

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 unused Framingham-Lowell rail line into 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 section of the rail trail in Sudbury would continue the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail whose most northern 6.8 miles recently opened in Chelmsford.

Three proposals submitted by RTCAC to the Board of Selectmen were approved by Town Meeting in 2007—a title review, a four-season wildlife study, and a field survey to map the corridor in detail. In summer 2007, the title search was judged sufficient to proceed with the wildlife study and the field survey with wetlands delineation. The wildlife study is not yet available in 2009; the Town will post the completed study on the Town website when it is finalized. The field survey with wetlands delineation, though scheduled for completion in June of 2008, is also not yet available for public inspection in 2009.

In May 2007, the Board of Selectmen assigned the RTCAC a new task, the formulation of a notebook containing information about the history of this right of way and also a review of the development and operation of representative rail trails in other Massachusetts communities.

In October 2008 the Board of Selectmen designated Town Planner Jody Kablack, Director of Public Works Bill Place and Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen to generate a concept plan for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury. These members of Town Staff attended a meeting with RTCAC in January 2009 to clarify the responsibilities of staff and of the RTCAC.

At the 2009 Town Meeting article 27 was presented, requesting reallocation of \$25,000 appropriated but not expended under Article 24 of 2007 Town Meeting to engage technical consultants and pay incidental expenses as Town Staff produce a “concept plan” for the rail trail. Town Meeting approved the article.

At their June 9 2009 meeting the Board of Selectmen voted, in the spirit of nurturing a sense of community, to revise the membership criteria for the RTCAC from representation of Town boards and committees to at-large members. This removes the requirement for a representative from the Conservation Commission, from the Park and Recreation Commission, and from the Planning Board. Town Staff no longer serve on the committee in any capacity.

The RTCAC has updated the Notebook and posted additional recommendations for the Board of Selectmen. The RTCAC also anticipates lending our expertise to the public discussion of the trail concept developed by Town Staff during the coming year. The information compiled by the RTCAC is posted on the committee page of the Town website where citizens can find an up-to-date account of our activities.