

Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee

The Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC) was created by the Selectmen in November, 2004, to provide a mechanism for the Town to examine the conversion of the existing unused rail line (formerly the part of the Framingham-Lowell line lying north of Route 20) to a recreational path and alternative transportation corridor, to help identify and address the many questions and concerns of Sudbury residents concerning this project, and to support town staff as they study the feasibility of such a conversion.

The RTCAC drafted the technical input for an RFP (Request for Proposal) for a preliminary environmental and engineering review of the ROW (right of way) under consideration. Funding for this project had been approved at the 2005 Sudbury Town Meeting. Six proposals were submitted to the Town of Sudbury prior to the April 7, 2006 deadline in response to this RFP. These proposals were reviewed by an evaluation team drawn from committee members, and proposals from three companies were selected for further consideration. The evaluation team interviewed representatives of these three companies and recommended that the Board of Selectmen accept the proposal from the firm of Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike (FST). The Selectmen concurred and contracted with FST to conduct this study. The RTCAC has reviewed a draft of the study document, and presented its comments for inclusion in the final document. FST will present the completed preliminary environmental and engineering review to the Town in November, 2006.

The RTCAC is the focal point for questions concerning public safety arising from the proposed conversion of the former rail line. The RTCAC Public Safety Subcommittee drafted a letter recommending sources of information on public safety issues for Sudbury Public Safety officials and also compiled a list of questions for these officials on various aspects of community safety on a rail trail in Sudbury. Both these documents were revised and approved by the Committee and sent to Sudbury Public Safety officials. The responses to the list of questions constitute important input for the Committee.

On September 14, 2006, the RTCAC hosted a public meeting at the Sudbury Town Hall to introduce the Committee to Sudbury citizens and inform the public of the physical location of the proposed conversion, the process of conversion, the results of the Rail Trail Neighbors' Survey conducted in 2005 by RTCAC, and a summary by a RTCAC member of studies on the effects of rail trails in other communities.

The RTCAC presented three proposals for CPC funding in the coming year during the October 3 meeting of the Sudbury Board of Selectmen. These proposals are a four-season wildlife study along the corridor, a title review establishing the definitive width of the ROW along its length, and a field survey mapping the corridor in detail. The Selectmen elected to present these proposals to the Community Preservation Commission (CPC) for funding.