

Recreational Path Committee
FY2007 Town Report
July 1, 2006 to July 1, 2007

The proposed Georgetown Recreational Path is a 4.5 mile non-motorized shared use recreational and alternative transportation pathway utilizing the abandoned railway corridor extending from Boxford to Newbury. The trail will provide wonderful, safe, and healthful outdoor recreational activities for all ages. It will provide public access to a scenic and tranquil natural resource that is now closed. This section will be a key part of the 30 mile Border to Boston (B2B) Trail that will eventually run from Danvers north through Wenham, Topsfield, Boxford, Georgetown, Newbury, Newburyport, and Salisbury to the New Hampshire border. Additionally, New Hampshire owns 6 miles of adjacent, abandoned corridor and is studying feasibility.

The vision that was born in 1994 is coming closer to reality. The Georgetown Recreational Path Committee has been working hard towards the realization of this objective. Milestones and key events completed so far are:

- Community Preservation Grant of \$30,000 – fund used for Title research and Conceptual Design & Feasibility Study
- Favorable town wide survey
- Inclusion in the Open Space Plan, Community Development Plan, and past and present Master Plans
- Trail Neighbor meetings
- Working relationships with Town Planner, Highway Surveyor, and Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
- Trail safety talk by Police Chief Jim Mulligan
- Meetings with National Grid toward license/lease agreement
- Liability Analysis - National Grids liability issues can be met with town insurance
- Received National Park Service Rivers and Trails Grant through an effort coordinated by the National Essex Heritage Commission
- Resolution by selectmen to participate in B2B Coalition.
- Title Research contract awarded to Salem Law Office in April 2006 to characterize ownership. Additional research & title opinion needed. (Legal work had to cease because lack of funds but is commencing effective 7-1-2007)
- Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike Engineering firm contracted to provide a conceptual design and feasibility study. After several iterations of the report it has been finalized. Media is being prepared and public presentation and discussion is planned in Sept. 2007.
- Contributing member of the B2B Coalition resulting in a comprehensive Border to Boston Trail Implementation Plan.
- Mass Highway B2B Task Force --- Mass Highway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky announced the creation of a Mass Highway Border to Boston Task Force based on the presentation of the B2B Implementation Plan on January 21, 2007. Georgetown is represented on this Task Force and so far there have been several productive monthly meetings at Mass Highway headquarters in Boston.
- Lease vs. License – National Grid is willing, pending agreement on the plans, to approve a long term license. Federal Transportation Enhancement rules require a long term lease. A resolution of the overall lease vs. license issue is being sought by the Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation. It also affects other Rail-Trail projects within the state.
- SAFTEA-LU Funds – Mass Highway B2B Task force has agreed spend some of the \$800,000 of this federal earmark on the 25% design for the all of the B2B towns.
- Scope of Work for the 25% Design is underway by the retained consulting company, Transystems to develop a scope of work and obtain cost estimates.

- Two Recreational Path articles were approved at the May 7, 2007 town meeting warrant: Article 26 - request to authorize selectman to negotiate agreements for rights to the railroad corridor; and Article 28k - a Community Preservation Committee request for funds for expenses to obtain ROW ownership and local match for the 25% design.

**Recreational Path Committee
FY2007 Town Report
July 1, 2006 to July 1, 2007**

Financial Plan – It became apparent early in the process that it would be difficult to obtain state and federal funding as a standalone 4 ½ mile segment. This is what supported active involvement with other adjacent towns with common aspirations for a regional approach. The Recreational Path Committee financial plan to fund the recreational path is:

1. Federal SAFETEA-LU earmark (80%/20%-federal/local) for preliminary (25%) design; at this point in time, the match may not be required.
2. Transportation Enhancement Funds for construction and design (80% Fed; 10 State/ 10%Local);
3. The local match for the 25% design, due diligence, title research, conceptual design and feasibility study, legal and miscellaneous development expenses is covered by the Community Preservation Articles of FY2005 and FY2008.
4. The local match for final design & construction can be covered by future CPC requests, including CPC bonding if necessary.

In this process, it is incumbent on the town to acquire rights to the right-of-way (ROW) corridor. The Fay, Spofford, & Thorndike July 2007 estimate for cost of construction for the 4 ½ miles of a 10 foot wide paved surface is \$4.4 million. This estimate includes a 5 year 3% annual inflation rate and a 15 % contingency. Also, an FST ballpark estimate for permitting, 25% design, and final design is \$550K: \$220K for 25% design and \$300K for permitting and final design. Additionally funding sources which offset local contribution could possibly be from additional state and /or federal earmarks.

Next Steps - 1) obtain title opinion from RR ROW legal experts on certain parts of the ROW; 2) complete remaining title research and have title finding certified; 3) finalize easements from non-National Grid owners; 4) agree in principle for 99 year agreement from National Grid; and 5a) complete (25%) rail-trail preliminary design of 4 ½ mile section and public hearing; 5b) Complete the approval of the Project Notification Form & Project Initiation Form.; 6) Final signing of 99 year agreement; 7) Qualify for Federal Transportation Enhancement Funding; and 8.) Commence with Phase 3 – Final design & Construction

The Committee feels that this is a doable project. It is especially enhanced with the creation of the Mass Highway task force. This same type of task force is being used on the Blackstone River Trail and is successful in moving a multi-town trail towards completion.

Current Committee – The current committee is Richard M. Paganelli, Chairman, William Hastings, Jeffery Wade, and William Monroe. Mr. Robert Morehouse did not accept the appointment for F2007 but we thank him for the vision and foresight to be the main proponent in the creation of the Recreational Path committee during his term as a Selectman. (Note: Kelly Lombardo became a member for FY2008)

Special Thanks - The chairman extends his appreciation to the hardworking members of the committee both past and present. It is a very difficult project which demands much of volunteers. Kudos and thanks to Mr. William Steelman, National Essex Heritage Commission for his invaluable support and creation of the B2B coalition which provides important cohesion for all the towns. And lastly, kudos and thanks to Mr. Steve Golden of the National Park Service for his knowledgeable guidance bringing the project to its current state.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard M Paganelli, Chairman

**Recreational Path Committee
FY2007 Town Report
July 1, 2006 to July 1, 2007**