

# **Sudbury Fire Department**

Response from Fire Chief to Rail Trail Questions

August 23, 2006

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## **Questions related to Public Safety Along Rail Trails in Sudbury**

7/14/2006

1. The proposed rail trail is intended to be for non-motorized use, with the exception of public safety vehicles, maintenance vehicles, motorized wheel chairs and motor vehicles crossing at authorized points. What tools, legal and physical, will you likely need to enforce this prohibition and other rules for the rail trail?

*This is a legislative, policy and police matter.*

2. The proposed rail trail is likely to have bollards or gates at each road crossing to prevent motorized vehicles from entering the rail trail. The bollards or gates will have keys so that the bollards can be removed for access by authorized vehicles. In addition to the Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works Department, who should have keys?

*The bollards used in other towns are three across, with the middle one removable to allow for vehicular access, such as an ambulance, DPW maintenance vehicle, and the like. There is no reason to have any other group have a key as legitimate access can be arranged through any of the three listed departments.*

3. If the Town wishes to exclude unauthorized motor vehicles from entry points other than road crossings, what kind of barriers would you recommend?

*Other towns use chain link fence or wooden guardrails.*

4. The bed of the rail trail and the bridges will be designed to accommodate authorized motorized vehicles. For what size and weight of vehicles should the trail be designed?

*The gross vehicle weight rating of the Sudbury ambulance is 14,050 pounds.*

5. The rail trail would be too narrow for turning around. Do you think turnarounds would be needed?

*On sections of the trail that are long between road crossings, turnarounds may be desirable. Generally, though, if an exit is available by driving straight ahead, this is preferable to maneuvering in tight quarters.*

6. The Sudbury Police Department already does some patrolling with bicycles and has recently purchased an ATV. Presumably, the rail trail could be patrolled by bicycle or ATV. Would you consider patrolling the rail trail with cruisers, motorcycles, snowmobiles or other motorized vehicles? What other resources (assets, equipment, staff, etc.) may be required for Town safety officials to effectively monitor the trail?

*The Sudbury Fire Department does not patrol.*

7. In responding to the location of emergencies along the rail trail, would something like mile markers, identification of road crossings or stream crossings be useful? Do you recommend emergency aid call boxes be installed at trail entry points or at intervals along a trail?

*Mile markers (at each 1/10<sup>th</sup> mile) would be very useful along the trail. A trail user who is injured may not be oriented to their precise location, so reporting their position relative to a mile marker will greatly enhance the fire department's ability to quickly respond.*

*Call boxes at entrances will not be much help to someone who is remote from their location. If someone goes to a road crossing, they can flag down a passing motorist for assistance if necessary. However, many people carry cell phones and reception appears to be satisfactory along most of the proposed trail.*

8. The trail would cross Route 117, Pantry Rd., Haynes Rd., Morse Rd., Hudson Rd./27, Old Lancaster Rd and a private road, Codjer Lane. Do you have any recommendations concerning the engineering of the road crossings? Would you recommend the installation of traffic and/or pedestrian crossing lights at any of the road crossings?

*Road crossings must be clearly marked and enforced. High traffic roads, such as Route 117, would benefit from a tunnel but this is probably cost prohibitive.*

9. Should the rail trail have a dusk-to-dawn curfew? How would a curfew be enforced and with what type of patrol vehicles?

*Most other towns restrict rail trail use to daylight hours and do not patrol at night.*

10. From what you have learned about rail trails, do you have any special concerns? Is there any other information that the RTCAC can help provide?

*I have observed rail trails in other communities and find that they are well used as a recreational and exercise facility. From talking to other chiefs, it does not appear that problems have arisen from their use other than occasional bicycle or roller blade accidents. Some users have parked in business areas instead of approved rail trail parking lots.*

*From a safety point of view, I believe that providing a non-motorized venue for bicyclists, roller-bladers, runners and walkers greatly reduces the likelihood of injury as opposed to conducting these activities on public streets. Crossing public roads presents a safety challenge, although no reports of crossing accidents were received when I polled fire chiefs in towns where rail trails are present.*