and the adjacent highway is desirable to ensure that the path functions as an independent highway. Where wide separations are not possible, physical dividers may be considered.

The vertical clearance to obstructions should be a minimum of eight feet.

Grades:

Grades should be kept to a minimum. Grades greater than 5% may make ascents difficult for many cyclists. Grades greater than 3% may not be appropriate for crushed stone surfaces.

Signs and Striping:

Adequate sight and stopping distances should be provided both on the trail and at intersection crossings. Where this is not possible warning signs should be provided.

On a two way path, center stripes should be used. Safety can also be facilitated by widening paths at curves and using a yellow center stripe.

Pavement Surface:

Pavement structure should be designed and selected under the supervision of a qualified engineer. Pavement structure should be adequate to support maintenance vehicles.

The path surface should be smooth and as skid-resistant as possible.

Asphaltic or Portland cement pavements are appropriate choices in many circumstances. Hard, all weather pavement surfaces provide a higher level of service for bicycles than crushed aggregate, sand, clay, or stabilized earth.

Curb cuts should be the same width as the bicycle path.

Structures:

The minimum clear width of an overpass, underpass, bridge or road-bridge bicycle lane should be the same as the approach to the bicycle path, and should be of an adequate width for use by emergency vehicles.

Restrictions to Motor Vehicle Traffic:

Physical barriers to motor vehicle access may need to be provided at road crossings. Posts, bollards, landscape plantings and split entry ways can all aid in restricting motor vehicle access.

These guidelines are presented here for consideration. It is worth noting that there are a number of successful bicycle paths in some states that use standards that differ from the AASHTO recommended standards. For instance, the Arlington County bicycle path system can include grades up to 8%. Clay or stabilized earth trail surfaces have also been used successfully on some bicycle paths in Maryland and Virginia, as have narrower trail widths. Standards that vary from those recommended by AASHTO can be considered based on variables such as type and level of use and existing conditions, and may be appropriate under some circumstances.

A more detailed discussion of these AASHTO recommendations can be found in the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 1991.

13. Safety Issues

The proposed Merritt Parkway trails would be safer to use than many existing state bicycle routes because cyclists would be separated from motor vehicle traffic by a wide buffer of vegetation, and would not traverse roads used by motor vehicles, except at occasional crossings.

The forest vegetation along much of the right-of-way would serve as a natural fence between the trail and the roadway. Where there is no forest vegetation or vegetation is sparse, barrier plantings such as wild rose, briars, raspberry and shrubs with thick branching patterns can be used to discourage or prevent visitors from leaving the trail.

Where the trail would cross roads passing over or under the Parkway, crosswalks, stop signs, yield signs, pedestrian and bicycle crossing signs, rumble strips or stoplights can increase safety. These are commonly used methods at other successful parkway trails (VA, DC, NY) that create good safety conditions. Bicycle path signs should be located so that they will not confuse motorists, and roadway signs should be located so they will not confuse bicyclists.

A number of road intersections along the route of the proposed bicycle trail already have traffic lights, and, in some cases, pedestrian crossings. AASHTO suggests that bicycle crossings can be located at or adjacent to existing pedestrian crossings. It may be advisable to adjust the timing of these lights in order to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian crossings generated by the trail, or to install walk signs and buttons. Median refuge areas can also be provided at higher volume crossings that do not have traffic lights. This would help to increase safety at these crossings (AASHTO, 1991). Where the proposed path approaches existing roads, grades should be kept as low as possible in order to facilitate safe stopping (AASHTO, 1991). Transition areas where the proposed Parkway trail would join the state's existing bicycle trails should have signs to warn and direct both cyclists and motorists.

It may be possible, in some areas, for equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians to share the proposed parkway trails. However, because of the differences in trail surface materials suitable for cyclists and equestrians and the potential safety issues related to sharing a trail, it may be advisable to study the possibility of having parallel trails in areas where there may be substantial equestrian use.

The greatest impediment to creating a continuous trail system along the Parkway is the presence of three high-volume, high-speed, limited-access state roads that intersect the Parkway on a north-south axis: the Route 7 Expressway in Norwalk, and Routes 25 and 8 in Trumbull. At-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossings of these roads are obviously out of the question because of safety hazards. One option is to construct special bicycle and pedestrian bridges, or underpasses, as recommended by AASHTO, but this would no doubt prove to be expensive because of the width of the roads and the complexity of the interchanges. A second option would be to treat the Parkway trails as a series of four segments, divided by the major road crossings. A third option is to use local roads and parks to route the trail around these major junctions. Map analysis, verified by field investigations, indicates that this is a possibility.

Because the Parkway trail would be separated from motor vehicle traffic (except at occasional road crossings), cyclists and pedestrians could avoid many of the hazards common to sharing roads with motor vehicles. Some examples of these hazards include the absence of bike lanes, overly narrow bike lanes, lack of sidewalks and frequent road crossings. Other common hazards include poor sight lines (on sharply curved roads), swerving or inattentive motor vehicle operators, complicated intersection crossings and motor vehicles parked in bicycle lanes. Overgrown vegetation, or sand or dirt on bike lanes or road surfaces, can force bicycles or pedestrians into the road. People walking or riding along roads with high traffic volumes may also inhale car exhaust fumes. With few exceptions these problems could generally be avoided or decreased when people use the proposed Parkway trail system.

14. Some Examples of Potential Trail Use

Some selected examples of trail uses or segments that could provide valuable links between different types of origin and destination points are listed below.

Students at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield could use the Parkway trail to cycle or walk (or cross country ski, during the winter) to Lake Mohegan Park.

Students and teachers at public and private schools that are located along the Parkway, or at Sacred Heart University, could use the trail as a safe route to school or employment from their homes.

Neighborhood residents in Stratford, Trumbull, Norwalk and Stamford could use the trail to get from their homes to shopping areas.

Commuters living in all the towns along the right-of-way, but particularly in Stratford, Trumbull, Fairfield, Norwalk and Stamford, could use the trail to travel to their homes to their place of employment.

New Canaan residents could use the trail to travel to and from the New Canaan railroad station.

Greenwich residents could use the trail to travel to scenic areas such as Lake Putnam or the Tollgate ponds.

Stratford and Trumbull residents could use the trail to travel to the Housatonic River.

Equestrians in Greenwich and New Canaan, who already use trails near, or crossing, the right-of-way could share parts of the new trail where conditions are suitable for shared use.

Neighborhood residents in all towns could use the Parkway trail for recreation and to travel to nearby parks, preserves or recreational facilities.

15. Potential Demonstration Sites For Trail Segments

Construction of demonstration trail segments can give communities along the Parkway an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the proposed trail system. Demonstrating the value of a Merritt Parkway trail system can help to build the support necessary for the eventual completion of a bicycle and pedestrian path along the entire length of the Parkway. The potential demonstration trail segments described below have been selected based on factors such as relative ease of implementation, the potential to link origin and destination points, landscape or resource characteristics, or multiple use potential. All include trail alignments located on the south side of the right-of-way. Some also include parallel trails on the north side of the right-of-way in order to provide a loop trail that will allow the user to return to their original destination point without retracing their steps (or bicycle tracks). The demonstration trails would connect existing residential areas with employment centers, commercial, recreational or scenic areas. Potential demonstration trail segments are shown on the maps included at the end of this section.

At least one trail segment is described for each town. Demonstration segments in different towns vary in terms of ease of construction, linkage value, potential environmental constraints or benefits, scenic qualities, character of adjacent land uses and potential use levels. For some

towns, more than one trail segment has been described if the additional segments appear to have relative ease of construction, provide particularly valuable linkage between origin and destination points, or provide other major benefits. An asterisk appears next to those segments that might prove to be the most valuable to the communities that they pass through, or would best demonstrate to the region the benefits of a trail along the entire length of the Parkway.

Greenwich - Putnam Lake Trail*

This trail section would begin at Lake Avenue, and extend for approximately three fourths of a mile past Lake Putnam Reservoir to North Street. It would provide residents from both the Lake Avenue and North Street neighborhoods with a pleasant route to the scenic views at Lake Putnam. To the north of the Parkway there is a large town park, the Babcock Preserve, that abuts both Lake Avenue and North Street, suggesting the possibility of a loop trail system in this area. At North Street, visitors could cross the bridge over the Parkway for a scenic view of Rockwood Lake, or continue farther northward to the town park.

The Greenwich Riding Club maintains trails near alongside the Parkway right-of-way which are used by both equestrians and, unofficially, by pedestrians. The possibility of constructing a parallel trail within the right-of-way for cyclists and pedestrians should be examined. Alternatively, the possibility of pedestrians (and possibly cyclists) sharing the existing equestrian trails should be examined.

If permission can be gained from the water company that owns Lake Putnam, routing the trail along the old Butternut Hollow roadbed that crosses the north end of Lake Putnam would make the trail more interesting. It would also avoid the difficulties of building a trail on the narrow strip of steep land at the northern end of the lake and reduce the amount of noise that could be heard from the Parkway. Additionally, or alternatively, the new trail could leave Butternut Hollow Road at the old underpass and follow existing horse trails northward to the Babcock preserve where it could hook in to the preserve's trails. To complete the loop, trail users could follow the Babcock preserve trails westward back to Lake Avenue.

Greenwich - Tollgate Pond Trails

The scenic Tollgate Ponds are located west of Riversville Road, directly south of the site of the former Greenwich tolls (Radde, B., 1993). An old stone bridge, in need of repair, leads from Riversville Road to a small island in the northern-most pond. This island is frequently used by fishermen and affords scenic views of the ponds.

Remnants of old equestrian and pedestrian trails can be discerned in the woodlands that lie both to the northwest and northeast of the Tollgate ponds. One trail extends from Riversville Road to the Byram River, which is approximately twelve feet wide at this point. Another extends from the Byram River to approximately one-fourth of a mile west of the end of Duncan Drive. The trail to the east of the river is very level. The trail immediately to the west of the river is currently obscured by vegetation or eroded, but subsequently continues along the level area on the north side of the ponds. It becomes clearly evident and apparently receives at least occasional use once it enters the hilly woodlands to the west of the ponds.

Although there is no apparent trail in most of the area that lies to the southwest of Bailiwick Road, the presence of a Parkway rest stop just east of the New York border, approximately one mile to the southwest of the ponds, suggests the possibility of continuing the trail through this moderately hilly area to the rest stop. This rest stop currently has a small tourist office. The trail could provide an opportunity for those stopping to visit the tourist office to take a short walk along a route that runs through a typical young Connecticut woodland to the scenic Tollgate Ponds. In addition, there are moderately dense residential areas that lie both to the north and south of the Parkway whose residents could enjoy the use of this trail.

Greenwich - Thunder Mountain Trail*

This trail would begin at Riversville Road, crossing the East Branch of the Byram River and continuing westward across gently sloping land, up a steep, rocky area to a ridge top. Next it would cross a quarter mile stretch of level open woodland, descending a gentle slope to the vicinity of the Ernest Seton Reserve (Boy Scouts of America). A decorative Parkway underpass allows access between the northern and southern portions of the Boy Scout property, suggesting the possibility of access to the reserve when the Scout camp is not in session. Just to the north of the underpass is a scenic pond. Cyclists might need to walk their bikes at two steep slopes along this segment.

West of the underpass the terrain is level. A Greenwich Riding Club trail parallels the right-of-way and ascends a steep ridge where it winds to the south on private property. If a bicycle trail were located on the flank of this ridge, running parallel to the contours of the slope, it would provide a long level stretch through the beautiful open woodlands at the crest of this dramatic ridge. Alternatively, the trail could be located at the foot of the ridge, adjacent to the Parkway Road. At the western end of the ridge, the Greenwich Riding Club trail descends the slope and passes through an underpass to provide connection with other Riding Club trails on the north side of the parkway. The proposed bicycle and pedestrian trail could continue along the right-of-way to Round Hill Road. To the east of Round Hill Road there is a large wetland that would be very difficult to traverse. Consequently, in this area the trail could extend eastward along Springhouse Road and Will Merry Lane, continuing onward to Old Mill Road, where it could once again enter the right-of-way and join the Lake Putnam Trail.

Although this trail presents a number of physical constraints, the beautiful open woodlands and striking topography along its route are major assets.

Stamford - High Ridge Trail*

This trail loop would lead from residential areas in the Newfield Avenue neighborhood of Stamford, westward to the office complexes and commercial areas on High Ridge Road. The part of the right-of-way directly adjacent to the High Ridge Road office complex includes some steep areas. Consequently it might be preferable to have the trail leave the right-of-way at the east end of the office parking lots, routing it down the access road through the complex to High Ridge Road.

Turning north under the High Ridge Road overpass, the trail would pass near to the High Ridge\Dzamba Grove neighborhood, and subsequently turn eastward back along an abandoned portion of Turn of River Road. It would cross the Rippowam River on a small historic bridge. The trail might continue either along the narrow northern portion of the Parkway right-of-way or along an abandoned subdivision road that lies just north of the right-of-way, passing eastward across a long level stretch by the river, and then up a short, steep hill to a utility right-of-way. Visitors could follow this utility right-of-way northward to the Dzamba Grove Ponds and the North Stamford Reservoir, or continue eastward, within the northern portion of the right-of-way, back to Newfield Avenue.

New Canaan - Talmadge Hill Trail Loop*

This trail loop would begin at the New Canaan Metro North Railroad Station. It could serve as a commuter route for New Canaan residents to walk or cycle to and from the train station. Because the trail passes the train station it would be accessible by public transportation. It is also possible that the station parking area could be used on weekends by trail users. A small section of Waveny Park (owned by the town of New Canaan) is located south of the right-of-way, between the train station, Talmadge Hill Road and Lapham Road.

From the railroad station, which is located at the corner of Hoyt Street and Talmadge Hill Road, the trail would lead eastward along an existing pedestrian trail to Lapham Road. At the corner of Lapham Road there is an historic church. This will add interest to the trip for those who enjoy local history.

To the east of Lapham Road the right-of-way contains an unmarked but well defined trail that is currently used by both pedestrians and occasional equestrians. This trail has one spur that leads to a knoll overlooking the Parkway. The area is level. At South Avenue visitors would travel north along the margin of this wide road to the Parkway bridge, continuing further north to an entrance to the Waveny Park Trail System at Talmadge Hill. Well defined crossings would be needed to guide trail users safely past parkway ramp entrances.

The Waveny Park trail system is well used and has a loop that extends westward along the north side of the Parkway, directly adjacent to the right-of-way. Walkers, joggers and people walking their dogs were observed during a winter field visit. Bicycle tire tracks were also apparent. The area is very level. Trail users could follow this existing trail westward to Lapham Road where they could turn south and rejoin the trail leading back to the railroad station. Alternatively, they could take a detour into Waveny Park, following one of the existing park trail loops up to the Waveny Hall mansion, fields, theater and gift shop.

A western extension of this trail would lead from the railroad station, crossing Hoyt Street to a small private road. Approximately one-fourth of a mile westward along this road is a dirt pullover. An existing trail leads up a steep hill from this pullover, through open woodlands to the eastern end of Hawks Hill Road. Although the steep hill might make it necessary for cyclists to dismount and walk their bicycles for a short distance, the existing trail is already clearly used by pedestrians.

New Canaan - White Oak Shade Trail*

East of South Avenue, the existing trail described above continues across level terrain. It is well used by pedestrians and the boundary fence that separates the right-of-way from private land has been cut in many areas providing access between adjacent residential neighborhoods and the trail. This suggests that the trail is already being used by neighborhood residents. The existing trail passes behind the New Canaan Parkway rest stop, which provides parking opportunities and suggests the trail's possible future use by travelers and tourists as an opportunity to take a short walk. Just west of White Oak Shade Road, the trail descends a short, moderately steep hill that might prove challenging for some cyclists.

Norwalk - Cranbury Trail*

This trail section would begin at Grumman Avenue south of Cranbury Park, extending westward for approximately one and a half miles to Old Route 7 (Main Avenue). It would provide people living in the moderately dense residential areas on the south side of the Parkway with an alternative route to the Merritt 7 office complex and commercial development on Main Avenue, and to Cranbury Park and Cranbury Elementary School. A utility line along the south side of the right-of-way would provide buffering between the trail and the neighborhoods.

The trail segment between Grumman Avenue and East Rocks Road is generally level with scattered small hills that can generally be circumnavigated. Just west of East Rocks Road there is a track that apparently provides access to the adjacent utility right-of-way. Three hundred feet to the west of the track there appears to be a second track or old road bed, leading from the Parkway road to the utility right-of-way. To the west of this track is a wet area with a number of scattered small streams that would require boardwalk bridge crossings. Because the ground was covered with snow during field investigations, it was not possible to

tell if there were any well used informal trails in this area. However, the tracks of one person, heading from east to west through the woods, were observed.

West of Grumman Avenue, the potential trail alignment would continue along gently sloped land to a steep drop which contains a large wet area, one of the two difficult areas of this alignment where cyclists would probably need to walk their bikes. Beyond this the land resumes its level to gently sloped character. Crossing West Rocks Road the potential alignment passes a power line substation (proper security would need to be ensured) and continues along level to gently sloped land until reaching a steep slope just east of Old Route 7. In order to avoid this steep drop, which leads to a wetland, the trail could leave the Parkway right-of-way, traversing the utility right-of-way that follows a slightly less steep slope (still challenging to most cyclists) down to a company parking lot. This lot might provide parking opportunities for trail users on weekends if the company were interested in cooperating. The entrance to the lot is on Old Route 7, and from here it is a short trip to the Merritt 7 office complex, the Boy Scouts of America center, stores, restaurants and other businesses.

Westport - Bayberry Trail*

This trail would begin just north of the Wolfson Open Space on Bayberry Lane extending westward along relatively level land across North Avenue to Route 136. East of North Avenue there are some steep areas that might require trail users to walk their bikes. A large wetland that would need to be crossed by a boardwalk lies just to the west of Route 136. At Route 136 the trail would follow the road south for approximately a thousand feet and then turn northward on the Weston Road, re-entering the right-of-way just south of the Weston Road overpass and the commuter parking lot. From this point, the trail would continue westward across Clinton Avenue to the wooded bluff overlooking the Saugatuck River, where a scenic overlook could be established. Staples High School and some town-owned land that is used for community gardens lie to the south of this potential trail segment, suggesting the possibility that students or community gardeners from nearby residential areas might use part of the trail as an alternate route to travel to these facilities.

Fairfield - Nonopogue Trail*

This trail section would begin at the Black Rock Turnpike commuter lot, crossing Cricker Brook and extending for approximately three-fourths of a mile along an unofficial but well used pedestrian pathway that already exists in the right-of-way. The existing pedestrian trail would need to be realigned in two steeply sloped areas in order to make it usable by most cyclists. A segment of the trail that passes along the foot of a steep slope at the northern boundary of a wetland that lies just west of Morehouse Drive would need to be replaced by a boardwalk crossing. On reaching Morehouse Drive the trail would cross the road and join the Lake Mohegan trail and Cascades trail system.

Fairfield - Stratfield Trail*

This trail section would begin at the state owned commuter parking lot on Easton Turnpike. It would extend along the northern boundary of the General Electric property, on a service road that leads to the back of a Parkway rest stop. It would continue along a level, currently abandoned roadbed to the north end of Lake Mohegan Park, where it would link to the Lake Mohegan and Cascades trail system. Its total length would be approximately three-fourths of a mile. This trail section could be used by residents of nearby subdivisions, tourists stopping at the Parkway rest area, and students at Sacred Heart University.

If this demonstration segment were extended eastward for an additional half-mile to South Park Road, it could be routed either within the right-of-way or along a bicycle lane (to be designated) on Jefferson Street. With this extension, the trail could also serve students at the grade school and employees at the health center on Jefferson Street, and employees at the office building located on the south side of the Parkway at South Park Road and Exit 47.

Fairfield - Owlbridge Trail*

This trail would begin at the corner of Congress Street and Cross Highway and extend eastward across level land to Hillside Road. Alternatively, since the portion of Cross Highway that borders the right-of-way receives little traffic, the trail could extend along this road. At Hillside Road trail users could turn north, passing under a historic bridge that is decorated with four charming sculptures of owls to the southwest entrance of the Larsen Sanctuary. Trail users could also continue eastward within the right-of-way, skirting a wetland and traversing a gentle grade to Burr Street. Between Hillside Road and Burr Street, adjacent to the southern portion of the right-of-way, are two preserves that are owned by the Aspetuck Land Trust, suggesting the possibility of trail users visiting the preserves, or preserve visitors extending their walks onto the Parkway trail. Turning North on Burr Street, trail users could pass under another historic bridge, and continue northward to the eastern section of the Larsen Sanctuary. This trail would provide a route from nearby neighborhoods to the preserves and sanctuary, and would give people a pleasant and convenient route from one preserve to another.

Trumbull - Ox Hill Trail

This trail would run from the office park at Lindeman Drive and Reservoir Road, westward across generally level land to Main Avenue and the entrance to the Trumbull Shopping Park. The right-of-way behind the office park has informal trails in it already, suggesting that this part of the trail segment could serve as a place for office workers to take a lunch time stroll, or as an alternative route from residential areas to the north, south and west to this employment center. Just to the west of the office park is a large bottomland forest with many drainage swales. The trail would probably need to be elevated on a boardwalk in this area. West of this point the trail would cross Frenchtown Road and Machalowski Road, continuing over Island Brook (which has informal trails leading to it) and past the Bonnie View residential area to Main Avenue and the shopping mall.

Stratford - Tavern Rock Trail

This trail segment would begin at Hawley Lane, just east of Route 8, and extend eastward across generally level land, to Huntington Road. Crossing Huntington Road, the trail would continue across level land until reaching a slope just west of a Catholic high school. Cyclists might need to walk their bikes up this slope. At the top of the slope the land levels out again and the trail would continue to James Farm Road. Moderately dense residential areas lie to the north and south of the proposed trail segment, suggesting the possibility of trail use for recreational purposes as well as an alternate route to the high school. The bridge at James Farm Road has two sets of dramatic sculptured wings on its central piers, and a sidewalk that will facilitate connection to the residential area lying to the north. Just north of the bridge is Cook's Pond and Roosevelt Park.

Stratford - Housatonic River Overlook and Boat Access*

This trail segment would begin at the commuter parking lot on Route 110, extending for approximately one-half mile along Ryders Lane, James Town Road, the south side of a highway storage area, and onto an old unused road that leads to the banks of the Housatonic River, where the Merritt Parkway ends. The old road continues under the Housatonic River Bridge to the Sikorsky plant on the north. Residents from neighborhoods to the south of the parkway could use the trail to get to the river, while employees at Sikorsky could use the trail to get to the restaurants and shops on Ryders Lane. The trail would provide opportunities to view the scenic river and its marshes, as well as access for bird watchers and, perhaps, a small boat or canoe launch.

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The trail segments presented above have been selected based on a preliminary study of feasibility and potential benefits. It is hoped that review of this report will generate suggestions related to the routes described above, or identification of additional potential demonstration routes that would be of value to communities along the parkway and those who might use the trail. Comments or questions are welcome.

16. Successful Trails in Other States

Bicycle and pedestrian paths have been successful in many other states for many years. These popular facilities are well used and quickly become a valuable community or regional resource. Some examples are described below.

George Washington Parkway Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail - Virginia

This trail runs parallel to the George Washington Parkway from densely developed Rosslyn to Mount Vernon, passing Arlington National Cemetery and National Airport along the way. It is bounded on the east by the Potomac River and provides an alternative route to various employment centers in Virginia and Washington D.C., as well as recreational and scenic resources. It has hiking trails that extend onto Roosevelt Island where there is a historic monument and pleasant plaza. The trail offers opportunities for fishing, picnicking, sunbathing, nature study, and a number of spectacular views of the Potomac River and the bridges crossing the river.

Arlington County Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails - Virginia

This eighty-five-mile-long trail network extends throughout Arlington County, connecting employment centers, commercial areas, parks, historic and cultural sites, and natural areas. The trails are popular and are used for both commuting and recreation. Part of the trail runs along the old W&OD Railroad right-of-way. Other parts traverse the Custis Memorial Parkway right-of-way. A route map of the trail system is available from the Arlington County Government Planning Division.

C&O Canal Trail - Maryland and Washington D.C.

The old C&O Canal extends from Cumberland, Maryland to Washington D.C.. From Great Falls National Park in Maryland to Washington D.C., a trail runs along the old towpath of the canal. Much of the trail in Maryland and Washington is suitable not only for pedestrian use, but also for bicycles. The trail connects parks, natural areas and downtown D.C., and is used for both commuting and for recreational purposes. It passes historic sites and picnic areas. In Maryland, there are striking scenic views of the Potomac River and the Great Falls. In Washington D.C. the trail passes alongside rows of historic buildings, providing a pleasant alternative route along the banks of the canal through the Georgetown neighborhood.

The Capitol Area Greenway Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails - North Carolina

The Capitol Area Greenway is a twenty-mile long system of bicycle and pedestrian trails in Raleigh that links parks, open space and natural areas. In addition to providing a continuous route between these areas, one of the purposes of the project was to keep development away from sensitive land and to help preserve the residential character of neighborhoods (Fox, T. et al., 1988).

Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails - Oregon

The Eugene, Oregon trail system includes twenty-one miles of bicycle trails and forty seven miles of designated bicycle lanes on city streets. It connects employment centers, commercial areas, scenic and residential areas. The 1971 Oregon "Bicycle Bill" requires the state to spend 1% of its state gas tax receipts for bicycle and pedestrian path development, providing one

million in funds annually. Maps and brochures of the trail system are available (Fox, T. et al., 1988)*.

Cross Island Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails - New York

This paved bicycle and pedestrian path runs between the Cross Island Parkway and Little Neck Bay. It is well used and provides scenic views of the Bay and the Throgs Neck Bridge. It links Fort Totten and Northern Boulevard, and forms a link in the Brooklyn/Queens Greenway which connects recreational, cultural and historic resources, with residential areas, employment and commercial centers, scenic and natural areas (Fox, T. et al., 1988).

Hutchinson River Parkway Equestrian Trails - New York

This trail system runs along the Hutchinson River Parkway in Westchester County. It connects parks, country clubs, scenic and residential areas. Although originally designed for use by equestrians, it is also used by pedestrians and joggers.

Metropolitan Linear Park - Michigan

A paved path within this linear park in Battle Creek links parks, natural and scenic areas, and historic and cultural sites. There are picnic tables, benches and shelters along the way, and signs that tell trail users about points of interest (Fox, T. et al., 1988).

Pinellas Trail - Florida

This bicycle and pedestrian trail passes commercial, recreational and industrial areas as well as schools, parks and scenic areas. A well designed 1993 guidebook for the trail shows the trail route, origin and destination points, parking areas, shelters, picnic areas, restaurants, lodgings and places of interest. This guidebook could serve as a model for a Merritt Parkway Trail Guide.

17. In Closing

Successful bicycle and pedestrian trails in other parts of the United States and the world serve a multitude of needs and have become valuable resources in their communities. In many cases copies of plans or reports on the development of trail systems in other parts of the country are available, and can be used as models or guides for the development of successful bicycle and pedestrian paths. Connecticut can benefit by the successful experiences of other states.

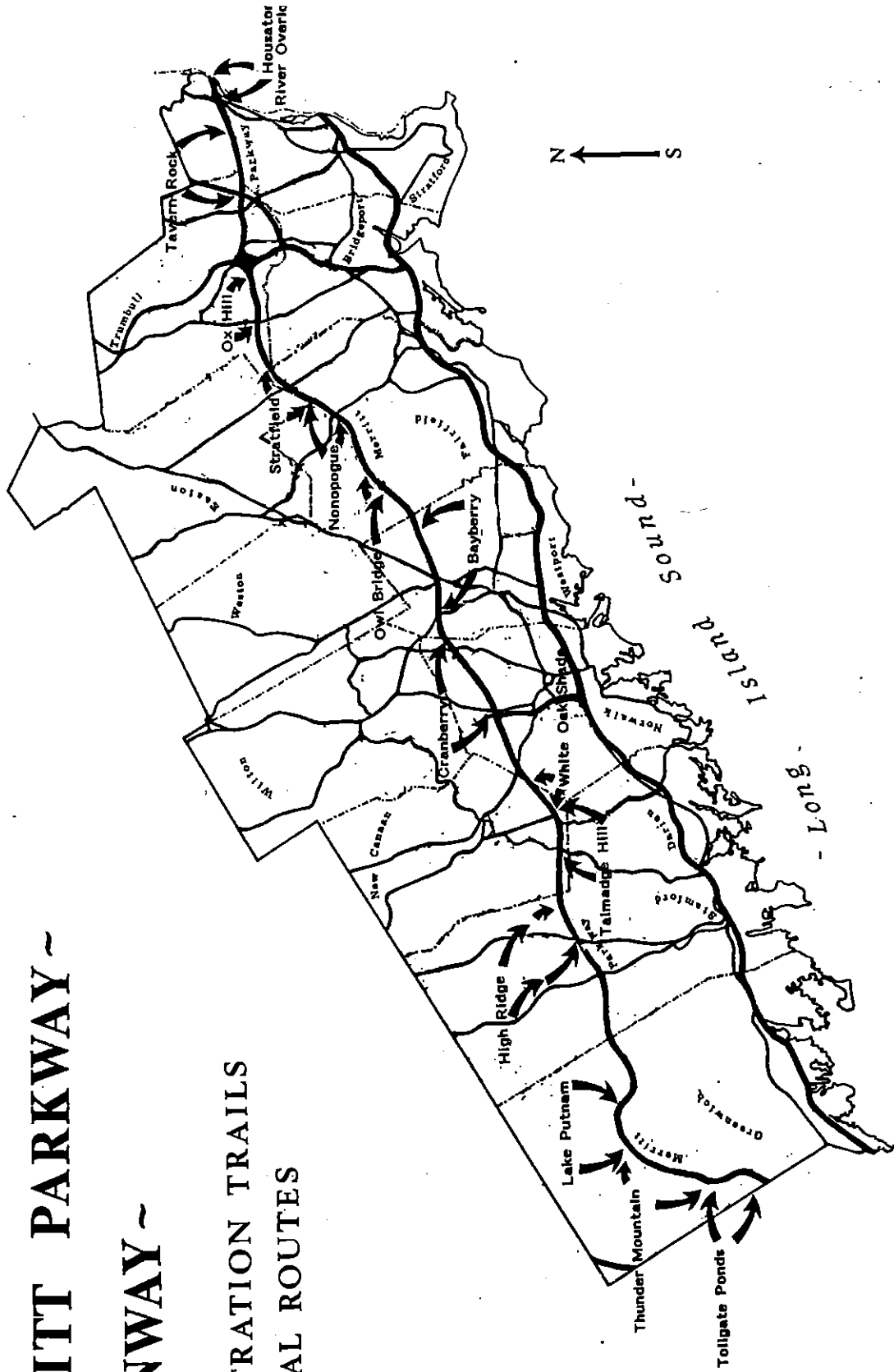
New sources of funding are available for alternative transportation modes and enhancements under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. At the same time, there are constraints to new road construction and widening under the Clean Air Act. Now would be an excellent time for Connecticut to establish a Merritt Parkway bicycle and pedestrian trail. This trail would not only provide multi-use alternative transportation opportunities but a pleasant greenway that would be a valuable asset to the state's residents and their children in the years to come.

*Information on the trails described above is on file at the Connecticut Office of RPA

**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATION TRAILS**

MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY

DEMONSTRATION TRAILS POTENTIAL ROUTES INDEX



CARTOGRAPHY: BY JENNIFER ALTY, 1994.
SOURCE: CONNECTICUT NATURAL RESOURCES ATLAS SERIES, WATER QUALITY CLASSIFICATIONS MAP OF CONNECTICUT, 1997, COMPILED BY JAMES E. MURPHY, STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

LEGEND:

 **POTENTIAL TRAIL LOCATION**

 **ALTERNATIVE TRAIL LOCATION**

 **POTENTIAL TRAIL BRIDGE**

 **POTENTIAL ROAD CROSSING**

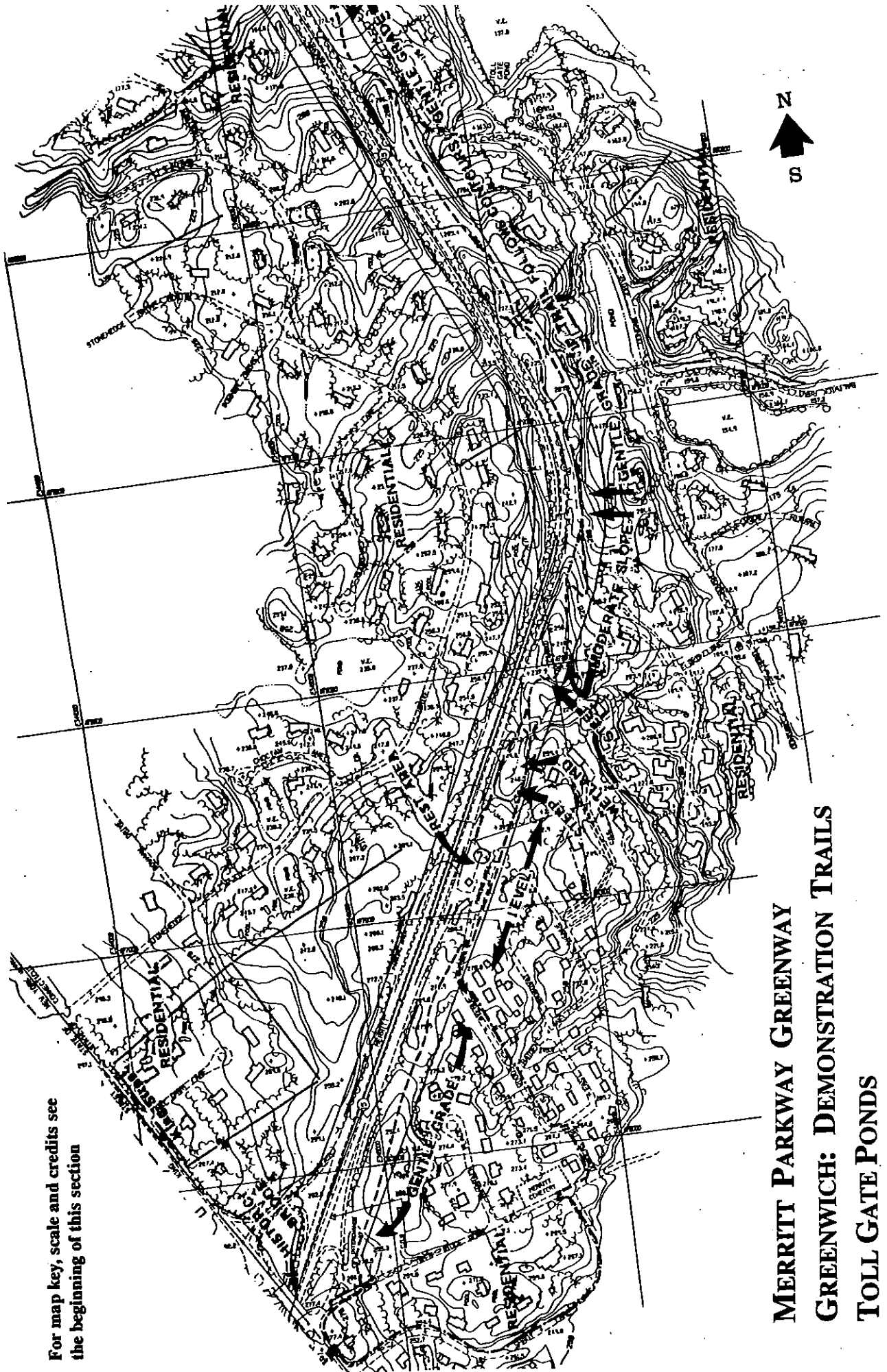
 **POTENTIAL PARKING AREA FOR TRAIL USERS**

 **SCENIC AREA**

 **BOUNDARIES OF MERRITT PARKWAY
RIGHT-OF-WAY AND OTHER STATE LANDS.**

SCALE: 1" = 600'

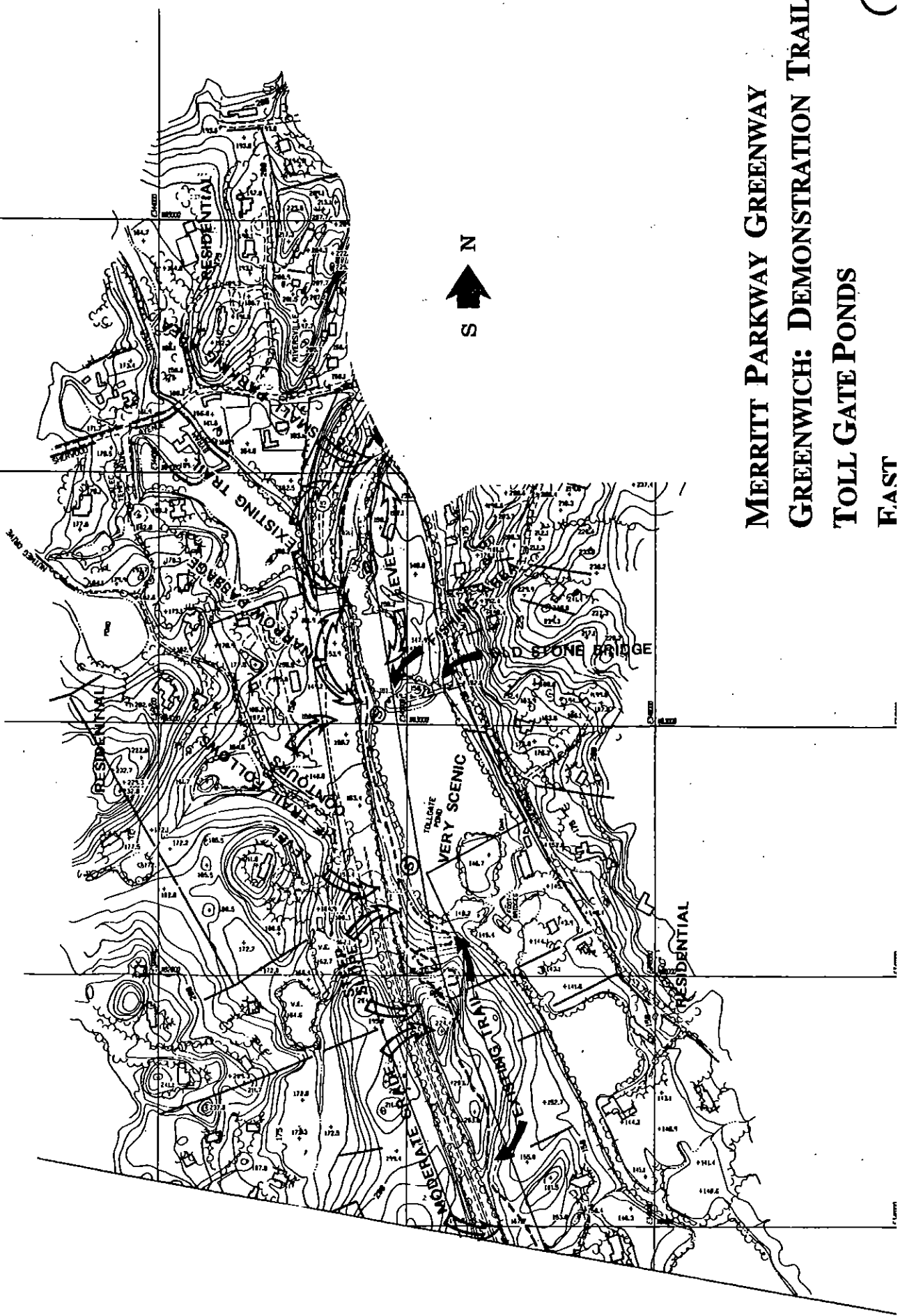
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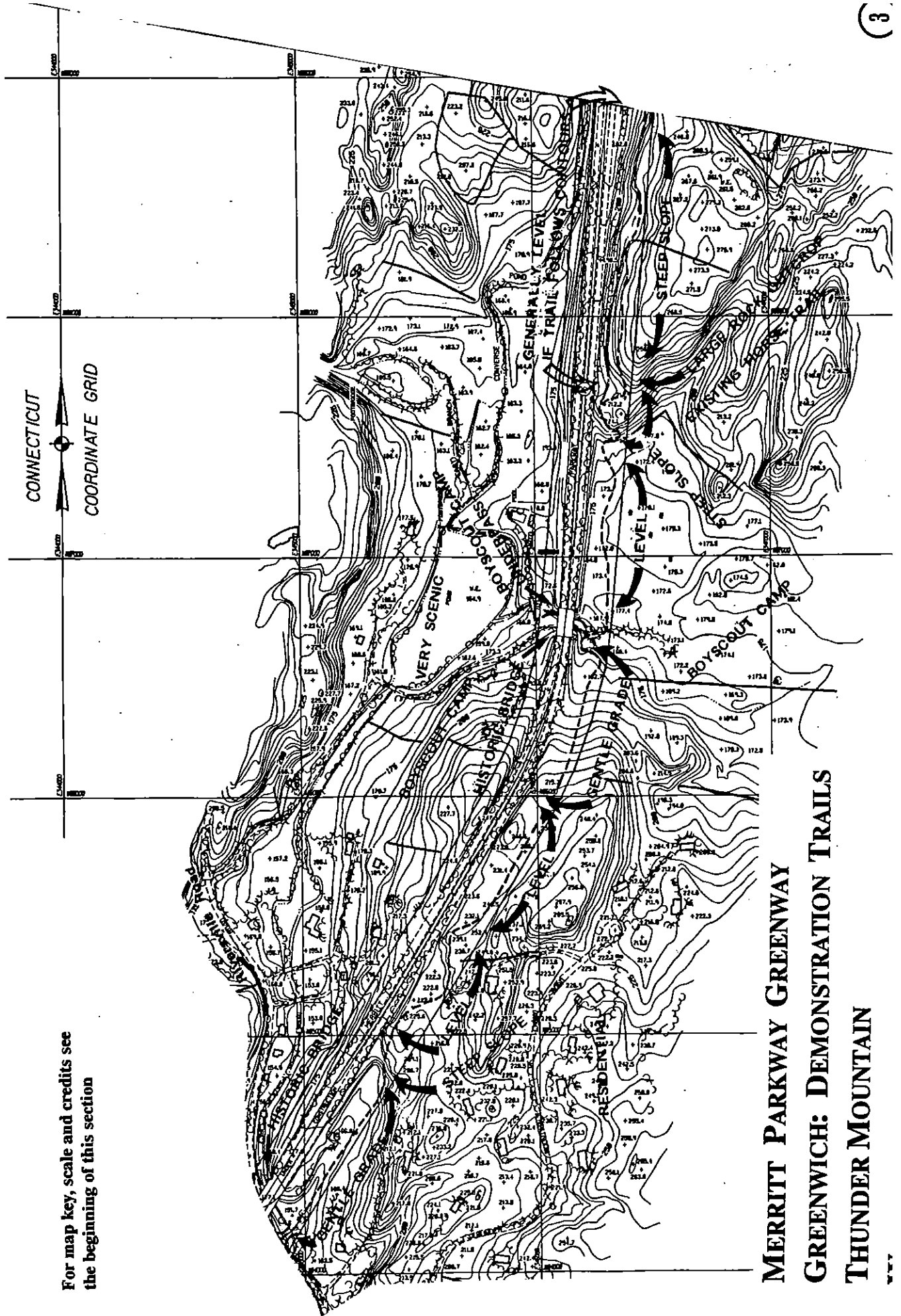
MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TOLL GATE PONDS
WFST

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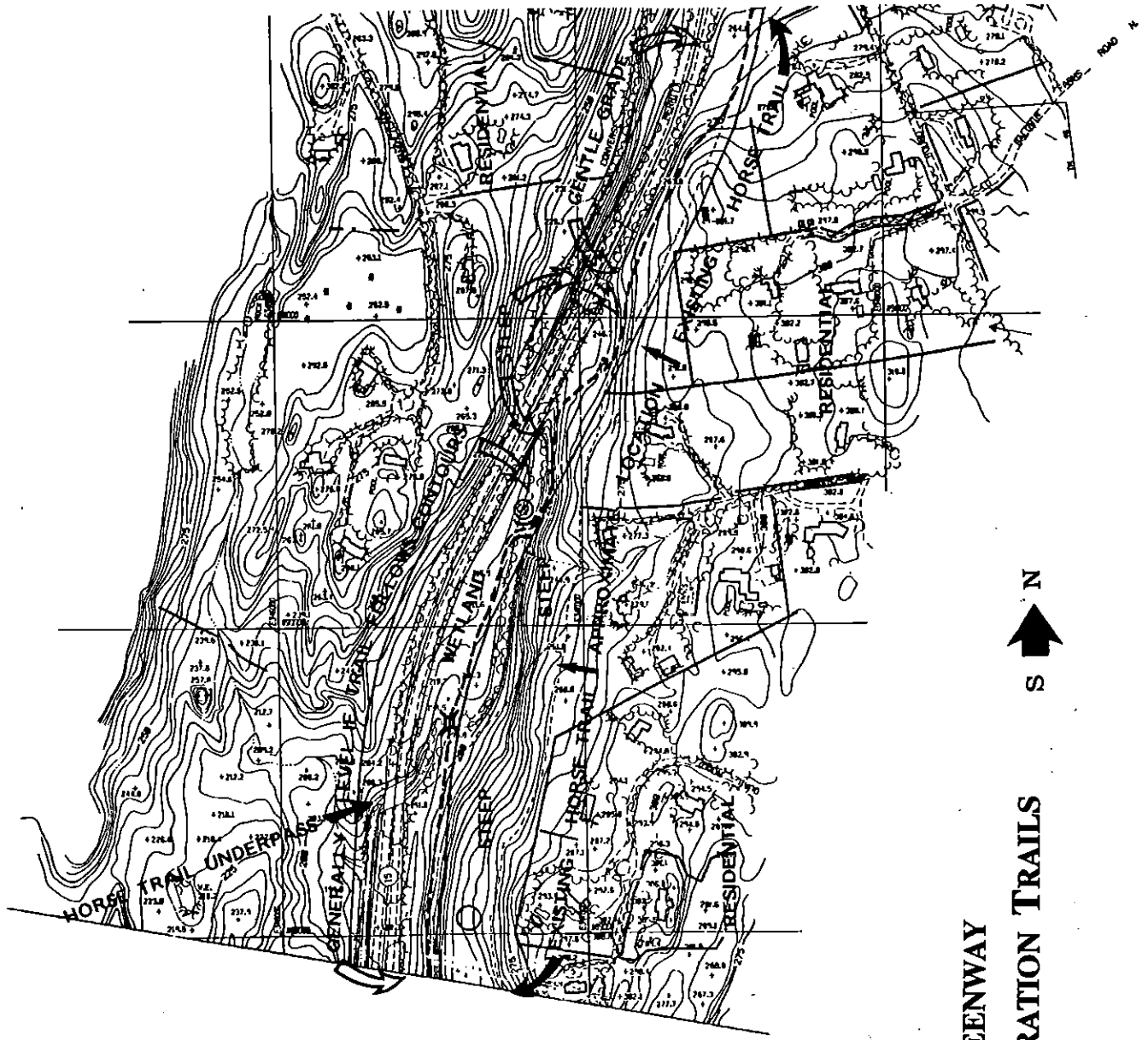
**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TOLL GATE PONDS
EAST**

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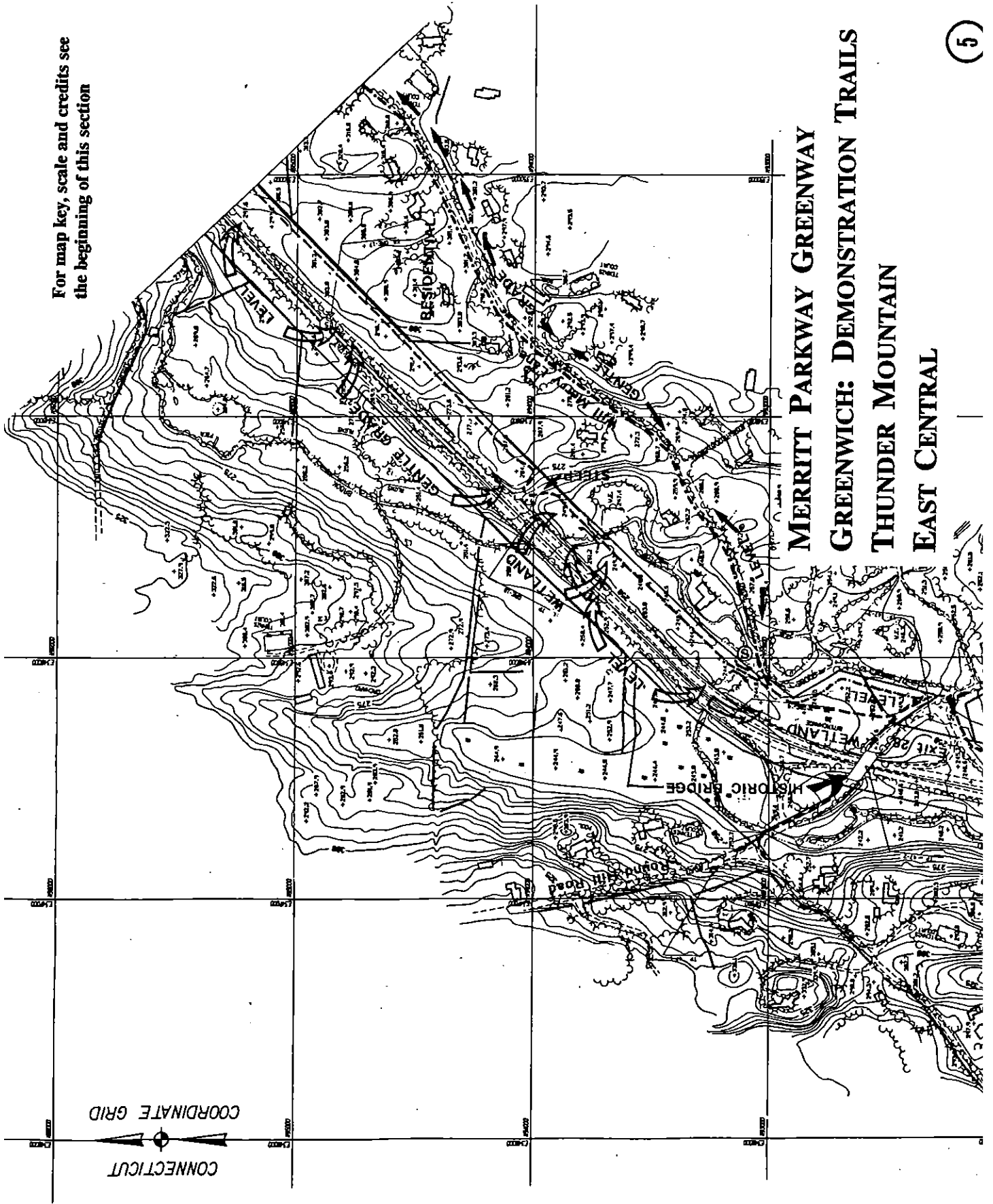
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GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
THUNDER MOUNTAIN

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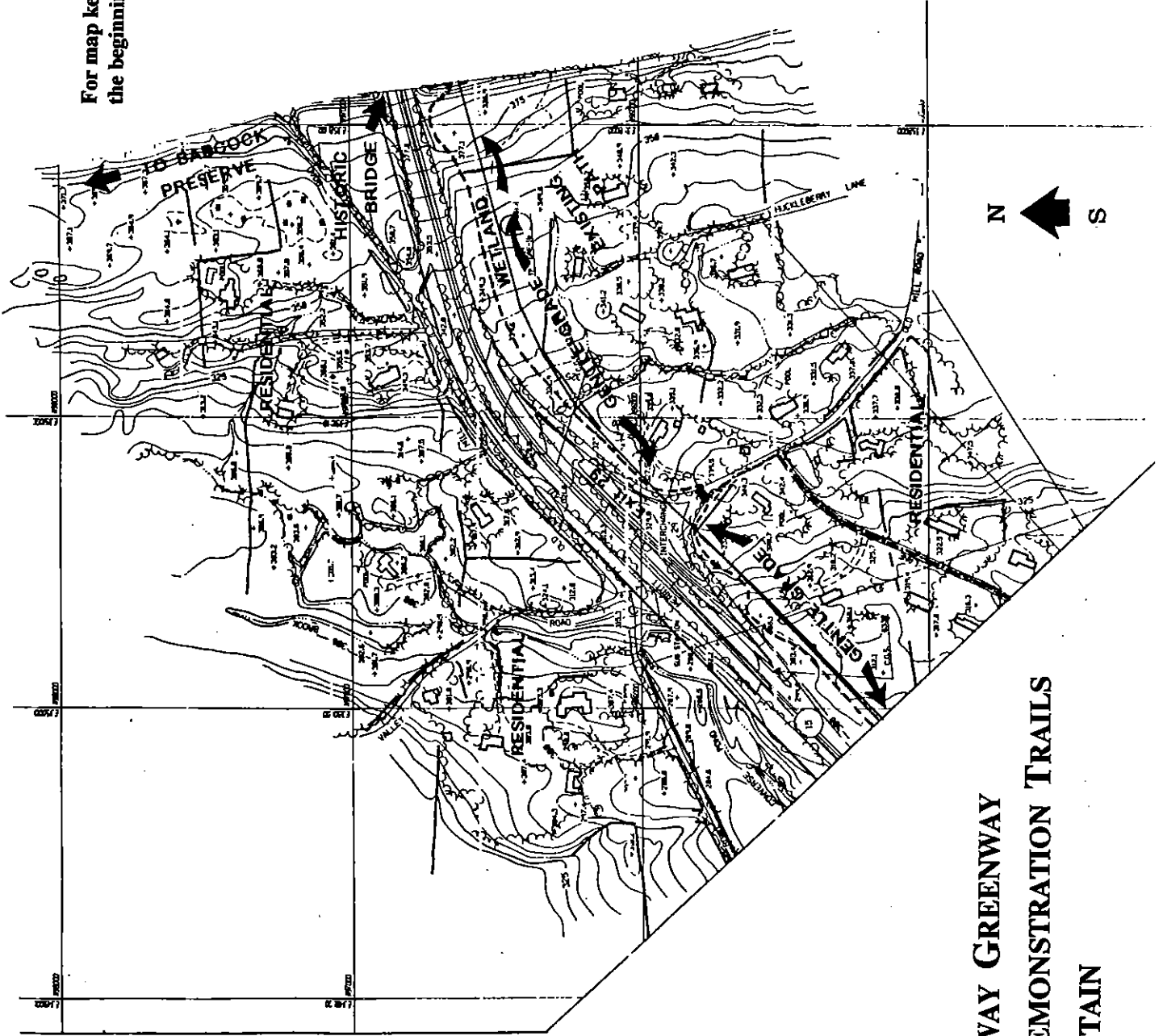
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GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
THUNDER MOUNTAIN
WEST CENTRAL

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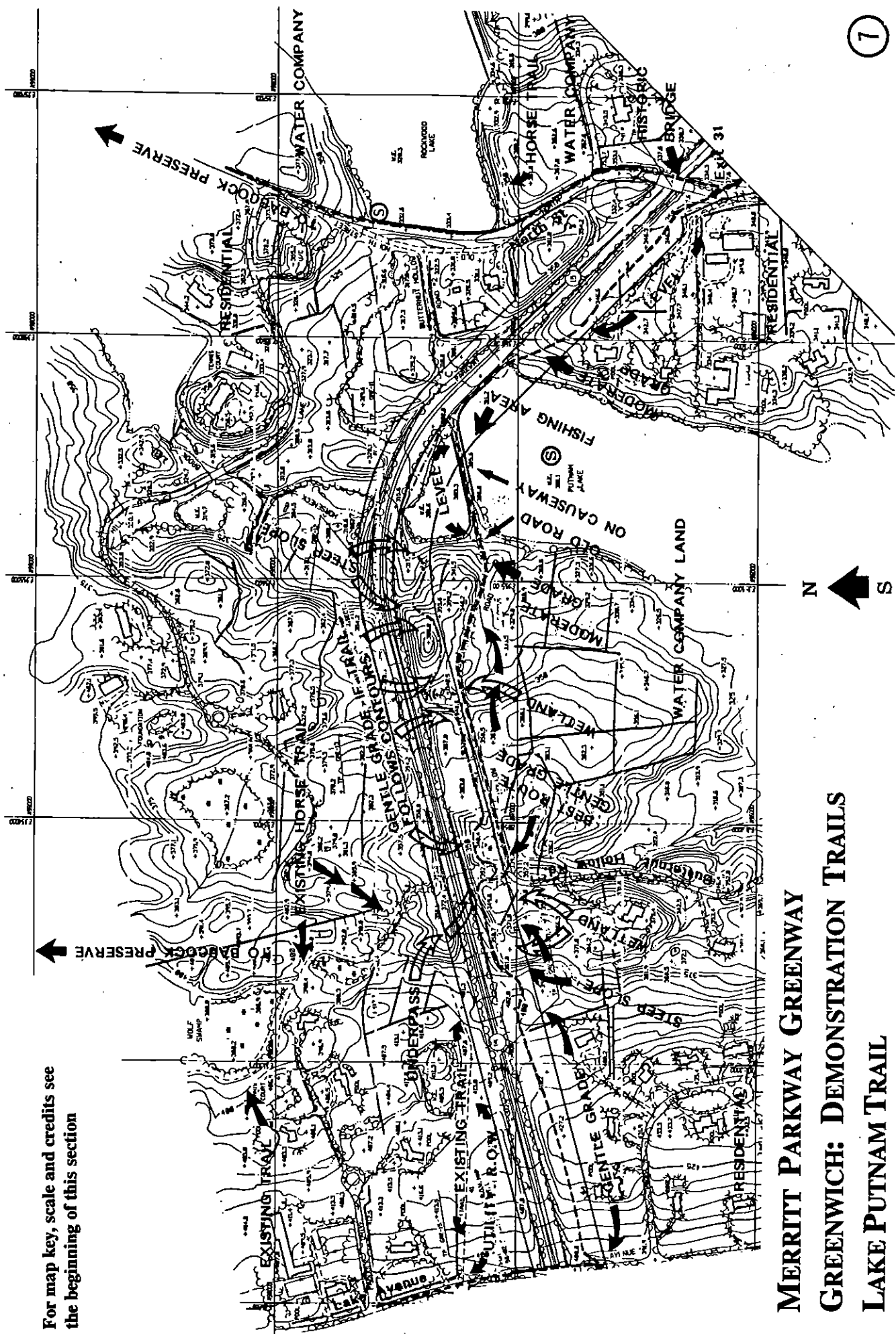


**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
THUNDER MOUNTAIN
EAST CENTRAL**

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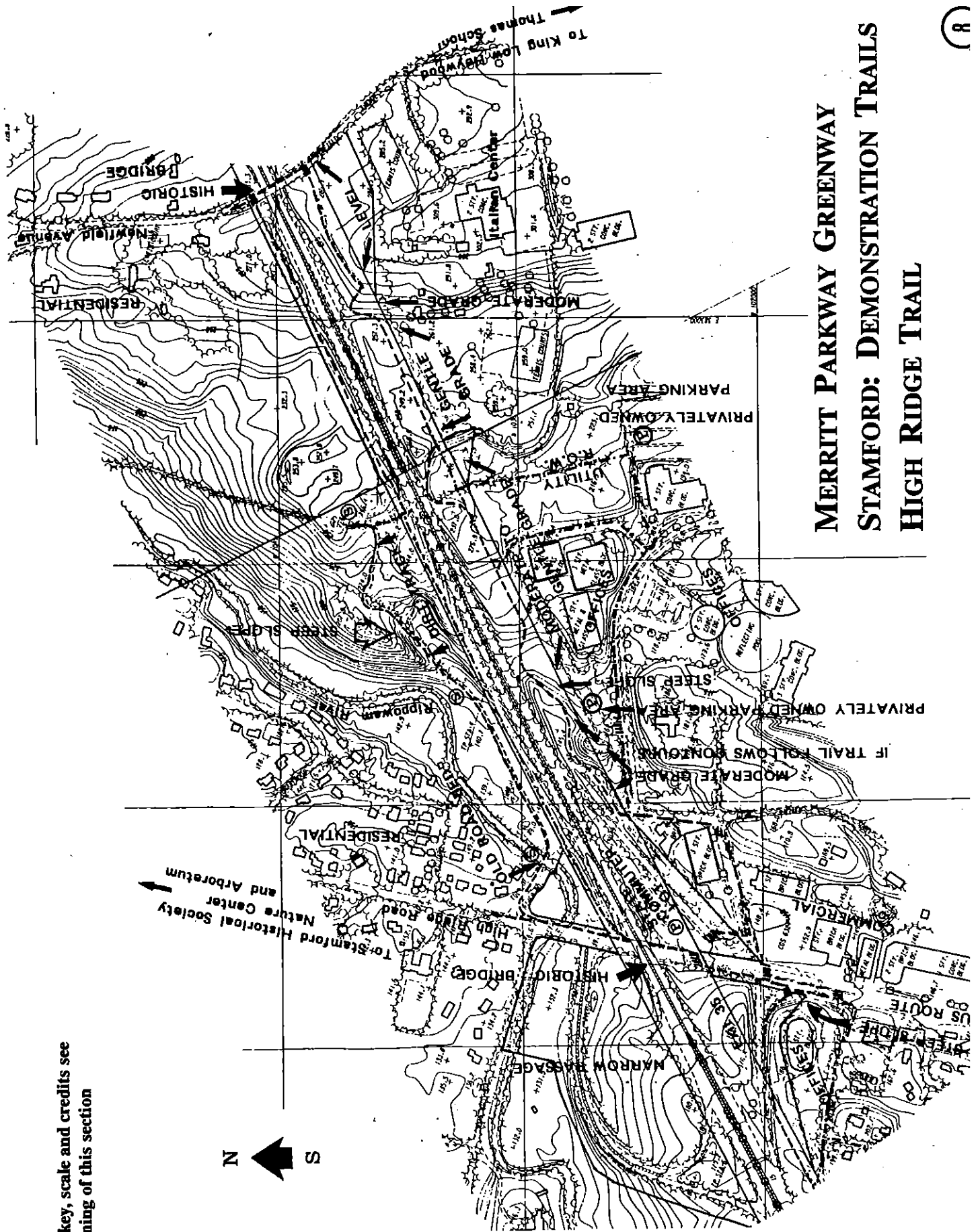
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GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
THUNDER MOUNTAIN
EAST**



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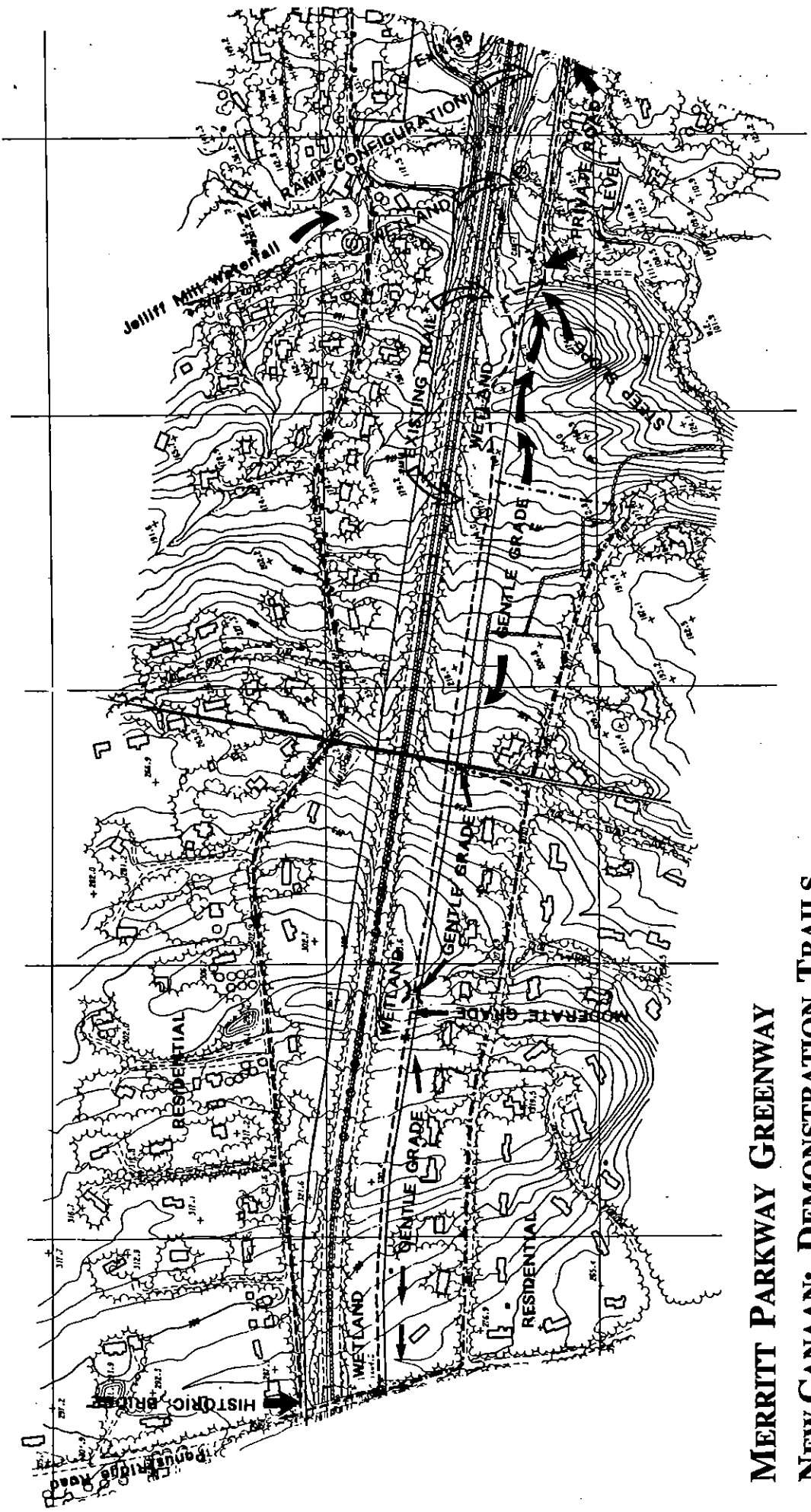
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 GREENWICH: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
 LAKE PUTNAM TRAIL**

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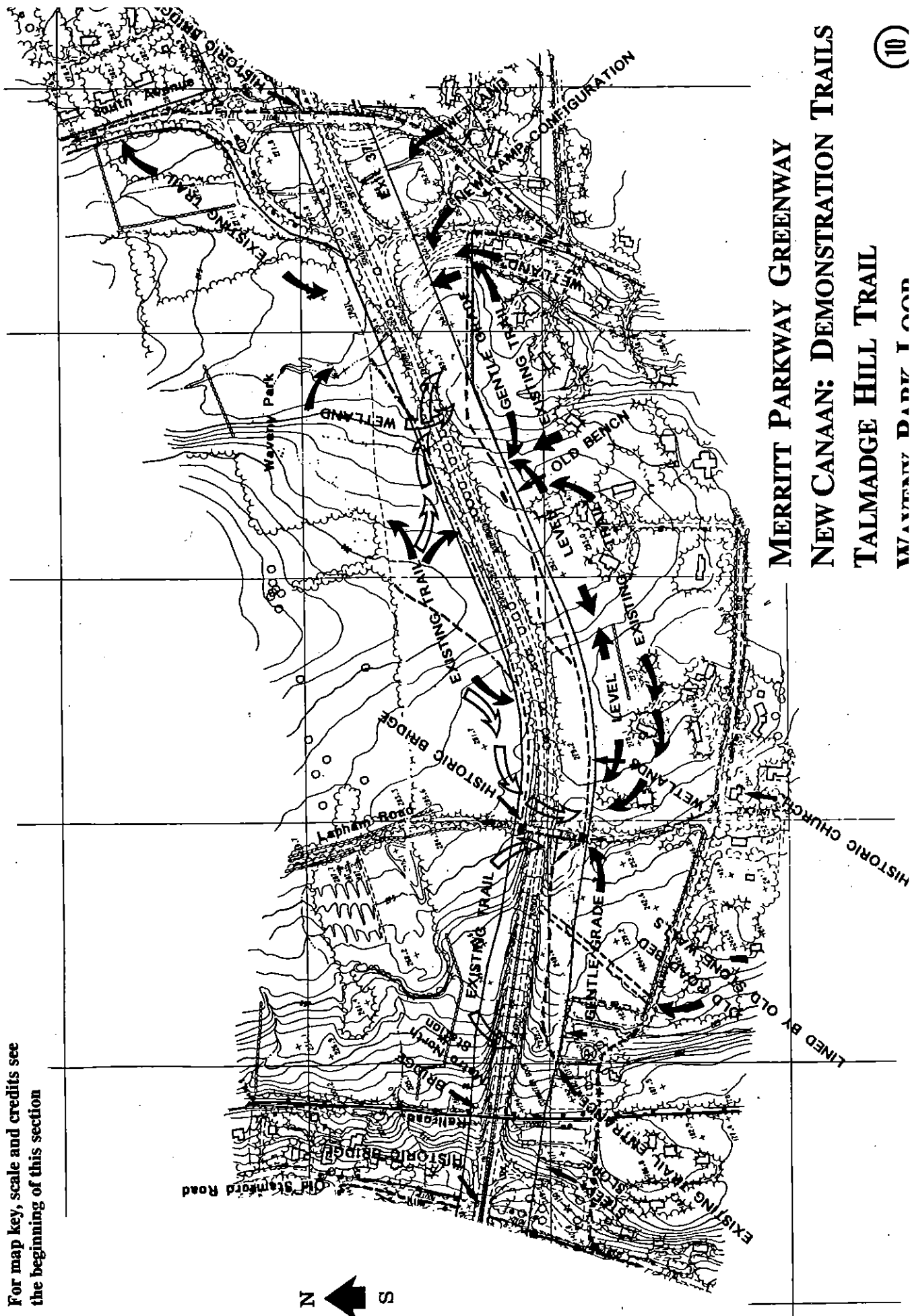
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STAMFORD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
HIGH RIDGE TRAIL**

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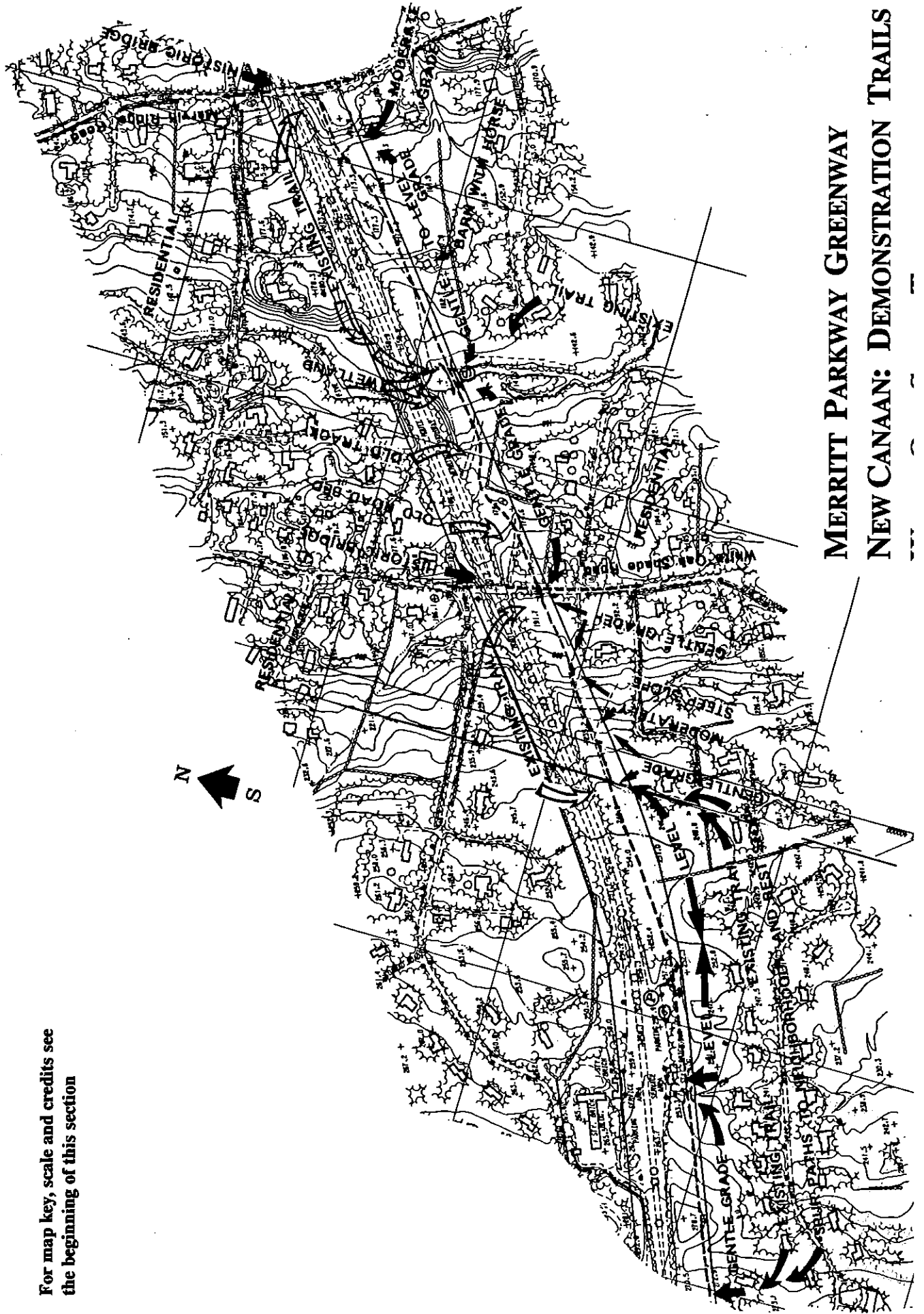
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NEW CANAAN: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TALMADGE HILL TRAIL**

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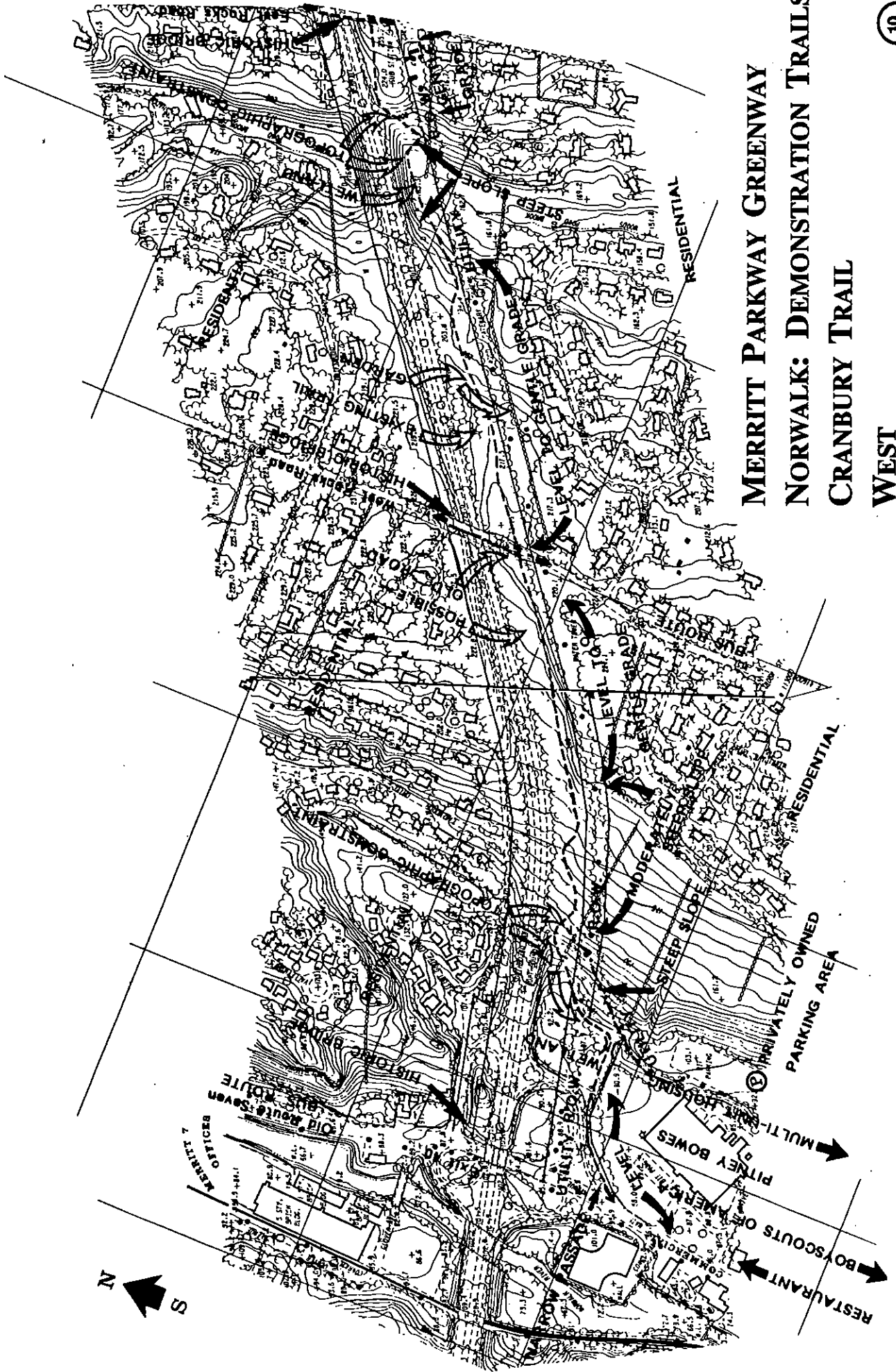
**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
NEW CANAAN: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TALMADGE HILL TRAIL
WAVENY DAVEY LOOK**

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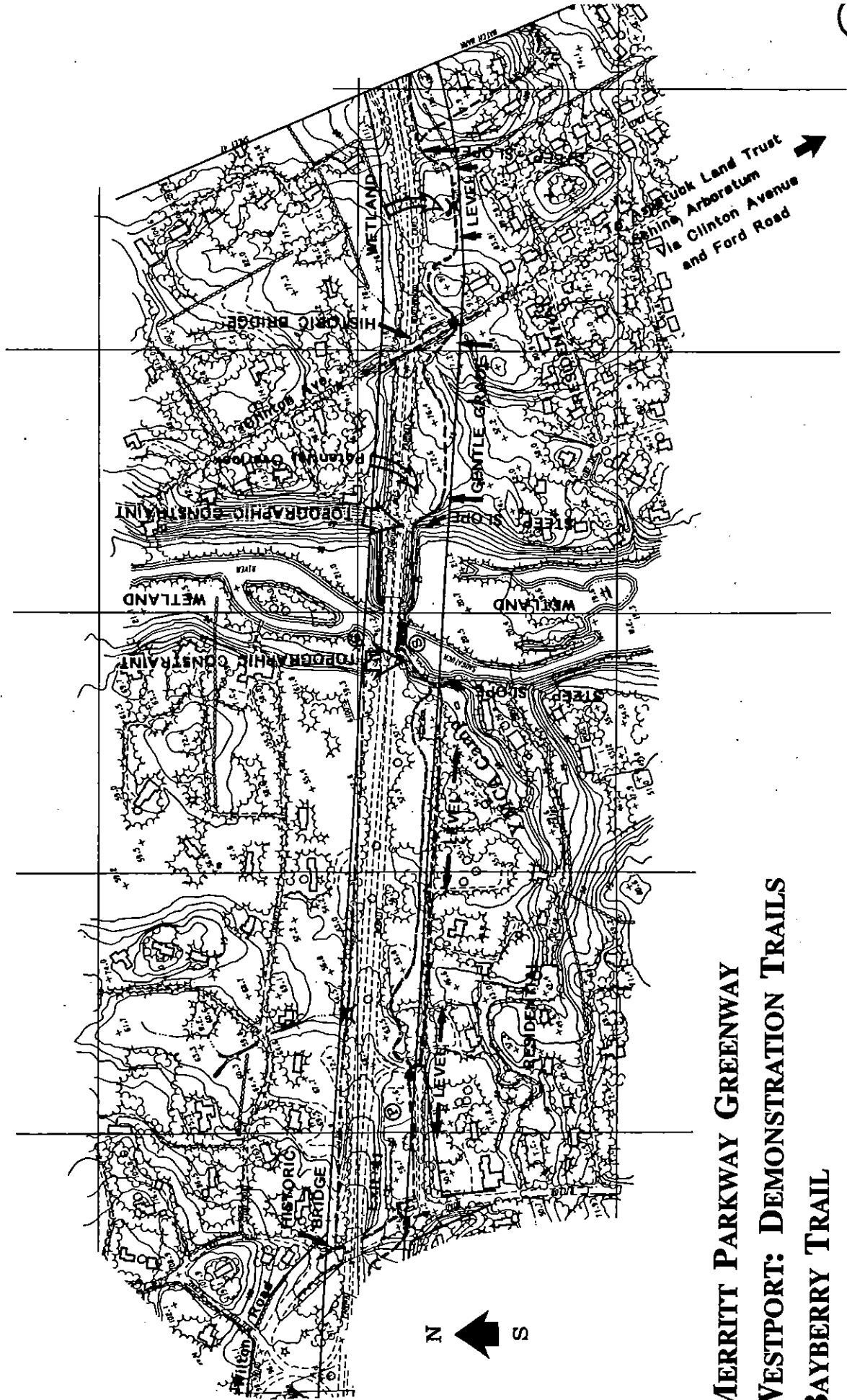


**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
NEW CANAAN: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS**

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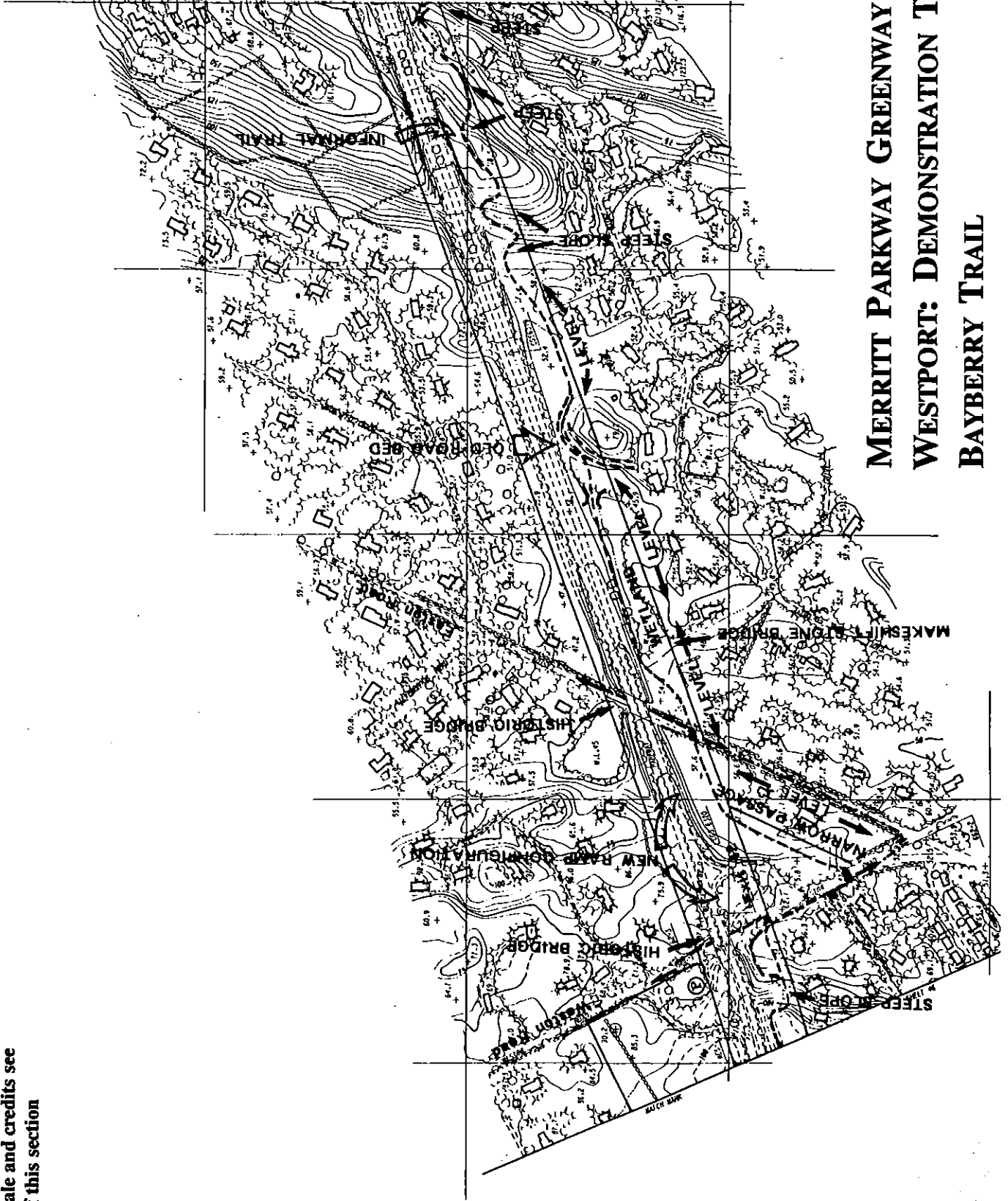
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MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
WESTPORT: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
BAYBERRY TRAIL

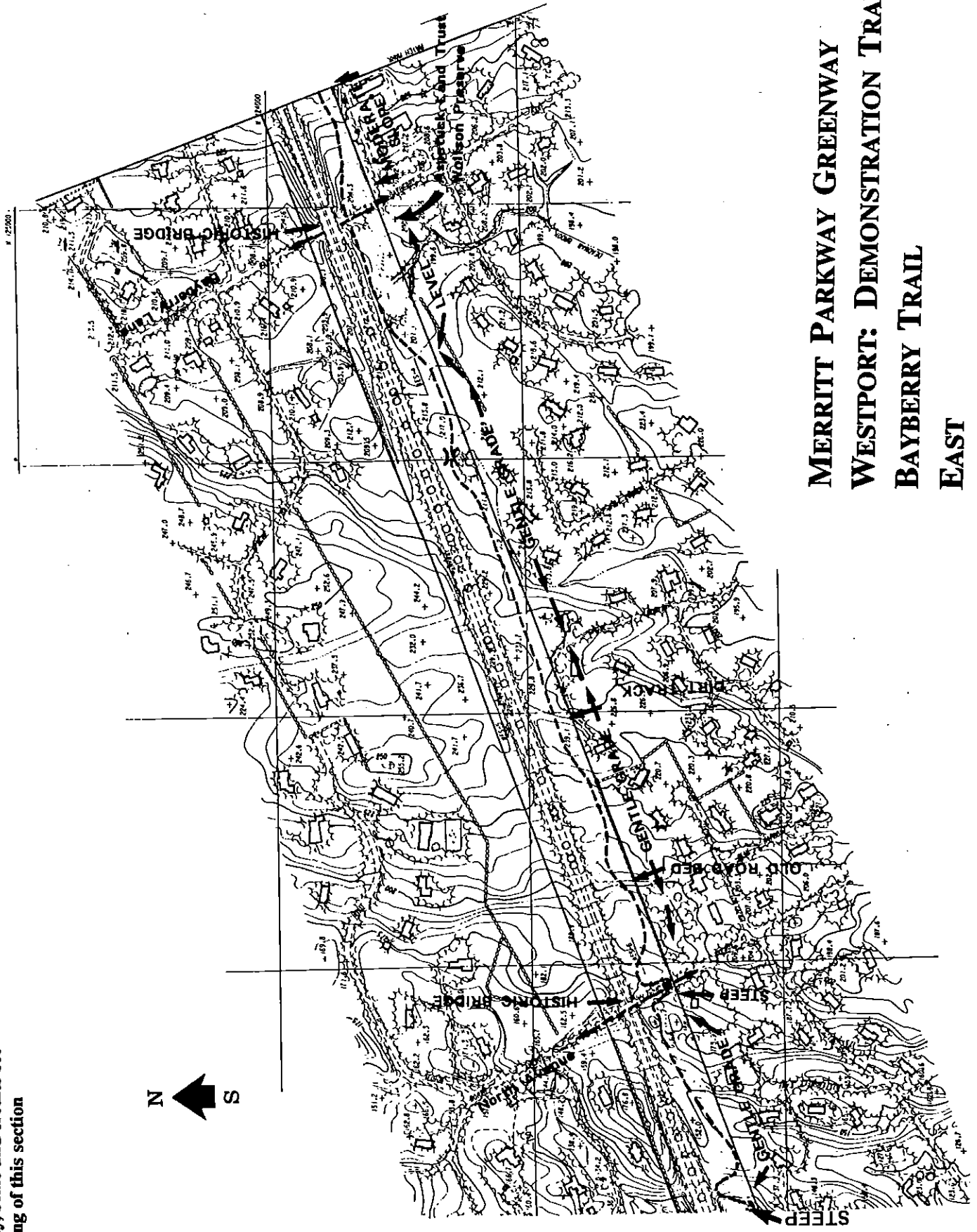
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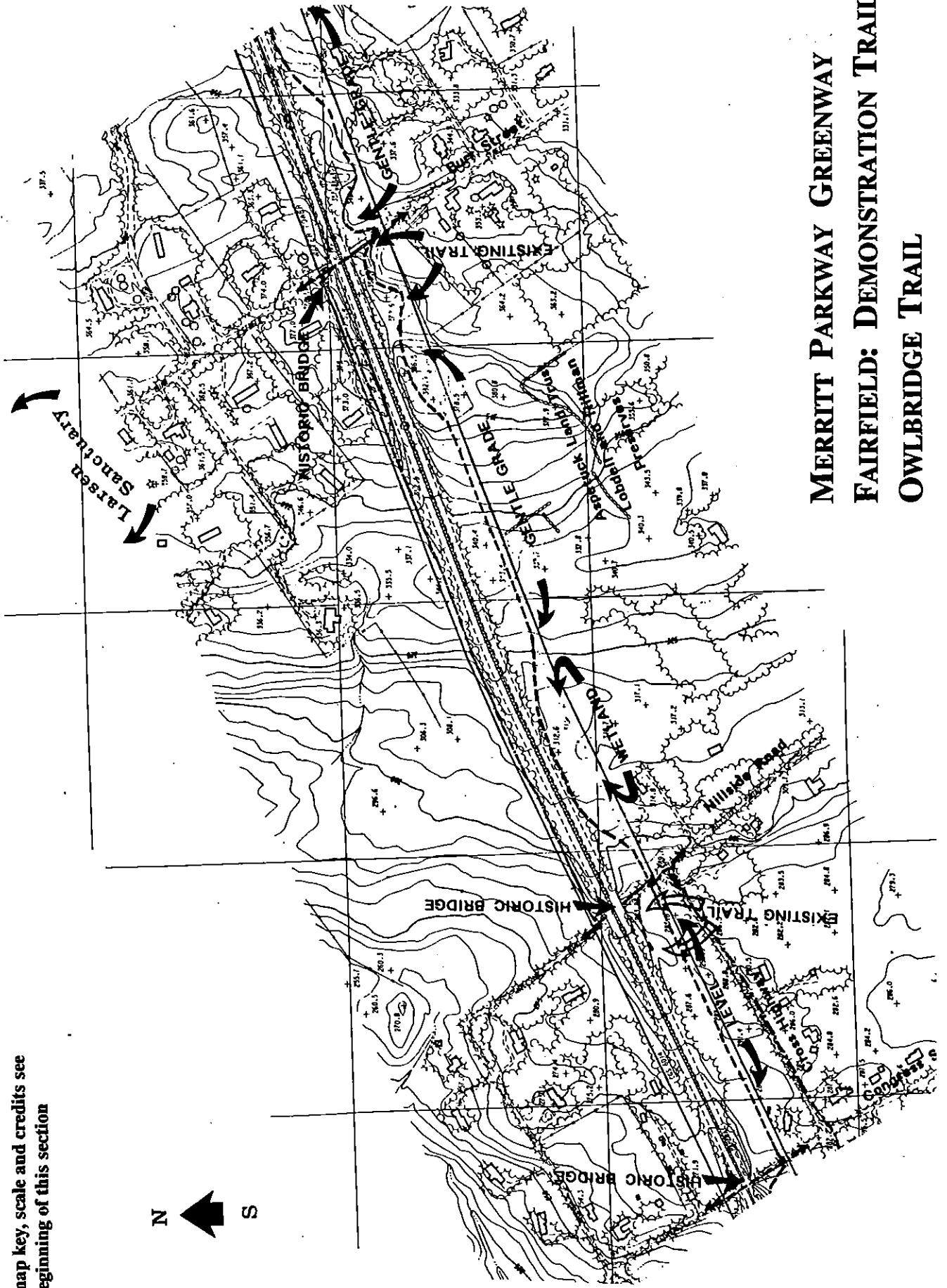
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WESTPORT: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
BAYBERRY TRAIL**

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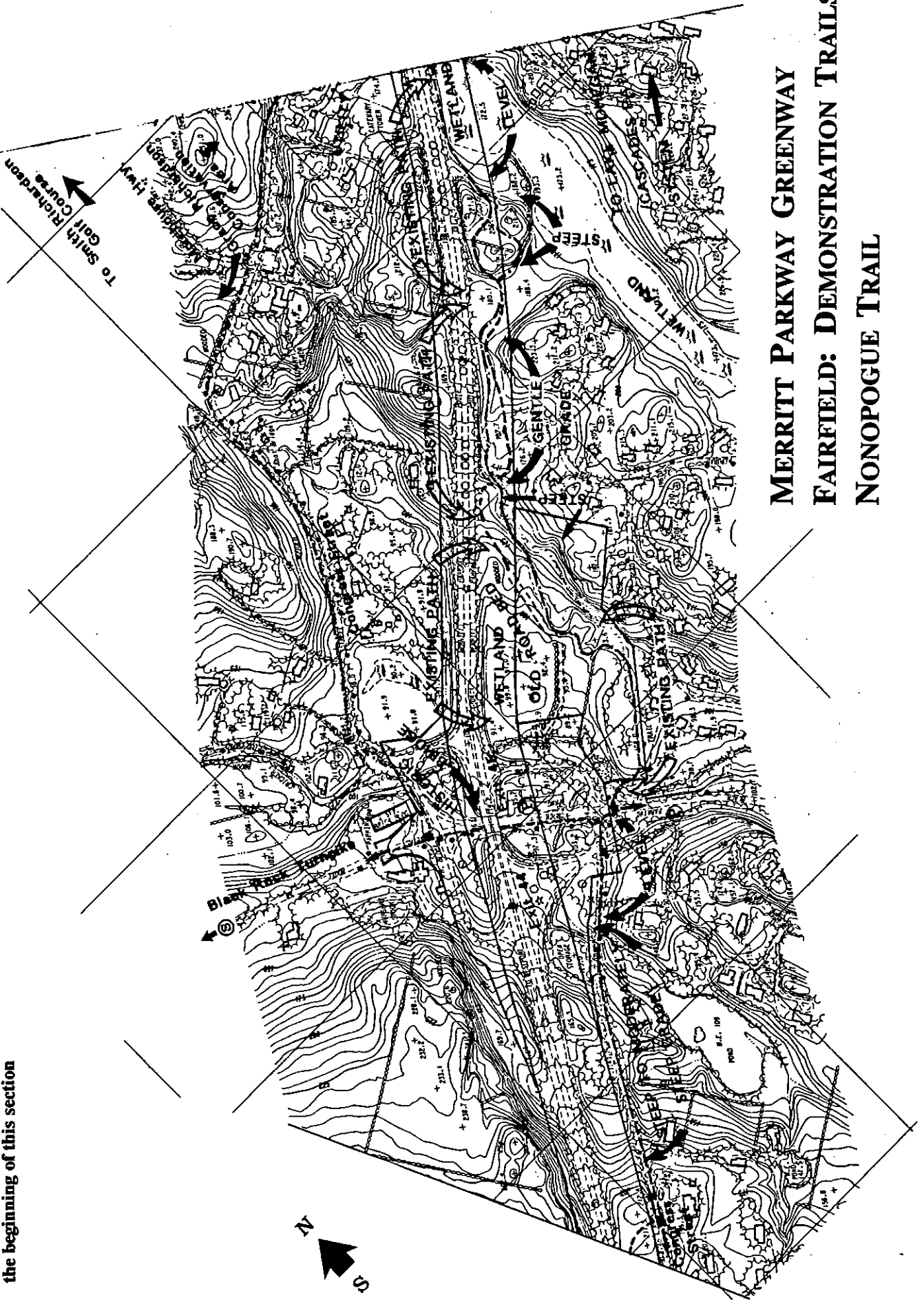
**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
WESTPORT: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
BAYBERRY TRAIL
EAST**

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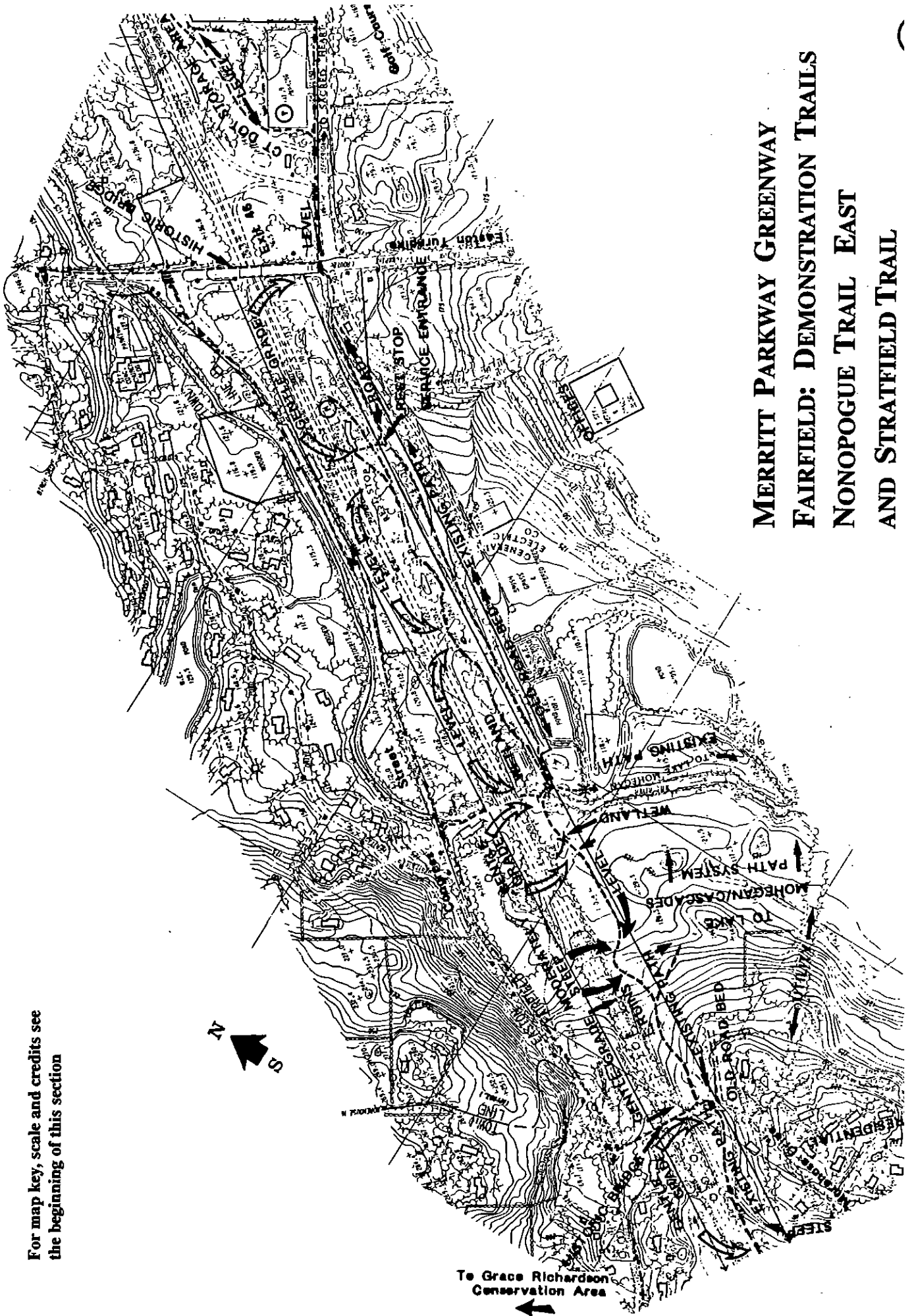
**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
FAIRFIELD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
OWLBRIDGE TRAIL**

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FAIRFIELD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
NONOQUOGUE TRAIL**

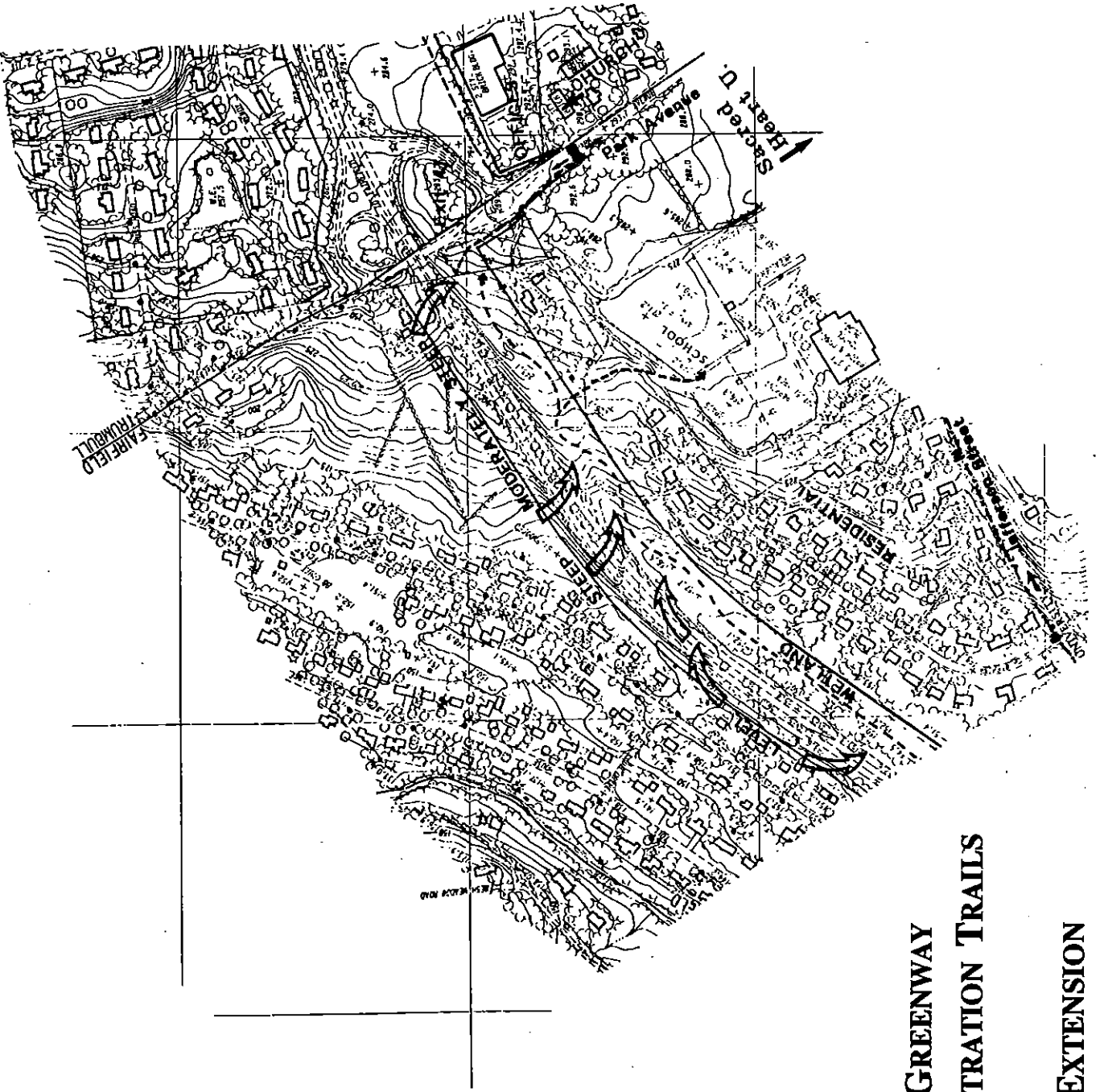
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**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
FAIRFIELD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
NONOQUE TRAIL EAST
AND STRATFIELD TRAIL**

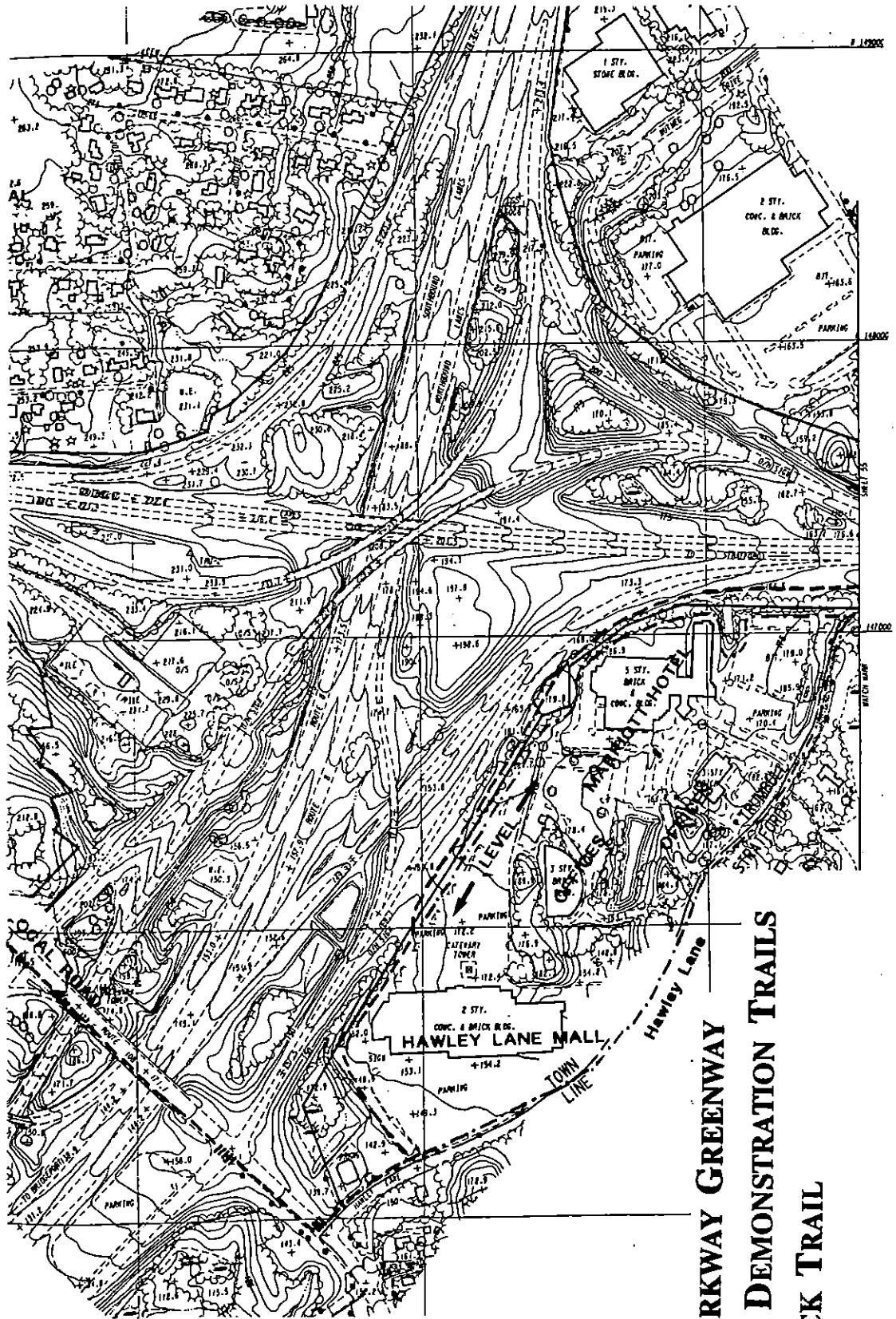
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Conservation Area

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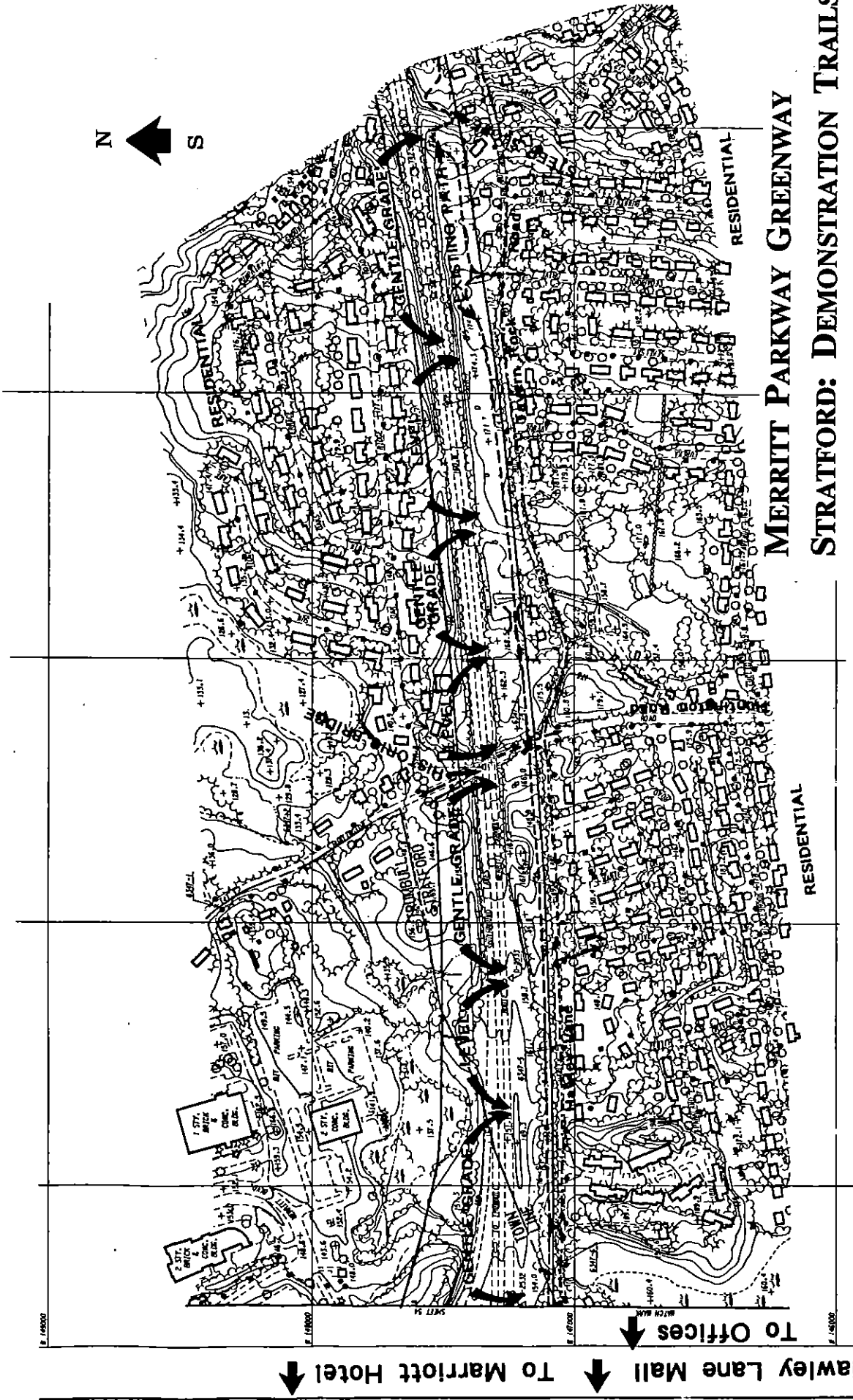
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FAIRFIELD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
STRATFIELD TRAIL
JEFFERSON STREET EXTENSION

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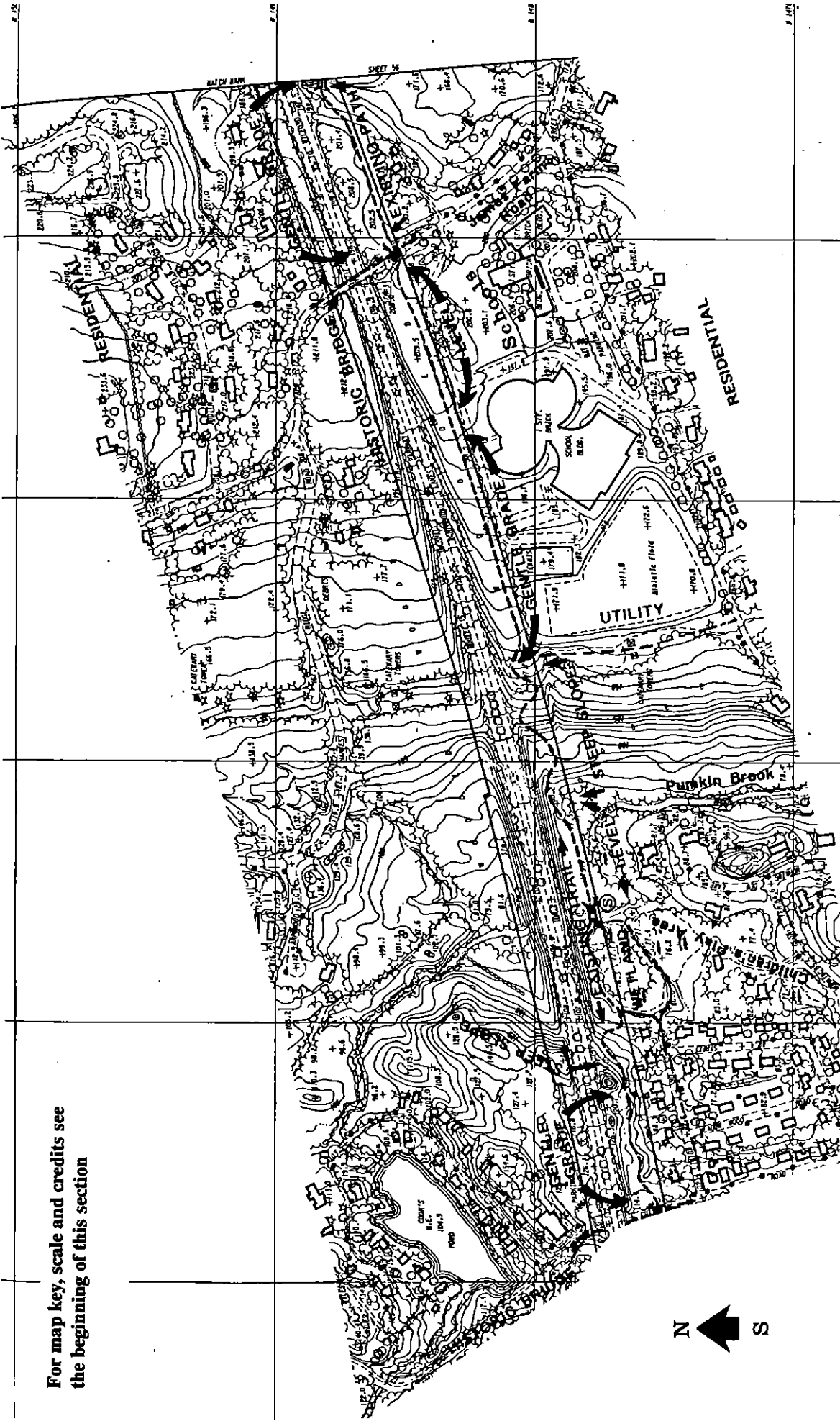
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STRATFORD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TAVERN ROCK TRAIL
EXTENSION

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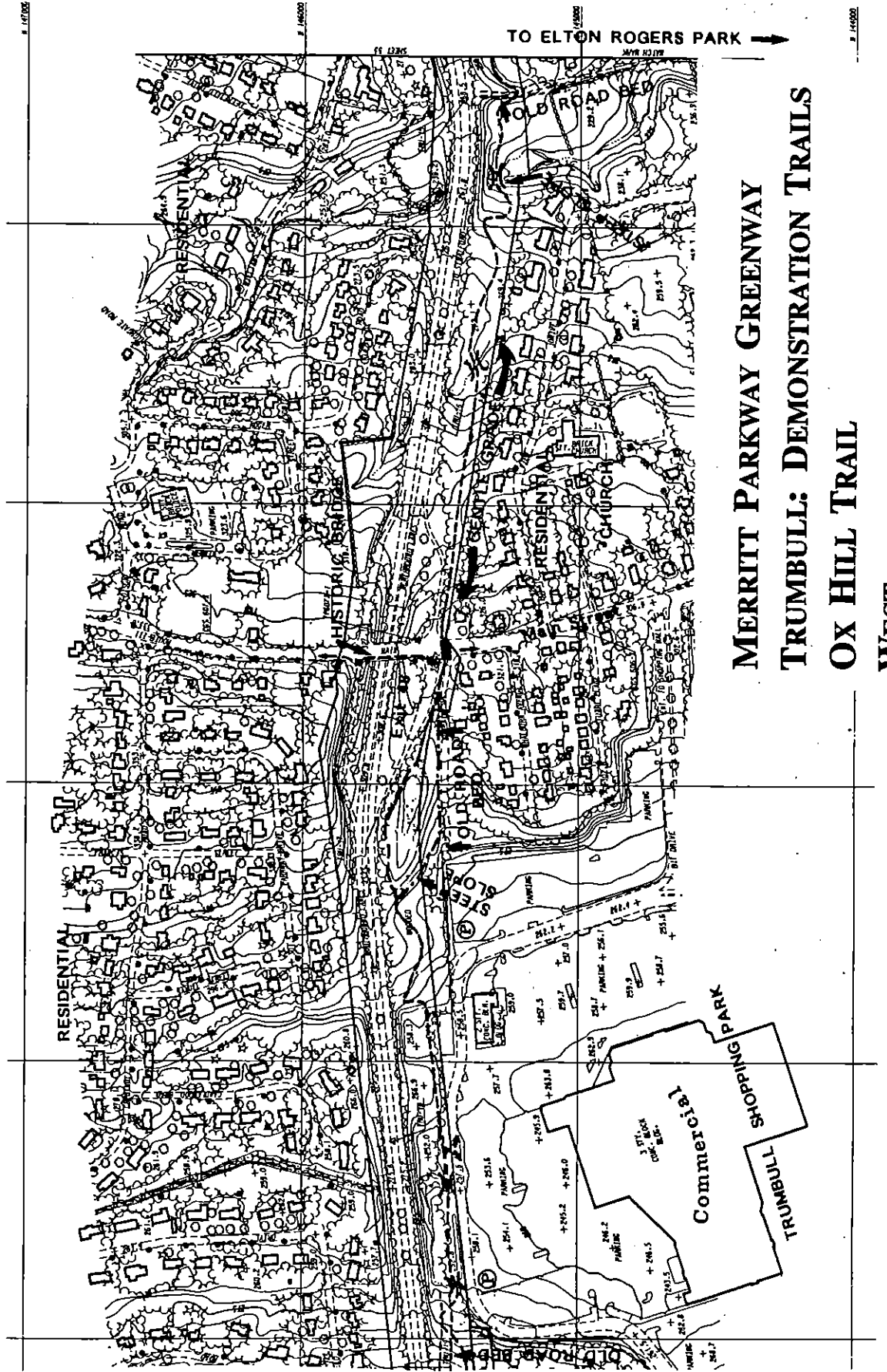
**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
STRATFORD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TAVERN ROCK TRAIL
WEST**

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**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
STRATFORD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
TAVERN ROCK TRAIL
EAST**

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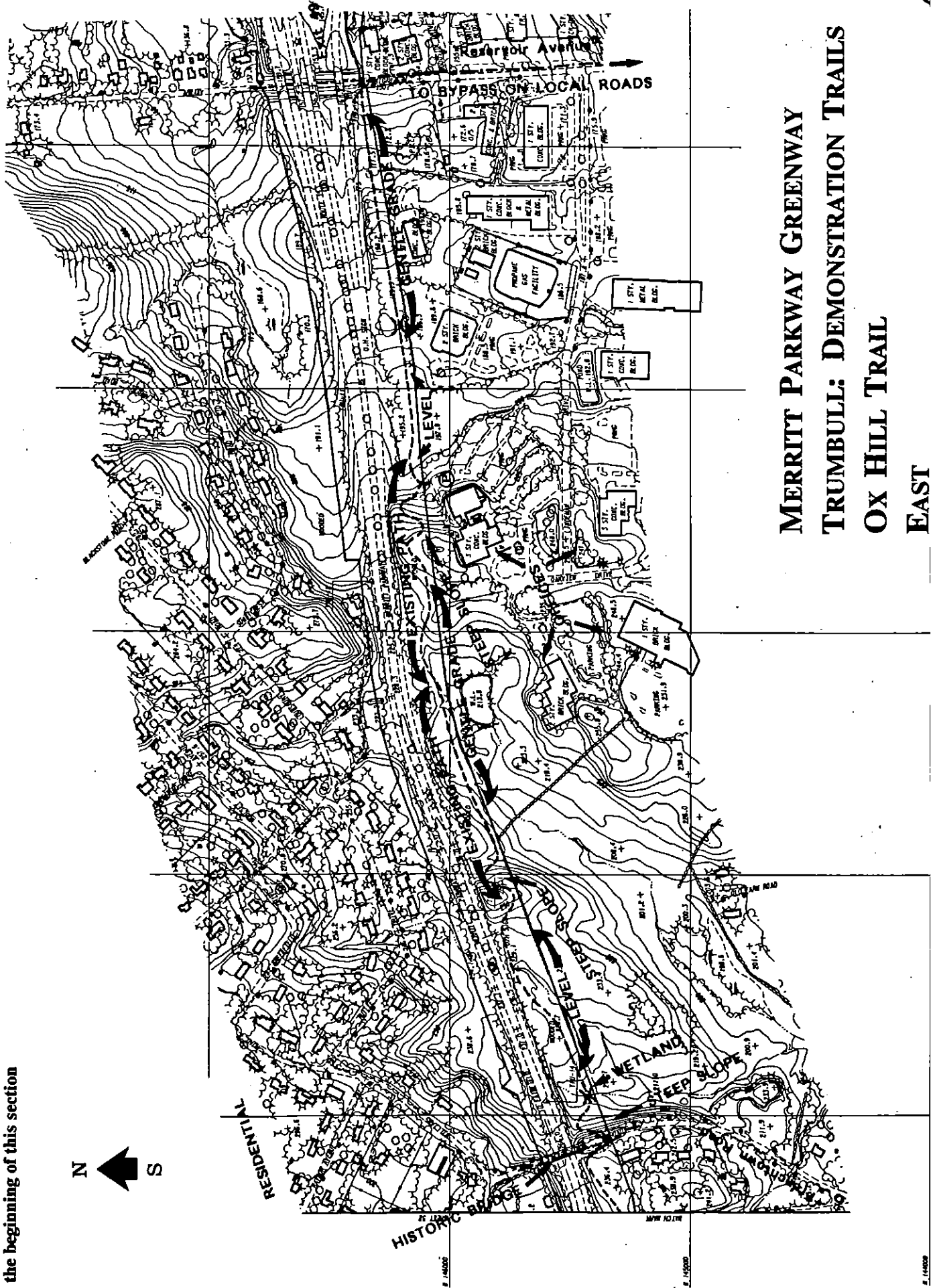


TO ELTON ROGERS PARK →

**MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY
TRUMBULL: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS
OX HILL TRAIL**

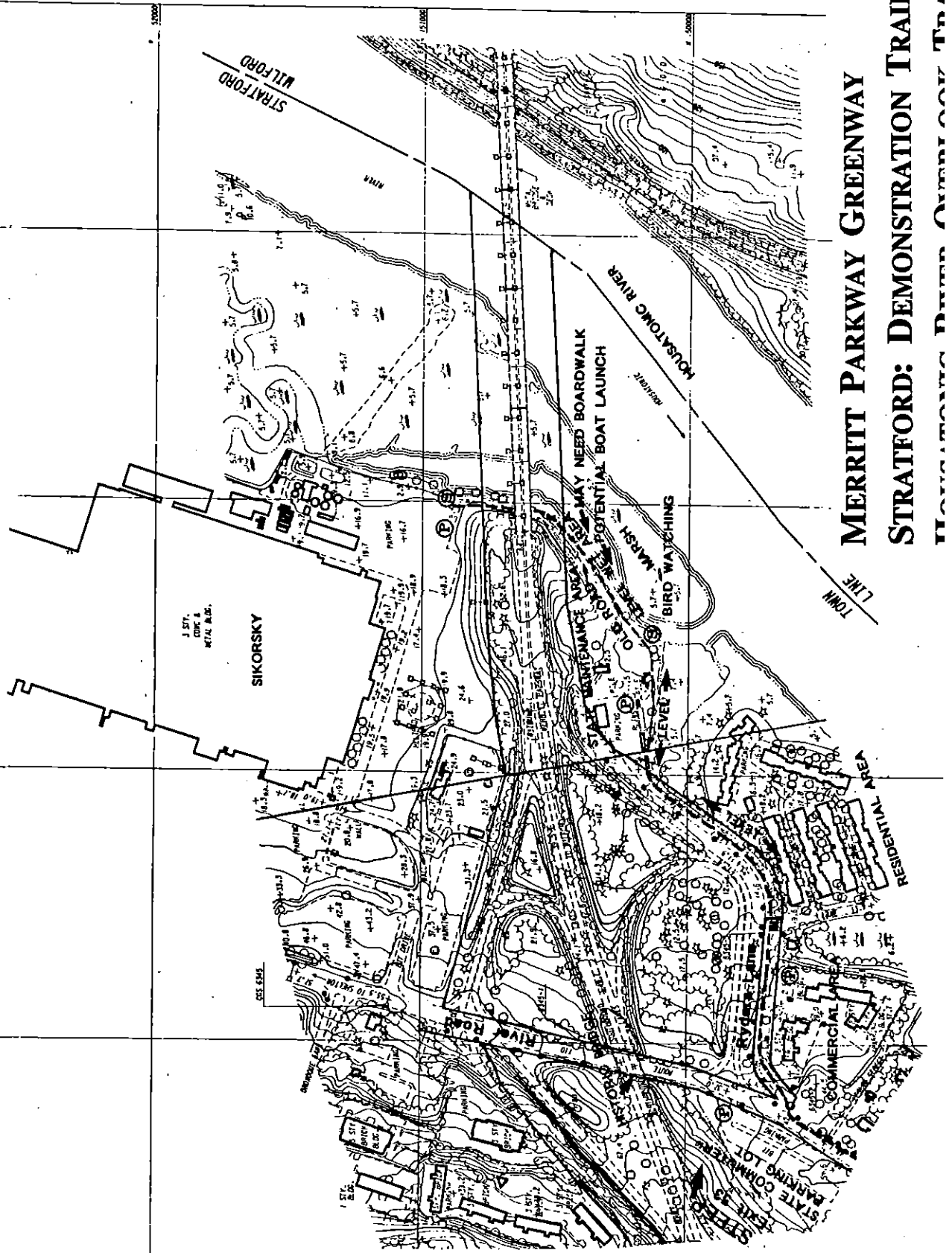
VIETNAM

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the beginning of this section



MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY TRUMBULL: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS OX HILL TRAIL EAST

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MERRITT PARKWAY GREENWAY STRATFORD: DEMONSTRATION TRAILS



MAP SOURCES AND CREDITS

Prepared for Regional Plan Association
By: Jennifer Aley

Potential Trail Alignments and notes on adjacent land use scenic areas, historical resources, accessibility notations, potential parking opportunities and other overlay information by Jennifer Aley (1994), based on:

- Connecticut DOT topographic base maps, 1989
- Connecticut DEP aerial photographs, 1990
- Town land use and open space mapping for Greenwich, Stamford, New Canaan, Darien, Wilton, Norwalk, Weston, Westport, Easton, Fairfield, Trumbull, Bridgeport, Shelton, and Stratford
- USDA Soil Conservation Service Maps, 1986
- Spot field surveys, 1993 and 1994
- Information provided by the Aspetuck and Greenwich Land Trusts

Topographic Base Maps showing the parkway road location, topography, adjacent structures and natural features provided by the Connecticut Department of Transportation - 1989:

- State of Connecticut, Department of Transportation, Bureau of Highways, Connecticut Route 15, Towns of Greenwich to Wallingford.
- Mapping compiled from photography dated March, 1988
- 1000 foot grid based on Connecticut Coordinate system (NAD of 1927)
- Contour Interval - 5 foot
- National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929
- Photogrammetry by Aero-metric Engineering Inc.
Field Edit - Connecticut DOT, District 3
Office Edit - Connecticut DOT, District 3

Please note that the topographic mapping used in the demonstration segments shown in this report is excerpted from the Connecticut Department of Transportation maps described above. For the purposes of this report, copies of the original base maps have been reduced to a scale of approximately 1" = 600'. A complete set of the Connecticut Department of Transportation topographic base maps for the Merritt Parkway right-of-way is on file at the Department's offices in Wethersfield.

III. Political and Financial Issues of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Path

POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL ISSUES OF A BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAIL ALONG THE MERRITT PARKWAY

1. The Role of the Connecticut Department of Transportation

The dual and seemingly contradictory character of the Merritt Parkway as a transportation and recreational corridor has typically resulted in controversy when efforts have been made by ConnDOT to alter or improve it. Commuters who primarily view the Parkway as a transportation corridor and daily find themselves caught in rush hour traffic have strongly favored widening the Parkway. This was particularly true in the mid-1970s and the late-1980s when such proposals were made. Equally outspoken cries against its widening and against alterations that detract from its scenic character are heard from those who value the Parkway as a cultural and historic resource; they enjoy the naturalistic view as they wind their way along.

Controversy around potential alterations or improvements is heightened by those who live along the Parkway and sometimes perceive it an extension of their backyards. They generally meet any major plans to alter the Parkway with substantial resistance. Another interest group that has the potential for being heard are those concerned about air quality issues. Widening the Parkway is opposed by them because it encourages additional vehicle miles traveled, potentially leading to increased air pollution in a region that already fails to meet federal air quality standards.

Because of the history of these vocal interest groups, it is unlikely that ConnDOT will take the lead in developing pedestrian and bicycle trails along the right-of-way. However, ConnDOT (under the Weicker Administration) will not stand in the way of creating trail segments if there is sufficient local support.

The Weicker Administration has recognized the dual character of the Parkway by declaring that it would not be widened and then developing guidelines to steer its management. The "Guidelines for General Maintenance and Transportation Improvements, and Scenic/Aesthetic Initiatives" is now being revised based on recent public hearings. ConnDOT intends to further revise the Guidelines to conform to the recommendations of the Landscape Master Plan (personal communication, M. Demma, ConnDOT, June 1994).

2. Public Response to a Trail Along the Parkway

Public response to a parkway trail will be mixed; there is likely to be a strong response on either side. The most vocal opponents are likely to be those who live along the Parkway who see a trail as a threat to their privacy and safety. They may also express concern about potential drops in property values. Ironically, this group has potential for becoming strong proponents. Field studies show that at least 15% of the right-of-way has informal paths along it created by pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists from surrounding neighborhoods, indicating there is already a need or desire for trails.

Education that would alleviate their fears and demonstrate the benefits of an improved trail could change their minds. Where studies exist, it has been shown that houses adjacent to trails do not experience an increase in burglaries and

vandalism, particularly if parking lots are away from the trail. Fears can be further alleviated by establishing a method to patrol the trails. Rather than adversely affecting property values, it has been demonstrated that the value of property along and near trails is increased because of the proximity.

Other potential opponents are commuters who still hope to see the Parkway widened to accommodate more automobiles. Adding a trail along the right-of-way could be perceived as an anti-widening measure even though the Weicker Administration has stated that the Parkway will not be widened. Even without the state mandate, federal legislation in the form of the Clean Air Act and ISTEA, combined with lack of funding, would have resulted in a construction moratorium. However, this does not stop those who are in favor of widening it from voicing their dissent when they perceive that work is being done which might prevent it in the future. This is particularly true for those communities in eastern Fairfield County who have limited or no access (such as Trumbull) to I-95. Highway widening projects in other parts of the nation have often led to increased use and an eventual return to congested conditions. This suggests that widening the Parkway will only temporarily alleviate congestion; it could, in fact, lead to greater congestion in the future.

The response of those concerned about the historic and cultural landscapes will correspond to their perception of how the Parkway will be impacted by a trail system. They should be comforted by the knowledge that because the Parkway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, any alterations must be approved by the State Historic Preservation Office within the Connecticut Historical Commission (CHC). The CHC, a state agency, is mandated to preserve Connecticut's historic and cultural heritage. There is some historic precedent for creating a trail in the Parkway right-of-way. Equestrian and bicycle trails were suggested during the development of plans for the Parkway, but were not incorporated into the final design (Radde, B., 1993). Equestrian and pedestrian paths that are adjacent to some parts of the right-of-way are still in use by local riding clubs and communities. As a result, these interest groups could be strong proponents of a trail designed to blend with the naturalistic character of the Parkway.

Additional proponents for a Parkway trail include environmentalists, open space advocates, and people concerned about quality of life issues. However, the most likely proponents are potential users which include members of bicycle and riding clubs, hiking and cross country skiing groups, and people living and working within a reasonable distance who might use it for recreational purposes or as an alternative mode for getting to work, school or shopping.

RPA recommends that a survey be undertaken to zero in on potential users of the Parkway, the people who have the greatest capacity to become the most excited about such a project. Their enthusiasm guided by strong leadership and careful planning could calm the fears of the opposition and build the necessary support for a trail.

3. Funding Trails Along the Parkway

The most likely source of funding for a bicycle/pedestrian trail is through the new Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA shifts federal transportation policy away from highway construction toward maintenance, repair and enhancement of existing facilities, as well as developing and enhancing

alternative forms of transportation, such as mass transit, bicycling and walking. As a result, funding is available within most of the ISTEA programs for bicycle transportation facilities defined in the Act as "new or improved lanes, paths, or shoulders for use by bicyclists, traffic control devices, shelters, and parking facilities for bicyclists. Attached is list of potential funding sources within the ISTEA program.

Each of the sections listed in the funding guide explicitly cites bicycle transportation facilities as eligible for funding. To be eligible, projects must be transportation rather than recreational oriented and be included in the state Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a priority list of projects to be carried out within a three year period. TIP projects must be selected from and be consistent with the Planning Region's Long Range Plan or transportation (M. Demma, June 1994).

Funding for bicycle transportation facilities in Connecticut has been made available through the Transportation Enhancement Activities (2.4 billion available nationally over a six-year period) of the larger Surface Transportation Program (\$24 billion available nationally over six-year period). Two of the ten Transportation Enhancement Activities are specifically bicycle and pedestrian related including (1) provision of facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians and (2) preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including conversion and use for pedestrian or bicycle trails).

In Connecticut, 7.8 million was received through the Enhancement programs in both Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 1993 and 1994. ConnDot anticipated receiving 7.8 million for FFY 1995 and 13.5 million for each FFY 1996 and 1997 (personal communication, M. Demma, ConnDot, June 1994). Requests for funding must be made through one of the 15 Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) where the project is located. The project must also be include in the RPA's regional plans. The RPAs make recommendations to ConnDot about project recipients but ConnDot makes the final decision. To date, ConnDot has followed the RPA's recommendations.

Competition for the funds is substantial because of the lack of funding available from other sources for the type of projects funded through the Enhancement program. It is likely that it will become more competitive as more people become aware of the program. The process is also somewhat political in that there must be a local sponsor for the project backed by local support. The sponsor must provide up to twenty percent matching funds.

It is likely that only a limited number of bicycle/pedestrian trails can be built through the Enhancement program funds given the competition for the dollars. (Even ConnDOT is presently considering using Enhancement funds to pay for the work along the Parkway recommended by the newly hired landscape engineering firm.)

As a result, it will be necessary to take advantage of funding from other sources, perhaps from other programs within ISTEA, such as through the larger Surface Transportation Program, which is generally used to fund highways and bridges. Although explicit language within these programs exists to allow funds to be used for bicycle transportation facilities, they have not been tapped for these purposes.

4. Conclusions

To create a continuous trail along the 37.5 mile stretch will take time, patience, and the concerted effort of dedicated people. It will also take substantial funding. These are difficult but not impossible hurdles, particularly if one takes a long-term view.

A continuous trail can best be realized by building a strong base of support in areas where shorter trails can easily and cheaply be constructed. Then, over time, as support increases in other towns, connecting trails can be constructed until a continuous trail is achieved. Gaps in the trail due to physical impediments or continued local resistance could be connected by routing it along parallel roads.

This approach has been used successfully in other areas. For example, in Rhode Island, the 14.5 mile East Bay Bicycle Path from Bristol to Providence began as a short segment in one of the towns. When the popularity of the path was demonstrated, support for it grew in the other towns until it is now a continuous trail that winds from Bristol to Providence through five towns with characteristics that are similar to some of those in Fairfield County.

Now is an excellent time to create a bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Parkway. Federal policy through ISTEA and the Clean Air Act is creating an environment that is supportive of alternative forms of transportation. A bicycle and pedestrian path along the Parkway would provide another mode of transportation, as well as an opportunity for Connecticut's residents to more fully experience one of the state's most picturesque landscapes.

IV. Appendices

Appendix A

Areas with Minimal Constraints, or Resources That Will Facilitate Trail Development

This section describes areas not addressed in the main report. These include trails that may not receive as much use because they pass through less densely populated areas or because they do not have as many potential origin and destination points. Some are segments that are too short to make good demonstration trails but offer level surfaces that are very suitable for bicycle trails or would cost relatively little to construct. Others have land that is generally suitable for a trail but includes a few specific difficult areas. These trail segments are intended to serve as a second tier, from which additional demonstration segments, or "phase two" trail extensions might be selected.

Norwalk/Westport

Area between Newtown Turnpike (Westport) and Chestnut Hill Road - East of Chestnut Hill Road, is a long level stretch of land that is generally dry. Boardwalk bridges would be needed to cross occasional wet areas. As the trail alignment approaches the Westport border the land begins to rise and the topography becomes hilly with gentle to moderate slopes. Just west of the Newtown Turnpike is another level but wet area that would need a boardwalk bridge.

Westport

Area east of Wilton Road - This is a short segment that extends from the Saugatuck River to the Wilton Road. The YMCA's Camp Mahackeno sits on the west bank of the Saugatuck. A road runs parallel and directly adjacent to the south boundary of the parkway right of way, extending over level land, from the camp to Exit 41 of the parkway and a commuter parking lot. Either this existing road could be striped to create a bicycle path or a trail could be constructed on the level land in the portion of the right of way that runs along the road.

Fairfield

Cross Highway - Blackrock Turnpike Area - This area begins at Redding Road and ends at the Black Rock Turnpike near a state owned commuter parking lot. It is generally level to moderately sloped, with a few steep areas that can be skirted. Cross Highway runs directly adjacent to the parkway right of way, from Redding Road to Congress Street, and is already used by cyclists and pedestrians. Since this part of Cross Highway does not appear to carry large volumes of traffic, it may be advisable to simply put a bicycle/pedestrian lane stripe along the side of the road for this segment of the proposed trail, as opposed to constructing a trail in the right of way.

The trail segment that extends from Congress Street to Burr Street is described in the main text of this report and is a potential demonstration trail segment.

East of Burr Street the trail would continue along gently to moderately sloped land, eventually running parallel to Congress Street. Just west of the Black Rock Turnpike is a moderately to steeply sloped area that might require some cyclists to dismount and walk their bikes for a short distance (see Appendix B for a discussion of this areas). Because Connecticut DOT has storage or staging sites in the right-of-way just west of the Black Rock Turnpike, it may be advisable to have cyclists use Congress Street in this area.

Trumbull

This trail would begin at Unity Park, and extend eastward along White Plains Road to the intersection with Unity Road. On the north boundary of this intersection is the historic Unity Cemetery. Across from the cemetery is Unity Church. The trail would then bear left onto Unity Road, which passes underneath the Parkway and onward to the community of Nichols. Nichols includes a senior center, the Fairchild Memorial Library, two churches, two historic cemeteries, Nichols Memorial field, Nothinagle Memorial Field, and the Nichols Community and Civic Center.

Just before Unity Road passes under the Parkway bridge, the trail would bear right onto the Parkway right-of-way. This would require ascending a steep slope which might require modification in order to make it accessible. Even with grade modifications it would probably be necessary for many cyclists to dismount and walk their bikes in order to ascend or descend this slope. However, upon reaching the crest of the slope, the trail would run across approximately a quarter mile of level to gently sloped land. In this area, the right-of-way parallels a subdivision, suggesting the possibility of subdivision residents using the trail to visit Unity Park or the Nichols area.

Beyond the subdivision the trail would skirt a wetland by traversing the varying topography that bounds the wetland's south side. If the trail is constructed to run parallel to the contours of the land, it can maintain a generally level to gently sloped grade along most of its length. This trail segment would end at Huntington Turnpike.

Appendix B

Areas With Major Constraints

This section describes constraints that present impediments to a trail in areas that are not discussed as demonstration segments in the main report. It also includes more detailed discussions of specific difficult areas referred in the section of the report on demonstration trails.

There are a number of areas along the proposed bicycle trail route that would make construction of a continuous trail difficult. The general categories that these impediments fall under include the following:

Topographic constraints - generally steep grades or rock knobs
Rivers, lakes and wetlands
High volume roads such as Routes 8, 25 and 7.

Specific examples of difficult areas are described below

Greenwich:

North End of Lake Putnam - Because the land between the lake and the edge of the parkway road is both steep and extremely narrow trail construction in this areas will probably involve a boardwalk bridge or fill, unless the water company grants permission for pedestrians and cyclists to use the old Butternut Road right-of-way and causeway.

East of Parkway Rest Stop - The State rest stop in Greenwich is located just east of Glenridge Road. A pile of rubble on the east edge of the rest stop property will need to be removed in order to allow passage for the trail. Directly beyond this pile is a steep slope leading down to a wooded wetland. Trail construction would probably require use of fill to create a passable grade leading down the slope, and a boardwalk surface would be needed along the north edge of the wetland.

West of Stanwich Road - Between Stanwich Road and North Street is a long stretch of wetland, interspersed with occasional rock knobs, that would require a boardwalk bridge along much of its length. A golf course lies just south of the right-of-way. If permission to run the trail along the north edge of the golf course can not be acquired, the trail could be routed along local roads that lie to the north or south of the Parkway.

Stamford

East of High Ridge Road - Directly adjacent to the parkway exit on the south side of the parkway and the west side of High Ridge Road is a steep, high bedrock outcrop that is impassable. The most suitable alternate route for skirting this area is along Dunn Avenue.

Rippowam River - The banks of the Rippowam River, near Wire Mill Road are very steep, and trail construction would require cut and fill in order to provide a trail bed with a grade suitable for cyclists. A pedestrian trail could be built with less alteration of the slopes leading down to the river. A bridge would be needed to cross the river. Consequently, an alternate route using local roads may be best.

Mianus River - The banks of the Mianus River are steep and trail construction would require grading, cuts and fill, as well as a bridge over the river. Consequently, an alternate route using local roads may be best. Again, a trail strictly for pedestrians would require less extensive slope modification.

New Canaan

West of Hoyt Street, between the parkway road and a short, private road, improvements to the Parkway have left a narrow strip of undeveloped right-of-way, making passage through this area difficult. As an alternative, the trail could be temporarily routed onto the private road, rejoining the right-of-way at the dirt pullover at the bend located just before the western terminus of this road.

Norwalk

Route 7 Expressway - The trail would need to be routed around the south side of the Route 7 / Merritt Parkway interchange using local roads, as crossing the expressway at grade would pose a hazard to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and construction of trail bridges or trail underpasses would be expensive, due to the size of this interchange.

Norwalk River - Crossing the Norwalk River within the right-of-way would require a long bridge. Using local roads to cross both the river and the expressway, described above, is probably the best alternative.

Westport

Saugatuck River - Crossing the Saugatuck River within the right-of-way would require a long bridge. The bank of the river drops steeply on the west side. On the east side there is a wide floodplain, beyond which is another steep bank. Unless the entire bridge is elevated and stretches from the upper west bank across both the river and the floodplain to the upper east bank, cuts and fill will be required on both banks, in order to provide a grade suitable to route the trail down to the level where a bridge would begin. If this option were selected, a boardwalk surface will be needed to carry the trail along the edge of the floodplain.

Fairfield

West of Black Rock Turnpike - Directly west of the Black Rock Turnpike exit (Exit 44) is a brook and a highway construction staging area. Beyond this is a steep slope. Since it would be difficult to place a trail in this area, a bypass onto Congress Street would probably be most appropriate.

Trumbull

Route 8 and Route 25 - The trail would need to be routed around the south side of these interchanges using local roads, as crossing the expressway at grade would pose a hazard to the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and construction of trail bridges or trail underpasses would be expensive.

Stratford

West of River Road, the configuration of the Parkway ramps combines with a steep grade to make passage through this area narrow and steep. As an alternative the trail could be routed onto Tanglewood Road, joining the Parkway right-of-way at the top of the slope. Although the area west of this point includes both steep slopes and wetlands the trail could remain on gentle to moderate grades if its location is carefully planned to follow a route parallel to topographic contours. The area includes attractive woodlands.

Appendix C

Locations of Steep Bridge Abutments

This section lists steep bridge abutments observed during field investigations. These abutments would require grade modifications in order to allow trail access. Steep cuts, rock outcrops or slopes that are directly adjacent to bridges are also listed. Cuts or slopes are specifically indicated, following the road name. All other listings are for steep abutments. It should be noted that there may be additional steep abutments that were not observed during field investigations.

Greenwich: Taconic Road, Lake Avenue (west side)

Stamford: High Ridge Road (rock outcrop on west side)

Norwalk: Grumman Avenue

Westport: North Avenue, Newtown Turnpike (west side)

Fairfield: Merwins Lane

Trumbull: Plattsville Road (west side), Madison Avenue,
Frenchtown Road (east side), Unity Road (steep slope on east
side)

Stratford: River Road (steep slope on west side)

Appendix D

Major Bypass Routes Around State Highway Interchanges

Norwalk - Route 7 Expressway:

Beginning on the west, the trail would leave the Parkway right-of-way at Perry Avenue, running southward along the edge of the road, as a striped bicycle path, to Old Route 7 where it would turn northward. The trail would then enter the Pitney Bowes property, passing through the parking lot at the back of Pitney Bowes, where it would enter a utility right-of-way. This utility right-of-way leads northeastward, back to the Parkway right-of-way.

Trumbull - Route 25:

Beginning on the west, the trail would leave the Parkway right-of-way at Reservoir Road, heading southward as a striped path along the edge of the road to Old Town Road. Alternatively, the trail could follow the Parkway right-of-way to the Route 25 right-of-way and Rocky Hill Road, following Rocky Hill Road southward to Old Town Road. After running south for a few hundred feet on Old Town Road, the trail would enter Fairchild Memorial Park, passing under Route 25 on the park drive, and continuing on to Quarry Street, Trumbull Road and White Plains Road. At White Plains Road the trail would head northeast to Unity Road, re-entering the Parkway right-of-way just before the Unity Road underpass.

Trumbull - Route 8:

Beginning on the west, the trail would leave the Parkway right-of-way at Huntington Road, heading southward as a striped path along the edge of the road to Nichols Avenue. At the intersection of Nichols Avenue and Hawley Lane is the Hawley Lane Mall. Here the trail would turn northeast, following Hawley Lane to the point where it begins to parallel the Parkway right-of-way. At this point the trail could either enter the Parkway right-of-way or continue eastward along Hawley Lane.

Appendix E

Vegetation in the Merritt Parkway Right of Way

Young and Midsuccessional Mixed Hardwood Forest

Red Maple Black Oak Red Cedar	Sugar Maple Beech	White Oak Hickory	Red Oak Tulip Poplar
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Barberry Dogwood	Sassafras Rose	Mountain Laurel Maple Leaf Viburnum
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Cat Briar Wild Grape Violet	Poison Ivy Beech Drops Christmas Fern	Virginia Creeper Wood Aster Dog Tooth Violet
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Forested Wetlands

Tulip Poplar	Red Maple	
Spirea Arrow-wood	Spice Bush Barberry	Sassafras
Jewelweed	Skunk Cabbage	

Shrub Swamps

Spirea	Spice Bush	Alder
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Herbaceous Wetlands

Phragmites	Cat-tail	Sedge
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Edge

Cherry	Ailanthus	Birch	Ash
Sumac	Sassafras		
Poison Ivy Rose Catbriar	Raspberry Barberry Honeysuckle	Oriental Bittersweet Virginia Creeper	

Old Field

Red Cedar	White Pine	Cherry	Birch
Raspberry	Rose		
Grasses	Goldenrod	Ragweed	Thistle
Plantain			

Managed Landscapes (turf and ornamental plantings)

White Pine	Red Maple	Elm	Red Cedar
Cherry	Dogwood	Linden	Sugar Maple
Rose	Russian Olive		
Grasses	Clover	Plantain	Violet

Other

Occasional individuals or clusters of the following were also observed.

Apple Trees	Hawthorne	Myrtle	Pachysandra
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Appendix F

Scenic or Recreational Areas and Points of Interest

This appendix lists additional areas not discussed in the chapters of this report that address scenic resources, open space and parkland. These features are generally located adjacent to, or within two miles of the Parkway right-of-way.

Rivers and Streams

Norwalk: Wood's Pond Brook, Stony Brook

Westport: Dead Man's Brook

Fairfield: Sasco Brook, Cricker Brook

Parks and Open Space

The parks and open space described below are additional sites not located in the report that are either directly adjacent to the parkway right-of-way or are located within approximately one mile of the parkway.

Stamford:

Bird Sanctuary
Sterling Farms Golf Club

Norwalk:

Park (Ponus Avenue)
Park (Patchen Street)
Park (Green Lane)
Silvermine Golf Club
Park (Wood's Pond)
Park (14 Acre Pond)
Park (Stonecrop Road)

Fairfield:

Park (Stevenson Drive)

Trumbull:

Aldo Park (West Lauderdale Road)
Davidson Park (Revere Lane)
Middlebrooks Park (Middlebrooks Avenue)
Mische Brook Park (Old Green Road)
Nothinagle Memorial Field (Shelton Road)
Park (Merritt Boulevard)

Stratford:

Park (Connors Road)
Peck's Mill Pond
Mill River Country Club

Water Company Lands

Water Company lands are located in the following towns:

Greenwich	Stamford
Fairfield	Bridgeport
Trumbull	Stratford
Weston	Shelton

Public access is currently allowed only at the Saugatuck and Shelton reservoirs. A permit is required. Where the trail passes near reservoirs, signs telling of the need to protect public water supplies should be erected.

Historic or Cultural Sites

Stamford:

Cemetery (Roxbury Road)

Westport:

Willowbrook Cemetery (Route 136)

Easton:

Abandoned Reservoir Dam (Buck Hollow Road)

Appendix G

Slope Categorizations and Notations

Slope categorizations on highlighted copies of USDA Soil Conservation Service maps are on file at the offices of the Regional Plan Association and are based on categories used by the Soil Conservation Service. These maps were used to aid in analyzing potential trail location. Slope notations on the demonstration trail maps included in the text are intended to serve as a preliminary assessment of the level of difficulty that bicycle and pedestrian trail users might experience. They are based on a combination of analysis of US Soil Conservation Service maps, field walks with persons ranging in age from 23 to 67, and a preliminary evaluation of the potential to modify trail grades by means such as running trails diagonally across the face of a slope, aligning trails parallel to contour lines, and using alternate routes such as adjacent state lands or local roads.

Appendix H

Roads Crossing the Parkway and Public Bus Routes

The roads listed below cross over or under the Merritt Parkway. Most would provide opportunities for cyclists or pedestrians to enter the proposed trail. In addition, roads that serve as public bus routes are noted with an asterisk. These public bus routes provide opportunities to travel to the trail without relying on an automobile. The bus companies and transit districts that have routes crossing the Parkway are Connecticut Transit, the Norwalk Transit District ("Wheels"), the Westport Transit District, and the Greater Bridgeport Transit District.

Stratford:

River Road
James Farm Road
Pumkin Ground Road
Huntington Road

Trumbull:

Route 8
Route 25*
Reservoir Avenue
Frenchtown Road
Huntington Turnpike
Unity Road
White Plains Road*
Main Street (Newtown Road)*
Madison Avenue
Plattenville Road
Park Avenue

Fairfield:

Black Rock Turnpike
Congress Street
Burr Street
Hillside Road
Redding Road
Cross Highway
Sturges Highway*
Merwins Lane
Moorehouse Drive

Westport:

Bayberry Lane*
North Avenue*
Easton Road
Weston Road*
Clinton Avenue*
Wilton Road*
Newtown Turnpike*

Norwalk:

Perry Avenue
Silvermine Avenue
Comstock Hill Road
Nursery Street
New Canaan Avenue
Chestnut Hill Road*
Grumman Avenue*
East Rocks Road
West Rocks Road*
Old Route 7*
Route 7 Expressway

New Canaan:

White Oak Shade Road
Marvin Ridge Road
South Avenue
Lapham Road
Hoyt Street/Old Stamford Road
Ponus Ridge Road

Stamford:

Riverbank Road
Guinea Road
High Ridge Road*
Long Ridge Road*
Wire Mill Road
Newfield Avenue
Den Road (Junction)

Greenwich:

Stanwich Road

Taconic Road

King Street

Riversville Road

Round Hill Road

Will Merry Road

Butternut Hollow Road

Lake Avenue

North Street

Two Metro North Railroad lines cross the Parkway. The New Canaan line has a passenger station that is located on Hoyt Street directly adjacent to the Parkway. The Danbury line has a passenger station in Wilton that is located west of Old Route 7, approximately one mile north of the Parkway.

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