

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.

Three proposals were submitted by RTCAC to the Board of Selectmen for CPC funding in 2006—a title review of the right of way, a four-season wildlife study along the corridor, and a field survey to map the corridor in detail. These three articles (22, 23, and 24) were approved by Sudbury Town Meeting in April 2007. The title review has been completed and Town is proceeding to award a contract for the wildlife study.

Many Sudbury boards and committees including the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Park and Recreation Commission have an interest in the possible effects of a rail trail. The RTCAC sent a letter to several Town Boards and Commissions offering to discuss the information presented in the preliminary engineering assessment delivered to the Town in 2006 by Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike, and to address other questions posed by these committees. RTCAC has been in communication with these committees, the Board of Selectmen, and other town bodies regarding the proposed trail.

The Public Safety Subcommittee of the RTCAC had stopped meeting and was dissolved. The Commercial and Agricultural Subcommittee of RTCAC was formed following the meeting with the Agricultural Commission to follow up with farming and business interests about the proposed trail. The Conservation Subcommittee of the RTCAC contributed to the formulation of the RFP for the wildlife study.

In May, the Board of Selectmen assigned the RTCAC a new task, the formulation of a notebook containing facts about the history of this right of way and also a review of the operation of existing rail trails. These facts will assist Town Staff in understanding rail trail issues and will allow the Board of Selectmen to prepare for a series of meetings to inform the public. The Board of Selectmen envision using this notebook as the basis for a decision to be made prior to the 2009 Town Meeting on how to proceed with the right of way. The RTCAC is working to create this notebook, with the first submission to the Board in October.

Most of the information compiled by the RTCAC is posted on the committee page of the Town website, where citizens can find up-to-date information on our activities.