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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Union County Welcomes East Coast Greenway Walkers on “The Big Walk”**

Cranford, NJ - Union County Freeholder Bette Jane Kowalski and Cranford Finance Commissioner Ed O’Malley, along with other officials, gave over 60 participants in “The Big Walk” event a rousing welcome as they hosted a break at the Cranford train station this past Saturday morning. Organized by FreeWalkers.org, the group walk started in Metropark station, Iselin at 6:00 a.m. and passed through Cranford en route to the day’s final destination, New York City. The walkers, following the East Coast Greenway trail the entire time, passed through Newark and Jersey City as well. Those that did the entire walk would end up walking a total of 50 miles in a single day.



This is the second year for the “The Big Walk”(<http://NJ2NY50.org>) event which harkens back to the 1960s when President Kennedy encouraged physical fitness for the health of the general public. In 1963, thousands of ordinary citizens attempted to walk a “50-mile Hike” as an astonishing fad grew and died in the midst of a turbulent year. Today, the concern for improving physical fitness is even more urgent. These events encourage everyone to get out and walk, if only for a small part of a big challenge.

The FreeWalkers, a social networking group of long distance walkers, organizes FREE walking events open to the public that challenge and promote fitness and pro-pedestrian issues. Paul Kiczek, founder of the group, added, “We are happy to support the East Coast Greenway trail and we are honored and encouraged by the assistance of Union County, a true leader in green river corridors and beautiful parks.” This year the FreeWalkers are also encouraging individuals to walk the entire 100-mile length of the East Coast Greenway in New Jersey at their own pace, any time during the year with a special incentive program called the “Cross-Jersey Walking Challenge” (<http://crossjerseywalk.org>).

The East Coast Greenway is a multi-purpose trail that runs along the entire East coast from Maine to Florida for a distance of nearly 3,000 miles. The East Coast Greenway Alliance works with local communities, such as Cranford, to share and utilize existing resources to complete the trail. By working with local communities, the Greenway enhances, advises and promotes recreational resources, while it encourages their use and improvement.

A 1.45-mile segment in Lenape Park being constructed by Union County will close a gap in the East Coast Greenway’s path through the county’s parks. It will also become part of Cranford’s extensive off-road network of safe pathways -- an example of how organizations and agencies work together for the benefit of the public. Al Faella, Director of Union County Department of Parks and Community Renewal, noted that “The East Coast Greenway was instrumental in helping us design a trail that not only serves our local residents but the larger goals of the Greenway as well. It’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

The **Big Walk – NJ2NY50** is a FreeWalkers (<http://freewalkers.org>) distance walking event supported by the East Coast Greenway Alliance (<http://greenway.org>). For more info on ECGA, contact Mike Oliva, Mid-Atlantic Trails Coordinator, 914-844-0728, [mike@greenway.org](mailto:mike@greenway.org).





[http://nj2ny50.org/sites/nj2ny50.eightytwentystudios.com/files/Thumb\\_BW2011\\_Cranford.jpeg](http://nj2ny50.org/sites/nj2ny50.eightytwentystudios.com/files/Thumb_BW2011_Cranford.jpeg)

Here is contact information for the notables in attendance:

- 1 - Freeholder Bette Jane (B.J.) Kowalski, Union County Board of Freeholders
- 2 - Alfred J. Faella, Director Union County Department of Parks & Urban Renewal
- 3 - Ron Zuber, Deputy Director, Union County Department of Parks & Urban Renewal
- 4 - Edward O'Malley, Finance Commissioner Cranford Township Committee



Freeholder Kowalski