

7/18/05

Minutes

Sudbury Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee meeting

7:30-9:45 – Department of Public Works Building, Old Lancaster Road

Present: Bob Hall, Sigrid Pickering, Dennis Manone, Bill Place, Jennifer Pincus, Madeleine Gelsinon, Carole Wolfe, Dick Williamson, Pat Brown, Elizabeth Foley.

Presentation by: John Hendrickson & Jen Shemawat of Fay Spofford & Thorndike – Engineering consultants.

Gave committee members promotional material about projects including the Cape Cod Rail Trail & Nashua River RT. Outlined scope of general feasibility study they did for the town of Concord for Friends of Bruce Freeman RT Committee there. The emphasis in Concord [in contrast to Acton] was on environmental resources and bridge design. Presented committee with Table of Contents from Concord study as an outline. In concord, they examined:

- Ownership of right of way – the West Concord MBTA.
- Physical encroachments, such as structures
- EOT agreement terms - such as 99 year lease (Acton/annual lease – hard to \$ project)
- Existing environmental data – MA GIS/Natural Heritage programs [Q-Bio-Map?]
- DEP HAZ data for ¼ mile – document each site & impact.
- Cultural & Historic – MA Historical Commission – National Trust?
- Trail design – incorporating user groups (e.g. equestrian, pedestrian, wheeled) into surface material recommendation & bridges. (example - White's Pond Association's public access concerns and vetting process) described projects as linear parks rather than transportation corridors.
- Cost Estimate - including removal of ties and rails, new construction materials, contingency costs (such as landscaping)
- Project Mapping – parcel mapping – town GIS can offer a lot of information

Jen then talked about the bidding process – notification in a six-month time-frame involving multiple reviewing committees. She discussed staffing issues at MAPC and noted that Concord was unsure about Federal Funding and thus FS & T did not pursue this in their study aggressively. She also noted that Sudbury can request that federal, state and foundation funding sources be part of the RFP. FS & T studies involve user groups

are that are broad – generally non-motorized, day use only. They do not have experience with any surface material other than asphalt. Some discussion on new product called “poly pavement” as an alternative to stone dust. Noted that Wachusett Greenways is using stone dust and encouraged committee to visit. Some discussion on fact that MA Highway to date has only awarded funding to Wachusett Greenways for surface other than asphalt. Discussed Josh Lehman and applying for waiver if Sudbury doesn’t want all asphalt. Noted they are currently doing a project in New York that is partially paved, transitioning to stabilized soil in sensitive area.

Carole Wolf asked about the minimum disturbance area for a typical project. They did not know – and confessed that they have not visited a site when actively being implemented. John talked about standard and variations on trail width. If trail is multi-use, including bikes, horses and walkers, trail is 18’ wide plus 2-3’ of shoulder on each side. For every 2’ of slope, there is a 3’ clear zone.

Carole then asked about funding for fencing - for slopes or abutters? She was told that the state decides where fences go, usually for slopes and sometimes for abutters’ privacy. If Sudbury doesn’t request money for vegetative screening during Phase I, then it will bear this cost as well as for cost overruns.

Questions were then asked about who pays for:

- Road crossings – Need must be demonstrated for state to pay cost.
- Composting toilets – Included in cost if town agrees to maintain
- Parking lots – often created in right of way zone or town can buy land and apply cost toward matching contribution requirement. John recommended looking to existing infrastructure before creating new – controversial subject.

John said that it is really hard to determine the number of users of a rail trail – there is no standard methodology for determining this. He noted that the Minuteman RT is estimated to be 3<sup>rd</sup> most heavily used in nation.

Pat Brown questioned whether it was advantageous to apply as an individual town or as part of a regional plan? Regional Plans move through funding and approval process faster. John recommended three towns as a good number. Jim Cope at DOT – recommends collaboration.

Q – If Acton’s segment costs \$4.6 million, Concord’s \$4.1 million and Sudbury \$4 million, does the state have money for that? Town Managers from all three towns have to be in conversation. DCR criteria include: traffic congestion, mitigation and air quality. Noted MA worst in nation in using available \$.

Q - Can FS & T do Town Meeting Presentations? A- Yes, but questioned need since community presentations occur after Phase I, where pro’s and con’s are vetted.

Most towns have to agree to maintain RT after implemented. Exceptions - Nashua River RT – DCR maintains. Sudbury must assume responsibility for patrol and maintenance.

Pat Brown asked about cost overruns and whether the state is still willing to cover overrun costs. Told state will pay 10% overrun cost, with municipality paying difference. Concerns were raised about Hudson and Fairhaven where contaminated material was removed unnecessarily and has resulted in significant cost overruns out of the control of the municipality. We were cautioned again (also from Assistant Town Manager from Hudson) to have an onsite engineer present to be sure this doesn't happen.

Denis Manone advocated for putting the RFP together now, getting it out to bid, and diving into the project ASAP. This was not a majority opinion. Many other RTCAC members thought that we still had a lot of research to do before we are informed enough to make recommendations to the Town Manager and draft the RFP.

Dick Williamson asked whether Acton's Park & Recreation Department was involved in their study. Concord's point person was the Natural Resources Coordinator who acted as project manager. Sudbury again has heard that we need to have a paid town employee take the lead role for this project (also emphasized by Assistant TM from Hudson). FS & T can do analysis of different surface materials for the trail in a table format.

Jennifer Pincus asked about the maintenance impact to the town. She was told that the Rails to Trails Conservancy published a guidebook on maintenance.

FS & T said for \$25,000 we do not get a formal survey of the rail bed, but they use existing available data. Acton's study was deemed to be lacking in certain key areas that are important in Sudbury, so the focus was on the Concord study, which seemed to parallel our focus on environmental issues better, though it, too, did not go into much depth on certain key environmental concerns. Sudbury's proposed rail trail has more wetlands and rare species habitat than either Concord or Acton, so we need to listen to the advice of the Conservation Commission (June 6 meeting), and do our diligence on the environmental issues now, because it will guide the engineering feasibility study.

FS & T said that once we have a survey and 25% design phase – then we find out at a public hearing about public sentiment. There was some debate about how much information was needed to have a public hearing – whether the feasibility study needs to be done prior to such hearing. Dick Williamson asked whether the railroad lease needs to be secured before or after this process. This question led to listing Claire Connelly – a consultant to EOT, Chalila Belfield (SP?) who does the leases for the manager of the rail (Maeve Vakely Bartlett. We need a right of entry to access the rail as an immediate action. We are considered trespassing to use it now.

Dennis Manone asked about vertical construction versus Rail Trail – same or re-bid?

We then opened questions up to members of the public.

- Q - How many studies has FS & T done? A - 4-6. Some difficult – there is a high cost for safety issues.
- Q – What was White’s Pond outcome – A - no alternative but to do original plan.
- Q - ORV’s? Snowmobiles? – policing, A - Paving negates snowmobile use. ATV’s might present management issues for town.

FS & T concluded by saying this is a spectacular corridor.

At 9PM, we then went to the business session of our meeting.

- Minutes from the 5/10/05 meeting were discussed. Bob Hall said there were substantive errors and typo’s that he corrected - approved
- Minutes from 6/13/05 – send comments to Pat Brown

Abutter questionnaire mailed out last week– response by August 15.

Park & Rec, Con Com and Planning are now ex-officio because appointees haven’t attended regularly.

Marcia Rasmussen from Concord – use same list? Dick Williamson will send out list of firms.

Madeleine Gelsonon wanted to have a presentation from Weston about why they rejected doing a rail trail. This suggestion resulted in Dick Williamson saying we didn’t need to hear from Doug Gillispie, because he is a paid lobbyist, and that Weston actually has three studies so it’s important to know which one we are talking about. Sigrid Pickering said that she thought it is the RTCAC’s job to do due diligence in order to produce recommendations for the RFP. This should include differing opinions and perspectives on the subject.

Pat Brown said she wanted a presentation about projects that used alternative surfaces to pavement.

New Business:

Pat Brown suggested that we prepare a status report to the Selectmen

Concerns were voiced about abutter representation, the need to formulate subcommittees  
Mention was made of the American Association of Safe Hwy Officials

Next meeting: Wednesday, August 8 – on Safety Issues – Presentation by Earth Tech.  
Mtg. adjourned 9:45 PM.

