

**RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts**  
**Minutes of Meeting on November 9, 2006**

**Present:** Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Dennis Mannone, Jennifer Pincus, Bill Place, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe.

**Absent:** Sigrid Pickering, Eric Poch

**Also Present:** FST project engineer Jennifer Shemowat

**Pat Brown called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 P.M.**

**Past Minutes:**

The minutes of the two previous meetings on September 21 and October 12 were both approved with a few recommended changes that had been incorporated into the documents prior to the meeting.

**Old Business:**

Because Jennifer Shemowat and Bill Place were scheduled to present the preliminary results of the Engineering and Environmental Assessment study by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike (FST) to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) at 8:30 P.M., Jen Shemowat reviewed the FST responses to 35 comments by RTCAC members on the second draft of that study, the draft circulated in October. Jen distributed copies of the comments and responses to committee members. Carole Wolfe began the discussion by noting that the note concerning corrections in the color graphics not included in the draft of the report distributed to RTCAC members prior to the meeting contained an error in applying the Agricultural-Preservation-Restriction label to her property. Carole also said that the report contained very little about the wetlands in the Pantry Road and North Road wetlands.

Jen made no attempt to go over the FST responses to all 35 comments, but selected a few that she thought might be most helpful to the committee.

Jen Shemowat further clarified the response to Pat Brown's question arising from review of the October draft about whether a project funded using state/federal monies would be exempt from local (Sudbury) regulations and bylaws. The "project proponent" is that entity—either the Town of Sudbury or Mass Highway—that applies for permitting at the completion of the 100% design phase. If that entity is Mass Highway, project construction will comply with local bylaws and regulations to the extent feasible, as determined by Mass Highway. If that entity is the Town of Sudbury, then the Town must determine whether an exemption from local regulation will be sought. The deciding factor is who—Mass Highway or the Town of Sudbury—is paying for the 100% design.

Before Jen and Bill departed there was some more general discussion about funding options. Dick Williamson noted that at the meeting of the Mass Bicycle Plan Update sponsored by EOT and held in Concord on October 19, someone asked how likely was it that CMAQ funds might be obtained for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The answer from Josh Lehman of EOT seemed to be that such funding would take a fair amount of effort, as one had to demonstrate that the trail was a transportation corridor and its use could predictably reduce automobile emissions. Jen Shemowat indicated that should the town decide to go forward with a shared-use path, it

should apply for funding under the transportation enhancements program; a request for CMAQ funds could be made later if funds were more readily obtained that way.

Dick Williamson tried to crystallize the options for funding a rail trail in Sudbury, noting that there were basically three choices:

1. Not build a shared-use path, but another kind of trail, for example, a walking trail
2. Not build a shared-use path to Mass Highway standards
3. Build a shared-use path to Mass Highway standards

If the town chooses either 1 or 2, it would have to pay most of the design and construction costs from whatever sources it could find. If it decides on the third option, the town would pay about 10% of the total cost, mostly for the design of the trail, and the rest, essentially the construction costs, would be paid by the state and federal governments.

Pat Brown commented on another concern of hers, namely, the lack of any legal egress (or access) from the southern end of the trail because it ends at the intersection of the east-west (Wayside) trail, property of the MBTA, and the southern extension of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail owned by CSX Transportation. One possibility suggested by FST is to use the Wayside trail to get to Union Avenue - if permission can be obtained from the MBTA - where a walkway to Route 20 would permit access to the shopping areas. The Wayland BOS are considering a proposal made by the developer of the new town center to provide \$250,000 for construction of a rail trail along the MBTA right of way (ROW). The Wayland and Sudbury BOS have discussed the ramifications of the new town center and are considering the development of a rail trail to connect the two town centers. Such a rail trail would partially eliminate the problem of egress/access at the southern end of the EOT rail bed..

Parking at the southern terminus of the trail is also a problem. At present there is no area that could be readily adopted without negotiations with local businesses, which so far have not been receptive to the idea. Madeleine Gelsinon suggested that there may be available space on Nobscot Road, and Nancy Powers said she had heard that Clapper's might be closing, whose parking lot might conceivably become available. Dennis Mannone mentioned another property, the Mahoney Farm, as another possibility. This property abutting the rail bed south of Route 20 has been acquired by the Town.

Before leaving, Jen Shemowat handed out copies of her outline for her FST presentation to the town to take place on November 16. Bridget Hanson reminded members that FST was asked to assess the feasibility of the rail trail, not to assess what the town wants. The question arose about who would answer questions at the meeting about safety and other issues not covered in the report, and Pat Brown indicated the need for some protocol. Nothing was formalized in that regard.

The BOS and Town Manager had submitted a request to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to fund three studies that were deemed necessary for a more complete assessment of the feasibility of the proposed trail: 1) conducting a full title review, 2) documenting the wildlife species that use the right of way (ROW), and 3) creating an existing conditions map of the entire rail corridor. This third item has two parts, environmental resource delineation and a property survey. The CPC expressed interest in the proposal and will deliberate its merits and get back to the Town Manager. The request was to fund all of the studies at once but to undertake them in stages, the title review having the highest priority. The CPC asked if the RTCAC would recommend going forward with the trail at this time, and the response was that it would not until some of the questions addressed in the proposed studies have been answered.

The costs of these studies would be counted as part of the 25% design, except for the wildlife study.

### **All of the RTCAC Members Present Signed the Submission to the Town Report for 2006.**

#### **The 2003 Update of the 1987 CTPS Study of Phase 2**

Dick Williamson moved that both the original 1987 study and the 2003 update be placed on the RTCAC website, and the motion passed. He also reported that he had just received a CD copy of the 2006 CTPS study of the proposed extension of the Bruce Freeman Memorial Path in Sudbury and Framingham (phase 3). He proposed that the committee delay discussion of these documents until a later meeting.

#### **Subcommittee Reports**

*Conservation Subcommittee:* The committee had nothing new to report. Nancy Powers asked if Carole Wolfe wanted to serve on both the Conservation Subcommittee and the Safety Subcommittee considering her membership in the Community Preservation Committee and Historical Commission. Were there any conflicts of interest? Carole responded that she did not mind serving and that her roles on some committees were dictated by the town's requirement that some committees have representatives from the various town departments and committees.

*Public Safety Subcommittee:* Pat Brown began the discussion by emphasizing the necessity that the committee address the questions raised by towns people about the safety of the trail in order to assist the BOS in their presentation to Town Meeting requesting CPA funds for the studies noted above.

Carole Wolfe distributed copies of two newspaper articles describing stepped up activity by West Boylston and Holden police on the River Road and Wachusett Greenways sections of the Mass Central Rail Trail, which have become known as popular meeting places for homosexual men seeking sexual activity. She also mentioned a report in a Lexington newspaper reporting indecent exposure by a man on the Minuteman trail; but in the same issue there was also the report of a similar incident in the high school library. Carole's point was that such incidents indicate that a trail in Sudbury will have to be patrolled. Dennis Mannone asked if the incidence on rail trails was any higher than in parks, recreation areas and parking lots at shopping centers. Bridget asked what the committee could add to this discussion about the safety of children. It is largely a question, she said, of what parents allow their children to do, for example, traveling alone or only with other children on the trail. Madeleine Gelsinon voiced her concern because there are some very remote areas along the trail. Bill Place said that the committee should go to the police departments in surrounding towns and ask about the incidence of unwanted behavior in their towns. Dick Williamson replied that Sudbury's police chief had spoken with the chiefs in other towns and learned that it was not a concern; there were virtually no occurrences of dangerous or undesirable behavior.

#### **Outstanding Obligations, A Plan for 2007, Designation of Responsibilities**

Pat Brown began by pointing out that the RTCAC needs a clear way of communicating with town committees, and Dick noted that the channels should be for information exchange, not requests for approval. Bridget inquired what business would come up at town meeting in 2007, and the answer was the request for funds for the wildlife study. She said that a meeting with the Conservation Commission (ConCom) should be arranged as soon as possible. Carole asked if the

ConCom might request additional work in the study that could add to the projected costs, and Bridget thought not. The CPC is expected to respond to the requests for funding sometime in December. Pat again noted the need for someone to schedule meetings with town committees and commissions. Dennis noted there was no need to contact Park and Recreation at this time, as that commission would enter at a later stage in the deliberations when parking, signage and other such matters are under consideration. Nancy Powers asked if the committee should approach the various committees to ask what we can do to answer their concerns and what questions they might have. There was general agreement that the RTCAC should meet with other town committees soon. More generally, the RTCAC should increase its interactions with all of the relevant committees and commissions in the coming months. Bridget suggested that when RTCAC members attend other meetings the minutes for those meetings should be linked to the RTCAC website. Nancy Powers agreed to draft a general letter of communication to initiate communication between RTCAC and other Town Boards and Commissions. This letter is to be reviewed and approved at the next RTCAC meeting.

Pat Brown suggested that guest speakers for upcoming meetings should address the rail-trail debate in Weston. Speakers could include Doug Gillespie and Dave Conna who were instrumental in the development of the Weston Rail Trail study. Both were members of the Weston Rail Trail Task Force; Mr. Gillespie was a member of the majority that voted not to build the Wayside Trail in Weston; Mr. Conna was a member of the minority voting for the trail. Dick Williamson will attempt to have these people speak with the RTCAC in May, 2007.

Members of the Wachusett Greenways organization involved in the development of the Mass Central Rail Trail in Sterling, W. Boylston, Holden, and Rutland have been invited to speak at the next RTCAC meeting on December 14 about their experience in developing and maintaining a soft-surface trail.

Cathy Lewis of the Central Transportation Planning Staff will make a presentation to the BOS and Town Manager on the just recently completed feasibility study of the proposed extension of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in south Sudbury and Framingham. The Town Manager will schedule that meeting, probably in January. RTCAC members should attend. Dick Williamson noted that the CTPS report will be put on the RTCAC website.

The FAQ sheet written by the RTCAC has not been updated in over two years. Dick Williamson will look at it to see what parts of it may require revision.

A hard copy of the final report of the Environmental and Engineering Assessment by FST will be placed in the Goodnow Library when it becomes available in December.

The question arose about the need for a comment sheet for residents at the upcoming November 16<sup>th</sup> presentation by FST. It was deemed unnecessary as people can make comments on the RTCAC website.

Questions regarding funding for the proposed trail occupied the remainder of the meeting. Bridget Hanson will look into the possibility that the Safe Routes to Schools program might be a source for some aspects of the trail in Sudbury. The program does not pay for construction, but it does provide funds for such things as public awareness programs and signage. The question arose as to how many children might use the trail. Pat Brown suggested that laying out the location of schools and the areas served by school busses in relation to the trail corridor would indicate the number of dwellings whose children might use the trail as a route to school. The statistical, rather than the current, number of children living in these dwellings would constitute an estimate of demand

Jody Kablack, the Town Planner, had been asked about what other funding sources might be available for the development of a rail trail. She replied that the only source she knows at present is the state Department of Conservation and Recreation that provides trail grants. However, such grants are for only relatively small amounts, not greater than \$100,000.. Dick pointed out that the Wachusett Greenways put together funds from a variety of sources. He also noted that the Wachusett Greenways section of the Mass Central Trail with its soft surface was built in such a way that it would probably not meet the current standards for a shared-path.

### **New Business**

*Information Items:* There was a very brief discussion of the Mass Bicycle Plan Update, the topic of a meeting held by EOT on October 19 in Concord. This update is in the information gathering stage at this time. Carole Wolfe noted that it was stated at the meeting that rail trails have become so expensive that the impetus by EOT in the future will be to provide bicycle lanes on roadways. There is an apparent need for improved design of roads to accommodate cyclists. Dick noted that the MAPC plan is closely coordinated with the state-wide plan. Pat commented that there was a great deal of overlap with the information in the regional plan update provided by the MAPC on their website

Pat Brown also received from the Town, without cover, a study quantifying the Level of Service (LOS) experienced on trails. It indicated that increasing the width of the trail or decreasing the number of trail users contributed to a better user experience.

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 P.M.**

Submitted by Bob Hall on November 21, 2006

Resubmitted on December 8, 2006

Approved on December 14, 2006