

**RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Town of Sudbury Massachusetts**  
**Minutes of Meeting of June 13, 2005**

Present: Bill Place, Bridget Hanson, Madeline Gelsinon, Carole Wolfe, Bob Hall, Pat Brown, Jennifer Pincus, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Dennis Mannone, Eric Poch, Sigrid Pickering

Not Present: Elizabeth Foley

Others attending: approximately 11 residents including Allan Wallack of Thompson Dr., Jim Nigrelli, Pennymeadow Rd., Elaine Kneeland, Pennymeadow Rd., Minor and Helen Crary, Hunt Rd., Arthur Huston, Peakham Rd. and Jay Leu, Meadow Dr.

The meeting convened at approximately 7:05 p.m.

The RTCAC welcomed 2 new members: Sigrid Pickering (in attendance), and Elizabeth Foley (not in attendance).

Main presentation:

Most of the meeting was a presentation by Michelle Ciccolo (the assistant manager of the town of Hudson), with assistance from Nick Rubino, senior project director of Earth Tech, the engineering firm that developed the Assabet River Rail Trail design. Michelle is the key town official working on the Assabet River Rail Trail, which, when completed, will run from downtown Marlboro through Hudson, into Stow, Maynard, and Acton.

Ms. Ciccolo gave us many handouts outlining the process Hudson has had to go through to work within the enhancement process with Mass Highway and the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration.) to obtain federal funding for the conversion of the railbed in Hudson to a recreational path. The application for enhancement funding through the Federal Transportation System is done through the MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) which reviews applications four times a year. Before applying for funding we would need to have the 25% design complete, or a formal commitment to complete one, approvals from all pertinent town committees, and all financing in place. They would want support letters from the selectmen, the planning board, and, especially, the conservation commission. If approved, Mass Highway will award and oversee the contract between the EOT (Mass Executive Office of Transportation) and the Selectmen of the town. The MAPC likes to see regional applications and it will help to work with neighboring towns that are part of the same overall project. It is important to consider all problems and solutions before we submit the application. Thus, we might include a list of contaminants that may be found during the feasibility study, wetland problems, wildlife habitat, and vernal pools. We should submit a complete application to the Enhancement Projects Review Committee of MAPC. The application is then submitted by MAPC to EOT 3-6 months later. If approved by EOT it gets forwarded to TIP, and then we wait.

It is important to have a town employee to identify and coordinate all aspects of the grant applications and construction process.

When searching for an engineering firm, Hudson developed an RFP and advertised among firms the town had worked with on other projects. They received about 6-8 applications, screened them, and then had group interviews with a selection committee. It is probably best to look for a larger firm, one that would have a structural engineer, a wetlands specialist and a traffic engineer, all on staff, so the firm would not have to subcontract some aspects of the study.

Contaminants such as creosote, coal, and herbicides are expected and not insurmountable. If capped, i.e., the trail is paved, these can stay in place.

It is important for the project manager at Mass Highway to involve the town in the process. Often they don't. Communities are responsible for all cost overruns over 10%, so it is important for the town to provide or hire an engineering representative to remain on site during construction. The cost for this person should be included in the cost estimate.

Be sure to talk about wetlands and have any problems built into the 25% feasibility study.  
Mass Highway requires notification of the 25% hearing.

Before construction begins, the town must agree to maintain, police, and eventually take control of the project. When completed, Mass Highway will turn the project over to the town.

Parking lots should be included in the construction budget.

Financing used for Marlboro-Hudson project:

1. Enhancement program (federal)
2. TIP (grant)
3. CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality): 80% federal; 20% state
4. DEM (Mass Dept. of Environmental Management) allots small amounts of money for recreational trails, for such things as wildlife studies.

Surface Materials:

Stone Dust vs. Paving: Stone dust is not always desirable. It often makes for increased maintenance and increased run off into wetlands. It would preclude use by rollerbladers and some walkers with baby strollers. Federal enhancements funding does not require paving, but Mass Highway usually does. Both require that the surface meet ADA standards.

Other Business and Information

Contamination issues for Phase 1 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT): Fly ash has been found. It is a particulate matter from coal burning trains and not an issue if the trail is capped. However, soil has been removed and piled in the construction of the Assabet River Rail Trail and has raised concerns for the construction of the BFRT.

We now have a list of trail neighbors and have worked on and approved the wording of the questionnaire to go out to them.

The studies of rail trails, even those not previously on web sites, will be placed on the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT) site. If they pass review of the RTCAC they will be placed on the RTCAC site also.

We have had no response from MAPC to our request for a list of qualified bidders for our feasibility study. There is currently no one filling the position that we need to contact.

Our July meeting will be held on Monday, July 18. Jen Shemowat from FST, the firm that did the Concord feasibility study, will do a presentation. Nick Rubino of Earth Tech, will speak at our August meeting.

A problem that has surfaced as a result of CSXT clearing the railroad ties on the line in south Sudbury is that the trail has been left open to motorbikes, and probably snowmobiles in the winter. The vision of the RTCAC for the trail conversion does not include motorized vehicles (except perhaps motorized wheel chairs). We need to ask the town to construct an ordinance to go on the Town Meeting Warrant which would prohibit use of motorized vehicles on the railbed, with violations resulting in prosecutions and/or confiscation of the vehicle.

The meeting was opened to comments or questions by the audience and then adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Submitted by Nancy Powers; 7/12/05