

Sudbury Rails to Trails Forum
Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 22, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Town Hall – Lower Level

In Attendance: Chuck Woodard, Patricia Brown, Len Simon, Bob Haarde

Absent: Larry O'Brien

Staff in Attendance: Jody Kablack, Jim Kupfer

Visiting Consultants: Trish Domigan, VHB, Director of Massachusetts Municipal Service; Bill Desantis, VHB, Corporate Director Bicycle Transportation Planning & Design; Gene Crouch, VHB, Senior Environmental Scientist, Tracie Lenhardt, VHB, Project Manager

Selectman Chuck Woodard called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Woodard welcomed the public to the 2015 Rails to Trails Forum. He proceeded to give a brief introduction of both rail trail corridors and the process to date. Mr. Woodard then introduced the panel consisting of staff and the Town's consultant for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, VHB.

Jim Kupfer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the two corridors, starting with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Mr. Kupfer provided a brief history of the work the Town has done to date, current status of the design process and future proposed schedule. Mr. Kupfer continued on to the Wayside Branch of the Mass Central Rail Trail and the work the Town has done to date and the proposed strategy moving forward. Mr. Kupfer listed the next opportunities for public meetings for both corridors and urged the public to contact him with questions.

Allan Wallack, 67 Thompson Drive, asked if there is a document today that shows how the Town will protect the vernal pools and wetlands. Jody Kablack says currently VHB is delineating all of those constraints and will plot them out so the Town can evaluate them and see how best to proceed.

Robert Abrams, 578 Boston Post Road, stated the Department of Revenue has determined that Towns cannot acquire land without full title with CPA funds. Has the Town considered that the Department of Revenue may not allow the Town to use CPA funds for rail trail projects, and if so, does the Town have another source of revenue to use for this project? Ms. Kablack stated that this is not an acquisition project. The Town will be receiving a license to use the corridors. Also that other Towns have utilized CPA funds for recreational uses and many for rail trails. Mr. Woodard stated that the Town has not looked in to other funding sources, other than using Town funds.

Kirsten Roopenian, 45 Harness Lane, stated that the equestrian community uses the Mass Central rail trail corridor near Hop Brook. She would like a commitment from the Town to consider horse access for both rail corridors. Mr. Woodard stated that he will make sure it is a part of the discussion. Trish Domigan followed up that horses need space and have typically used space on soft shoulders on well-designed trails.

Ada Vassilovski, 40 Singletary Lane, asked if the Town will look at multiple surface options for the east west corridor prior to construction. Mr. Woodard stated that the public process will help define the surface. Mr. Kupfer added that currently the Town is proposing to place each approved surface as alternates in a request for proposals to receive definitive costs for each surface.

Carole Wolfe, 637 Concord Road, asked if there is going to be another full centerline survey. Ms. Kablack explained that yes there will be and it is due to an incomplete survey done in 2008, the firm walked away from the job and the Town did not accept the work. Mr. Kupfer added that during the interview process for a design team, the Town interviewed three engineering firms, all three stated that supplemental survey was necessary. Ms. Domigan also explained that it is necessary in order to meet both local and state standards.

Dick Williamson, 21 Pendleton Road, stated that cost for surface treatments can vary but stone dust and paved surfaces will be about the same. He then asked if staff could elaborate on the NStar project that has been discussed at prior public meetings. Ms. Kablack gave a summary of a proposal the Town has recently become aware of that would potentially put a transmission line along the Mass Central rail trail corridor between Sudbury and Hudson and NStar could potentially construct an access road which would be usable as a rail trail along the Mass Central rail corridor. Ms. Kablack explained that no details are finalized and the Town should hopefully know more prior to the 2015 annual town meeting.

Cassie Rogers, 3 Stonebrook Road, asked will NStar go through wetland permitting. Ms. Kablack stated that we do not know any definitive details of that project yet. Ms. Rogers also asked what happens if the Town does not expand the 1.8 miles of the Mass Central rail trail to the two towns. Mr. Kupfer stated that the 1.8 mile would then be a local amenity. It would connect residential neighborhoods to each other, commercial corridor, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and other spots.

Allan Wallack, 67 Thompson Drive, asked about operational cost, maintenance, safety, parking costs and if any of these issues have been studied. Mr. Kupfer explained that they have worked with the DPW Director to estimate the maintenance cost for a 1.8 mile stretch along the Mass Central rail trail. They have not done the same for the Bruce Freeman corridor but the 25 percent design will have a parking study component and the Town will begin to evaluate operational cost. The Town will have that estimate cost available to the public during the full design process.

Andrew Sullivan, 28 French Road, asked if a similar approach that is being taken place on the Mass Central, where an interim greenway could be done quickly with town funds, could be looked at for the Bruce Freeman while waiting for state funding. Mr. Woodard stated that the approach for the Bruce Freeman corridor was agreed upon so that the Town can take advantage of state funding to save town tax payers money. The state has shown that it will invest in the Bruce Freeman rail trail but the same cannot be said about the Mass Central at this time, and if the Town wants the Mass Central rail trail, the Town must pay for it. Mr. Sullivan said that it would be beneficial to get an estimate for the Bruce Freeman rail trail as a greenway while they wait for state funding.

Dan Carty, 15 Stonebrook Road, stated that the NStar project seems to be in conflict with our open space goals and would like some clarification from the Town on this. Ms. Kablack stated that NStar has been working with the Towns and we hope that the two projects are compatible. The Town has told NStar that overhead lines will be opposed.

Dave Gibbs, 115 Austin Road, expressed concerns over additional people passing his back yard as an abutter. He noted that the trail is elevated and allows for an easy view in to his yard. Ms.

Domigan described what VHB has designed elsewhere, not only fencing but also replanting for screening purposes is a big part of the design process and working with each abutter is important.

By email, Dan DePompei, 35 Haynes Road, asked if we are designing the locally contracted trails within the Bruce Freeman Right of Way and the Mass Central Right of Way to comply with Sudbury's Wetland Administrative Bylaws. Mr. Woodard said yes, to the extent feasible we will and where infeasible we will work with the conservation commission to discuss methods of mitigation.

Mr. DePompei also asked are we designing the Trails to be permissible under all Federal, State and local storm water laws and regulations. Mr. Woodard responded that the Town must get all applicable permits in place prior to construction.

Mr. DePompei followed by asking if the Town is designing the Rail Trails as local projects, or are we designing them as segments of larger regional and state sponsored projects. Mr. Woodard explained that they are both a local and regional project. He explained that we are part of a network and the benefits that the network can bring residents outside town boundaries.

Lastly Mr. DePompei asked what real property interest we have in these projects. Ms. Kablack noted that we would enter into a license agreement.

By email, Miner Crary, 1 Hunt Road, asked are there any plans to reroute the trail to avoid constraints. Ms. Kablack explained that part of the 25% design is to evaluate alternatives where necessary.

Mr. Crary, also asked what steps will be taken to prevent snow mobilers from accessing the trail. Ms. Kablack mentioned that the trail will be open to non-motorized only. Ms. Domigan also noted that other trails have put strategically placed boulders, bollards or gates in place but the design will have to take into account access by safety vehicles.

Dianna Mahany, 70 Ridge Hill Road, states that there is a lot of wildlife that will be affected. She asked if the trail will be plowed or lighted. Ms. Kablack stated that generally trails in this area are not plowed nor lighted.

Rich Testa, 95 Bridle Path, asked if statistics show any increase in crime along trails. Ms. Domigan stated that since these trails are to be a through corridor studies have shown that safety has increased.

David Hoaglin, 73 Hickory Road, considers stone dust to be the cause of many more accidents and wants to know what sort of statistics the Town will look into for this. Mr. Woodard stated the town will look into comparative issues for different surfaces such as accidents prior to making a final determination.

Dick Williamson, 21 Pendleton Road, mentioned that there is a lot of information that was compiled by the Rail Trail Advisory Committee and Mr. Williamson urged the public to visit the website, as well as the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail website.

Kirsten Roopenian, 45 Harness Lane, stated that she lives on a path currently and has seen that putting up a fence has been beneficial.

Dianna Mahany, 70 Ridge Hill Road, stated that she has read online that fencing has been incorporated in the design cost. Ms. Kablack replied by stating that the Town does not know the total construction budget yet and during the design process we will be able to have a better understanding which houses will be impacted and then work one on one with each.

Nancy Powers, 201 Union Ave, stated that fencing should be provided as mitigation.

Selectman Len Simon stated that as part of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail he assisted Acton to survey abutters for screening choices. He found that each had different preferences and that he believes MassDOT understands the need for screening.

Dick Williamson, 21 Pendleton Road, invites those with questions to visit local trails already in place. There are ones in Hudson, Marlboro, Arlington, and Nashua.

There being no further questions the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by James Kupfer