

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Design Task Force Meeting Minutes of March 2, 2017

(Minutes approved on March 29, 2017)

7 p.m., Town Hall, Lower Level, 322 Concord Road, Sudbury, MA

Present: Daniel Carty, Charles Russo, Lana Szwarc, Robert Beagan (7:30)

Absent: Robert Schless, John Drobinski, LeRoy Sievers

Also attending: Beth Suedmeyer, Sudbury Planning Department; Tracie Lenhardt, VHB

BFRT Task Force Joint Meeting with Historic Districts Commission

Fred Taylor opened the Historic Districts Commission (HDC) meeting at 7:10 p.m. A quorum of BFRT Task Force members had not yet arrived, so BFRT TF members agreed to not open its meeting and to listen without deliberation until a quorum arrived.

HDC members in attendance: Fred Taylor, Frank Reipe, Lee Swanson, Linda Hawes, Bill Andreas.

Tracie Lenhardt gave a project overview presentation to the HDC, with a focus on roadway crossings and associated signage near the Historic District, and showed safety signage from similar projects. Ms. Lenhardt noted that she had worked on the Sudbury Town Center project and understood some of the HDC's concerns based on that experience. She explained that historic elements, such as whistle posts, would be retained as much as possible, and sometimes removed and replaced. She noted a siting constraint near Ti-Sales because of town drainage infrastructure.

Fred Taylor noted that the HDC could offer many comments on the project overall, but should focus its comments on the Hudson Road crossing. Much discussion focused around the mast arm sign on Hudson road, and whether appropriate safety signage could be accomplished without the mast arm. There was a discussion of mast arms versus post signs.

HDC members noted that the Town Center intersection project included an evaluation of what must be done versus what individuals wanted done. Concerns were raised about the size and scale of MassDOT's required signage; Ms. Lenhardt noted those standards had been reduced even since the Town Center project.

Fred Taylor that additional site-specific visuals would be helpful to HDC in future deliberations.

BFRT Design Project Presentation for Abutters

At 7:30 p.m., BFRT TF achieved a quorum and Vice Chairman Dan Carty opened its Public Abutter Meeting.

Nearly 50 public attendees were counted over the course of the meeting.

Beth Suedmeyer noted that no takings were planned for any of the alternative routes, only voluntary easements. Tracie Lenhardt provided another presentation giving an overview of the BFRT. She noted that the southern alternative would travel along the west side of Union Ave and the south side of Old Lancaster.

Bobby Beagan asked to clarify why the two alternatives under consideration were chosen. Beth Suedmeyer explained that VHB's contract called for consideration of the Union Ave. alternative and that early public meetings had identified the northerly Concord Road (Pantry Brook avoidance) route as another alternative. As environmental permitting will require alternatives analysis around the stream crossing (Pantry Brook and Hop Brook), the choice of which alternative route to examine was opened up.

At 7:53 p.m. the Public Comment meeting was opened.

Dan Carty noted that no final decisions had yet been made and no decisions were being made at this meeting, so its focus would be on receiving feedback from abutters.

Margaret Richard, 31 Haynes Road

Noted her house was 20 feet from the proposed route. Asked about screening along the property – huge concern, desire for screening. Beth Suedmeyer noted that screening, landscaping, fencing and related details are part of 75 percent design.

Tom Hollocher, 623 Concord Road

Noted an alternative bike route paralleling the road was a “spectacularly stupid” idea (most of attendees applauded) and that he did not approve of the alternative routes. Thought the informational mailing did not provide sufficient information.

Rosario Caltabiano, 216 Old Lancaster Road

Asked why the alternative routes were being considered (assumed environmental concerns and concerns of direct route abutters, but that was not made clear). Noted he would have appreciated more detail in the plans. Beth Suedmeyer noted that the amount of information made it difficult to include it all in a mailing, but the hope was that the map provided enough background to begin the discussion.

Christina Deignan, 200 Old Lancaster Road

Noted she was still unclear about the impact – which side of the road the alternative would travel down Old Lancaster Road, how the route would turn down Union, and that sidewalks or utility poles cover both sides. Tracie Lenhardt explained the route would travel down the non-sidewalk side. Deignan asked if that meant two pathways (a sidewalk and a bike path) would travel down either side of the road. Lenhardt confirmed yes, because this would eliminate a roadway crossing (instead of a more difficult double crossing at the intersection with Concord Road).

Barbara Krebs, 223 Old Lancaster Road

Noted he was an abutter of both the main rail bed route and the alternative route – doesn't think the alternative could fit down Old Lancaster without taking up everyone's yards.

Barb McDonald 17 Pantry Road – corner of Pantry and Haynes road.

Believes safety is a concern for the Concord Road alternative. There are two dangerous intersections around Haynes, and a steep drop off at the edge of the road. A "dangerous intersection" sign already exists. Main concern is the safety problem with Pantry Road. Is a supporter of the rail trail but wants it to run through the woods away from roads, off dangerous Pantry Road. With snowbanks and dangerous intersections adding a path would be very hazardous.

HEAD COUNT of Rail bed Abutters v. Alternate Route Abutters v. Both

At this point, BFRT TF members saw a trend within the audience and asked for a count of direct abutters of rail bed, alternate route abutters, and abutters of both routes. Count was 24 for main rail bed abutters, about the same for alternate route, slightly fewer for abutters to both corridors.

Chris Boland, 24 Haynes Road

Unlikely to grant an easement. Since the bridge abutment at Pantry Brook was destroyed by town work, believes town should file an insurance claim rather than have taxpayer pay for repair.

Michael Cunningham, 3 Wash Brook

Concerns about width. Confirmed that 10 foot wide, with 2 foot shoulder on each side is current plan. Believes 14 feet is plenty wide, concerns about going any wider.

Nicole Dettmann, 204 Old Lancaster Road

Many concerns. Calls the intersection of Old Lancaster/Union/Concord roads "the Bermuda triangle." To increase traffic would be a safety nightmare. Notes that septic is in the front yard of many homes on Old Lancaster Road, so easements will be a huge challenge.

Lisa Cavanaugh, 9 Codman Drive

Wanted clarification of which side of the road the Concord Road alternative would travel on Morse Road. Ms. Lenhardt clarified west side of Concord, north side of Morse, by baseball fields, opposite homes. Asked if sufficient space exists to fit next to the ballfields. Noted Morse and Concord crossing is a dangerous intersection. Noted she doesn't like rail trails

near schools or high traffic areas. How would easements work? Beth Suedmeyer noted easements from neighbors would be required.

Matt Shedd, 51 Morse Road

Abutter of both options. Has a small horse farm, no horses currently, but the rail trail would be a concern if horses were there. Concerns about trash, debris, traffic, congestion on the path. Cars come down Morse at a fast speed. Neither side of Morse road alternative is easy or good solution.

Dick Gariepy, 213 Old Lancaster Road

Four main concerns for rail trail users and abutters:

1. Especially concerned about Hudson intersection, suggests considering traffic light synchronization so public safety isn't inhibited, and narrowing of Peakham Road to exclude the right-hand turn lane
2. Similar concerns at Old Lancaster, which has become a cut through
3. Old Lancaster would have to be widened for DPW trucks, would wipe out yards service
4. Users & abutters – maintenance, plowing, cleaning, safety, trash

David Bauer, 627 Concord Road

Old home; probably 18 feet between the edge of the road and the television in his living room. Asked how is the project valuing the heritage of the old homes, old stone walls, scenic trees, etc., which may be at risk under the alternative. Doesn't see how the alternative could go down Concord Road without demolishing the stone walls, possibly homes, etc.

Svetlana Semenova, 49 Hunt Road

Concerns about arsenic, specifically, as well as other toxic chemicals within the soil along the rail bed. Will there be testing, before, during, or after construction? Has arsenic been found, has it been tested for, has it been found, has it been remediated? Any results from places where rail trails have been built? Has a yard and garden near the rail bed, children play nearby, and arsenic can travel quite far. Tracie Lenhardt said testing for contaminants does not typically happen before or after construction; construction assumes the presence of contaminations. Best management practice is to cap and pave. Amounts unknown.

Tom Hollocher, 623 Concord Road

Comment on number of driveways along Concord Road; owners would need to cross the rail trail to reach the road, trail would not be plowed. How many owners would it take denying easements to deny the project? If just one, you found one here.

Roger Nichols, 220 Old Lancaster Road

Confirmed easements would all have to be voluntary. The maps shows two large problems that do not seem to be solved by alternative routes. Goal was to avoid environmental issues raised by stream crossing. Old Lancaster has poles on both sides, and the accidents at the intersection.

John Murphy, 150 North Farm Road (Frost Farm Villages)

- Familiar with problems based on White Pond involvement
- Thinks rail trail users will be out-of-towners
- Big parking problem at Cummings Office Park
- Concerns about parking
- Concerns about dogs on the trail
- Concerns about dogs leaving the trail
- Concerns about trash
- Wants a fence to prohibit crossing through Frost Farm

Jim Nigrelli, 51 Penny Meadow Road

Noted a section in Chelmsford had contaminated soil, which added to the costs. Asked if there be clear cutting? Tracie Lenhardt said not necessarily a clear cut, anything outside the 14-foot ROW we try to minimize. Nigrelli asked if the clearing would have an environmental impact? It was noted that ConCom will evaluate this. Nigrelli called attention to previous studies and abutter surveys.

Steve Lanzendorf, 43 Hawes Road

Worried about parking, worried that Sudbury providing parking when other towns are not increases the burden on Sudbury disproportionately. Also noted a report from Sudbury town staff identifying how bike trails could be created on-road throughout town. Who identifies NHESP areas? Beth Suedmeyer noted that's a state listing and a consultation is required.

Ralph Tyler, 1 Deacon Lane

Wanted to re-affirm that Town voted at least 5 times to build the rail trail. Remembers seeing trains go by decades ago. Seems as though abutters have clearly said they will not provide easements. Believes the alternative routes are a distraction and focus should shift to details of rail bed design. Thinks it's a relief to have bikes going past instead of trains.

Greg George 39 Meadow Drive

Questions about markings on trees. Tracie Lenhardt stated no trees have been tagged for removal.

Patricia Caltabiano, 216 Old Lancaster Road

Concerns about accidents at Old Lancaster and Union/Concord – called 911 four times in a year. DPW trucks travel fast and intersection would be dangerous. Noted that Old Lancaster is a scenic road. Said water often pools in her the driveway, and the neighborhood is aware of underground streams that make the area very wet.

Chris Boland 24 Haynes Road

Confirmed the construction costs of \$7 million, paid mostly by state. Then why do we need town funding? Response was to pay for design, or some articles for the separate East-West Greenway were defeated several years prior. Has concerns about future costs for trail repair, special public safety equipment spending. How many local residents use the trail?

Dave Leger 33 Morse

Feels frustrated. Dislikes the Concord Road alternative – would it really be a rail trail if 50 percent went on to the road. Has never seen the opportunity to vote on the issue.

Roger Nichols 220 Old Lancaster Road

Worried about plowing and emergency services. Asked if scenic roads would require a tree study? Tracie Lenhardt: yes. Saving trees would affect path layout requiring more impact to yards.

Jim Nigrelli 51 Penny Meadow Road

Clarification on Town Meeting voting: ever an up or down vote on the trail, or just votes on funding for design? Some discussion about town funding votes and language of the votes.

Stephanie Dettmann, 204 Old Lancaster Road

Noted that not all bikers from Cambridge are bad. She uses public spaces in Cambridge and Boston and does not want to exclude people from Sudbury Rail Trail, just as she does not want to be excluded.

Eunice Garay, 29 Pantry Road

Bought a house in 2000. Thinks the rail trail would be nice. Doesn't understand why the alternate routes would be looked at. Knows people who opposed the rail trail in other towns, now they support it. Believes less=better than more in terms of infrastructure and amount of pavement, etc. Clarification that one owner who denies an easement can deny that route, but that the entire railroad corridor is owned by MassDOT and no abutters can deny an easement.

Dan DePompei, 35 Haynes Road

Comments via email that stresses the need to meet environmental standards and undergo alternatives analysis.

Margaret Richard, 31 Haynes

To clarify, property has natural drainage swale. Drainage problems along that side of the road. What will happen to that? There's a collapsed culvert. Beth Suedmeyer noted DPW wants a culvert study. Richard would prefer the schedule of trains rather than constant bikers.

Dave Leger 33 Morse Road

Votes from town appear to be for a rail trail only, not a 50-50 road and rail trail.

9:40 END OF ABUTTER COMMENT, OPENED TO NON-ABUTTERS

Dick Williamson, 21 Pendleton Road

1. Lots of BFRT studies on the Friends of BFRT website that provide experiences from other rail trails
2. Town is not tiring of the rail trail; been at it since 1988 and every town vote has supported it
3. Sees strong case against alternatives
4. Easements will probably not be granted, would cost probably millions of dollars, so probably not worth discussing alternatives further
5. Wildlife census has occurred, which identified stream crossings as critical environmental locations, which has led to the focus on alternative routes

Note that another Public forum is scheduled to occur March 9, 2017. Discussion of upcoming outreach efforts.

Further meeting agenda items tabled, meeting adjourned.