

Taunton River Trail Committee

Meeting of May 24, 2011

Held at the Boyden Center, Taunton, MA

(Please mark your calendars: The next meeting of the Trail Committee will be held on Tuesday, June 22nd at 10:00 am at the Boyden Center. Committee meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 10:00 am at the Boyden Center.)

Present:

Bill Napolitano, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District
Adam Recchia, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District
Scott MacFaden, Wildlands Trust
Carolyn LaMarre, Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Priscilla Chapman, Mass Audubon
Joe Hattrup and associate, Iron Horse Preservation
Ronald Medeiros, landowner
Alfred Lima, Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Main Points of Discussion:

- Bill Napolitano explained the planning for the Taunton River Trail that had occurred in the 1990's by the Conway School of Landscape Architecture and showed the boards that were prepared by the students. Some of the issues that the presentation raised included: (1) how to deal with the filling that the Town of Dighton conducted within the ROW under the Center Street bridge; (2) how to cross the Aquaria property when security issues will be paramount; (3) archaeological issues on the spur that traverses west; (4) the ROW becomes active again at the Weir, where the RR lines cross; this would preclude proceeding north using the ROW.
- Ron Medeiros discussed a one-half mile section of the ROW that he owns that is south of the DCR ROW but separated from it by other owners. Scott MacFaden mentioned that DCR has not been interested in purchasing isolated sections of ROW, but if it was perceived as part of a longer-term strategy, there might be an opening.
- Joe Hattrup said that the key to Iron Horse working on a project is the track; if the track is there, they can get it done. "Control your rails," he said. "They are your asset." Iron Horse is working on a "top-down" deal to get the state agencies to work together to expedite the process for them. When the MBTA screens its trap rock for rail beds, it has to dispose of or recycle the smaller pieces that remain.

Iron Horse takes this material from the T and uses it for the path bed, at no cost to the T.

The Iron Horse process will result in a hard-packed surface usable for most recreational path uses except for thin-wheeled bicycles and roller-blades. The surface provided will also make the path ready for asphaltting. No funds are needed from the owner of a ROW, whether a town or the state. The ties within a ROW are a liability, but Gilford or other rail operators will take the rails “in a heartbeat.”

Priscilla Chapman said that the owner must go before the local Conservation Commission for a determination, since they are working within the 100-foot buffer. Carolyn LaMarre and Priscilla said that TRWA and Audubon could assist DCR with the paperwork. The surface is pervious. The T’s stone fines are tan in color. Joe Hattrup said that DCR lawyers have said that the work will need to comply with Chapter 30B, the State Procurement Act and will therefore need to go out to bid through an RFP process.

Adam Recchia said that the capacity of the bridges is not an issue here, since all of the ROW can be accessed from one side or the other. In the instance of the Fall River Quequechan River bikepath, the issue is getting access to the island that is part of the causeway on the river.

Joe Hattrup said that Iron Horse needs to know the timing of the availability of the T’s stone screenings. When will they be available? The T has to get rid of it, and Iron Horse wants to be part of the solution.

DCR owns about three miles of ROW that came with the Sweet’s Knoll acquisition. Iron Horse takes about one month a mile to complete its paths.

Follow-up tasks:

- At the next meeting, we will discuss the issue of long-term plans for the ROW owned by DCR and whether “land banking” should be pursued to secure those currently-disconnected and privately-owned parts of the ROW that, in the long term, should be protected to ultimately realize a fully-connected path system within the ROW.
- At the next meeting, we will also discuss how Iron Horse might be involved in the realization of an unpaved path on the DCR ROW and what we could do to expedite that process.
- The 2011 grant round for the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program has been announced as of May 24th. At our June 22nd meeting, we will discuss what DCR and the committee would like to include in an application.
- Kelly Whitmore will research whether the Town of Dighton has mapping showing existing protected and semi-protected land that could be used in plotting a greenway along the Taunton River, using the bikepath as its spine.

- Shaun Provencher will follow up with the attorney for the receivers of NE Capitol Corp on the disposition of a key parcel the estate owns on the Taunton River between the ROW and the river.
- Al will contact Charlie Tracy of the National Park Service on their Rivers and Trails Fund and on the Heritage River Program.