

Town of Sudbury

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Task Force

Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 7:30 PM

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting

Task Force Attendees:

John Drobinski, Charlie Karustis, Richard Morse, Glenn Pransky, Lana Szwarc, Frank Vitale, and Dick Williamson

Staff:

Beth Suedmeyer, Environmental Planner, Planning and Community Development

Fuss & O'Neill Attendees:

Nick LaPointe, Arnold Robinson

1) Meeting was called to order and roll call was requested by John Drobinski at 7:05 p.m. Meeting was recorded by Sudbury TV.

2) Current Activities:

Beth Suedmeyer referred to the night's agenda and explained that the meeting will be joined by members of the town's Historical Commission later in the evening. At that time, Commission members will express their findings and expected contribution to the efforts of the BFRT Task Force.

Beth highlighted meetings she and others had with the Parks & Recreation Commission, Historical Commission, Commission on Disability and the Historic Districts Commission concerning the BFRT project.

Dick Williamson raised a potential issue with the 25% design plans showing the BFRT ROW as being owned by the MBTA. Beth confirmed that the ROW was owned by MassDOT Rail Division and that this would be revised.

3) Broadacres Parking Concept

Nick LaPointe stated that he was prepared to review where they were with rail trail amenities beginning with the Broadacres site parking concept consisting of 32 spaces, connections to recreational fields and various amenities including a rest room, benches, bike racks, a bike repair station, a pavilion, picnic area, signage, hydration station and trash receptacles.

Nick pointed out that they would try to relocate the rest room outside of the wetland buffer zone and closer to the pavilion and picnic area. It also was suggested to move the benches closer to the rail trail to accommodate trail users. Also, a need for signage pointing to the location of restrooms on the other side of the parking lot stated.

Nick showed a photo of an outdoor restroom clad in wood and stated that enhanced building materials could be considered to increase aesthetic quality of the structure. Beth also asked if an increased overhang was possible to allow for shelter during inclement weather. Nick responded that a lot of these details could be addressed during the preparation of shop drawings enabling the town to make further changes at that time.

4) Parkinson Parcel

Nick showed a revised trail link from the Parkinson parking lot to the trail. The curve in the trail was designed to standards reflecting an 18MPH design speed. Benches have been proposed including an information kiosk at the juncture of the trail with the parking lot. A potential conflict was pointed out suggesting bicyclists and others exiting the connecting trail could conflict with field team users attempting to enter Parkinson's fields at similar times. Nick said that he would try to resolve this potential conflict.

It was pointed out that businesses across Hudson Road from the Ti Sales entrance might benefit from trail users seeking food and drink and a place to eat. Businesses might respond with outdoor tables and seating (some may already exist) and/or provide a pathway to the rail trail from these businesses.

Beth mentioned that the Historic Commission appeared to favor the black metal benches used along the BFRT in Concord but asked if other colors could be available. The Commission also favors interpretive panels and way finding signs. The Town of Lincoln has embarked on a system of way finding signs in their town that some of the Historic District commission members seemed to like (<https://www.lincolntown.org/928/Wayfinding>).

Richard Williamson pointed out that the old Sudbury rail station building still exists as a private home and was moved to the Ti Sales side of Hudson Road.

Beth noted that near the entrance of Ti Sales there are old rails (siding track) that there is interest in keeping for historical purposes. It also was noted that the stone retaining walls near the Ti Sales entrance drive are within the rail trail ROW and originally were the foundation of an historic building and merits consideration for interpretative signing at that location.

Regarding the nearby historic cattle crossing, it was asked if the cattle crossing width was too narrow to cross with the rail trail. Nick responded that he has proposed grade beams for that location and it seemed feasible.

Dick Williamson stated the Parks and Recreation Commission would not object to the proposed connection of the rail trail with the Parkinson parking lot.

5) North Road Gateway / Davis Field Connection

The need for benches was discussed and it was pointed out that there is a lot of bench seating at Davis Field. Other amenities proposed for the area included a trail head to accommodate a display board, rest rooms, bike racks, and trash receptacles.

After Nick described the proposed guardrails for this location, it was questioned whether the guard rail post shown would prevent a biker from falling over. A higher protective fence might be safer to prevent falls. It was requested that a cross section be shown of the relationship between the connecting path to Davis Field and North Road, the grass buffer between and the protective guardrails.

Nick didn't think a safety issue existed at this location when considering the spacing and height of the guard rail (vehicular guardrail and a bicycle safety fence), grassed 3' wide buffer and connecting shared use path of about 8 feet. He described how the posts, fencing and guardrail would work using already developed cross sections at this location. Furthermore, Nick noted that existing utility poles also made it difficult to provide additional fencing enhancements here due to the lack of enough space to accommodate additional fencing.

It also was suggested that higher fencing might be more appropriate along the curve of the connecting trail to Davis Field. Nick concurred that this was feasible.

Dick Williamson said that the Conservation Commission may not object to adding bike racks to the parking area at the Conservation land on the south side of North Road to the east of where the rail trail crosses the roadway.

6) Historical Resources

Beth stated that documentation of all the historical resources within the project corridor is incomplete. There are other artifacts within the corridor where an opportunity exists to retain and protect and interpret these resources.

Arnold Robinson said that a historical resource checklist was completed as part of the 25% design stage. A historic resources spreadsheet was developed by Fuss & O'Neill identifying important resources such as cattle crossings, whistle posts, etc. But some resources are missing. Members of the Historical Commission went out and walked the corridor and identified resources not previously identified such as:

- Rail rests
- Rails at a siding at the Ti Sales entrance drive

Dick Williamson mentioned that there was good information on the history of the railroads in the area developed by the towns of Weston and Wayland for the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT). Rick Conard (Wayland) is a local expert on railroad history in the area. Beth also said that she would share a link from Weston which would show a pamphlet of the history of past railroad activities in the area.

It was mentioned that the old utility poles along the rail tracks in Weston were removed because some believed that, because of their age, they were unsafe.

Also it is believed that there are underground cables supporting various rail electric boxes, signals, etc. that may exist along the corridor.

7) Bridges Review

Arnold summarized bridge treatment options:

Pantry Brook Bridge

A full replacement has been proposed for this bridge. A determination of the physical character of the bridge will suggest what the bridge facing will look like. It was questioned whether anyone will have a view of the facing from the rail trail. Nick cited that the Wayside Inn Road bridge has been proposed with stone to reflect the historical and physical character of the area. The DPW will share the Wayside Inn Road bridge treatment.

It was also brought up that it would be desirable to have a pull off at the bridge crossings to allow trail users to sit near the bridge or to get off bicycles and walk onto the bridge and view Pantry Brook and its surrounding environs. It was noted that families with children would especially be attracted to these locations where bikes, carriages and trail users may congregate leading to potential conflicts with other trail users passing by. There are significant constraints at these locations though with wetland resources, so it will be further evaluated.

Hop Brook Bridge

A revised proposed design for this bridge will require some removal of the historic steel used on the bridge and proposed to be replaced with lower profile beams and a timber deck. The surrounding granite will be fully retained.

Other options being explored are focused on materials, environmental impacts, and costs with the goal of minimizing loss of historical significance. Hop Brook is a regulated floodway and retaining the old bridge at a lower level (required to maintain consistent grade level) will reduce the overall hydraulic opening, but the goal of the design is to have no narrowing of the floodway opening.

If the existing beams are retained lead paint removal will be required and poses an environmental risk.

8) Historical Commission joins BFRT Advisory Task Force Meeting at approximately 9:05PM

Chris Haggard, Chairman of the Historical Commission called for a roll call of their meeting members and agreed to summarize what they talked about at their previous meeting that evening.

9) Highlights of their presentation to the BFRT Task Force included:

- They were disappointed that no historical inventory was undertaken for the MCRT Project
- The Commission mission is to preserve, interpret and highlight historical resources
- The Commission hired a preservation consultant for MCRT in Sudbury
- The Corridor was mapped and photographed
- Chris reviewed our team's historic inventory spreadsheet during the meeting
- Rail rests north of Hudson Road are not listed and should be
- Rail siding near TI Sales entrance should be retained and interpreted
- Electric Cabinets require an interpretative sign
- Cattle Crossings are considered rare and it would be desirable to show tracks over one or both of the two crossings
- Save whistle posts if possible
- North Sudbury Train Station should be identified and interpreted where it was situated originally (now a private home that was relocated)
- Show interpretative sign at Hop Brook bridge
- Rail Rests – a small interpretative sign at this location would be desirable
- May be desirable to add interpretative signs and pictures of North Road farms
- The tall Signal Tower south of Hudson Road is not on the inventory list and would be desirable to restore
- Section 106 archaeological resources haven't been included, but Beth responded that MassDOT needs to coordinate with the State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and MassDOT has on on-call contracts to complete reviews of this type
- Section 106 should be a dual process and will be accomplished under a programmatic agreement
- Historical Commission wants to work together with the BFRT Advisory Group and collaborate

John Drobinski thanked the Historical Commission for their work and conducting the joint meeting. He indicated the Task Force is looking into a number of the

questions the Commission discussed and looks forward to continued collaboration with the Commission.

Historical Commission Adjourned at Approximately 10:05PM

11) Continuing the Advisory Task Force meeting, Nick stated that Fuss & O'Neill wants to nail down styles and aesthetics and agrees that another meeting would be desirable on Monday March 15.

12) Crossings & Gateways Spreadsheet

A spreadsheet was developed by Charlie Karustis that was presented and reviewed by the group.

A need for directional signage was highlighted for locations along the rail trail. Fuss & O'Neill said they would try to incorporate this kind of signage at key locations.

13) Other needs along the trail that should be considered for inclusion:

- Trash receptacles – should not be too many that would need to be serviced by town
- Pet Waste Bag Dispensers added to Gateway locations

14) Next Meetings

Next meeting March 15 for Task Force group to finalize recommendations.
Meeting with Select Board March 16 to present recommendations.

BFRT Meeting Adjourned at approximately 10:20PM.