

**RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts**  
**Minutes of Meeting on March 5, 2013**  
**Sudbury DPW Building Conference Room**  
**275 Old Lancaster Road**

**Present:** Pat Brown (chair), Madeleine Gelsonon, Bridget Hanson, Jennifer Pincus, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe

**Absent:** Bob Hall, Eric Poch

**Also Present:** Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen, Town Planner Jody Kablack, Bob Abrams, Todj Gozdeck, Jim Nigrelli, Leonard Simon

**Bridget Hanson volunteered to draft the minutes for this session.**

**The meeting was convened at 7:34 P.M.**

**Concept Plan Alternatives:** Town Planner Jody Kablack presented a matrix of four concept alternatives that Town Staff had developed for consideration by the Board of Selectmen for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury along the rail right of way (ROW) between the Concord border and the MBTA crossing. These alternatives included three that had been named to the Board at its October 25, 2012, meeting and one additional possibility. These concepts are:

1. Full Rail Trail built to AASHTO standards along the ROW
2. Segmented Bypass (AASHTO trail on the ROW in some segments, deviate from the ROW sometimes)
3. Greenway
4. Existing Walkways/Cross Town Recreational Path (additional possibility)

In addition to the matrix, staff posted large maps showing the ROW and the proposed route of the various alternatives.

Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen reminded the RTCAC that staff had held discussions with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) during the fall of 2012. MassDOT requires trail design and construction using the trail design standards developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for any project receiving federal or state transportation funding, and requires that such a trail be constructed on the ROW. When constructing a trail using federal funding MassDOT does not obtain permits under local bylaws; rather they apply under state environmental laws, using the

stormwater and wetlands requirements imposed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

However, MassDOT acknowledged the challenges posed by the ROW in Sudbury, particularly the surrounding wetlands, the town's reliance upon water from local wells, and the apparent incompatibility of the new stormwater regulations with the AASHTO trail design requirements. Additionally, Sudbury's Board of Selectmen specifically and unanimously stated in August that they want to adhere to local wetlands bylaws when building the trail in Sudbury. MassDOT, which controls the ROW on behalf of the Commonwealth, indicated that they would permit the ROW to be used for the other designs proposed by town staff, with the clear understanding that no federal transportation money would be available for construction. The rails remain the property of the Commonwealth, and may not be disposed of by the Town to defray trail conversion costs. The ties are contaminated (creosote) and must be disposed of properly. The entire rail bed is considered contaminated and should be capped with clay, pavement, or 12" clean fill if the rails and ties are removed. Material from the rail bed should be kept on the rail bed if at all possible; it is difficult and expensive to dispose of.

There was a spirited discussion of the specific matrix provided by Town Staff as the RTCAC provided input. Dick Williamson pointed out that the Town had approved a paved trail in non-binding decisions at both Town Meeting and at the ballot box. Dick and Pat Brown both provided written input as well.

**Community Input:** Jody and Debbie welcomed input from citizens attending the meeting as well. Bob Abrams suggested 1) weighting the opinions of trail abutters based upon the number of linear feet their properties touch the rail ROW 2) specifically addressing the concerns of agricultural property owners along the ROW and 3) considering the cost of any proposed trail when asking citizens whether they prefer it. Leonard Simon spoke for twenty minutes on the benefits of a paved trail. Jody stressed that Town Staff were not going to issue a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen; rather, Staff were developing concepts based upon the criteria that they had been given by the Board. Staff did not have a confirmed spot on the March 12 Board of Selectmen agenda for this presentation, but would notify the RTCAC when these concepts were to be presented.

**Minutes:** The RTCAC unanimously approved the January 10, 2013 RTCAC minutes.

**Updates:** Pat had circulated by e-mail on February 5 her notes from the January 29 Mass Highway District 4 meeting of the MassDOT BFRT. She brought a handout of the proposed Route 2 crossing design. Dick mentioned that the Massachusetts Rail Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB) on which he serves would participate in a trail conference on May 4 at Devens.

**Future Meetings:** The RTCAC tentatively agreed to meet on April 25 to discuss Town Staff's presentation of the concept plans to the Board of Selectmen.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Brown, April 8, 2013