

# **Southwest Subregion Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study**

**October 2001**



**Grand Trunk Trail, Westville Lake Section  
Photo by Paul Bengston, UMass School of Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Southwest Subregion of the Central Massachusetts Planning area includes the communities of Auburn, Oxford, Webster, Dudley, Charlton, Southbridge, and Sturbridge. The Subregion's population has grown by 4% over the last decade, the lowest growth rate of CMRPC's five subregions. However, this should not lead one to the conclusion that this Subregion is devoid of growth pressures. In fact, several of the Subregion's communities have recently seen a record number of new housing starts. The Town of Dudley issued 79 building permits for single-family homes in the year 2000, the most in any single year since the 1970's. The Town of Charlton has issued an average of 85 building permits for single-family homes per year over the last decade. The Town of Auburn issued close to 300 building permits for single-family homes between 1996 and 1997. Several of the Subregion's communities have built, or are in the process of building new schools. Good schools, rural character, and quality of life make this area a great place to live for young families.

Although the rapid pace of residential development in the Subregion has taken away a number of opportunities for creating a regional trail system, the area is still rural enough to offer the possibility for creating such a system if action is taken in the immediate future. The most viable opportunities are for off-road trails within existing protected lands; however, opportunities do exist for integrating on-road bicycle routes into the region's future highway improvement projects.

The goal of this project was to investigate what options currently exist for creating regional trail systems in the Southwest Subregion, and evaluate their feasibility. Through establishing an on-going dialogue among representatives from the Subregion's seven communities, this project identified five potential trails that could link communities together and further CMRPC's goal of a truly regional trail system.

This report chronicles the trail investigation process and outlines what steps the communities will need to take in order to make these potential trails a reality. Frankly speaking, creating a regional trail system will require a great deal of political will, time, money, and committed volunteers - all of which are in short supply these days. However, the Subregion's communities ought to take advantage of the opportunities they have to create a regional trail system before these opportunities are precluded by future development.

**I. Introduction:**

Beginning in October of 2000, CMRPC's Community Development Program initiated a trail connection feasibility study for the Southwest Subregion. The communities of this particular subregion include Auburn, Oxford, Webster, Dudley, Charlton, Southbridge, and Sturbridge. The project was funded as an element of CMRPC's annual work program with MassHighway.

The Southwest Subregion was chosen as the study area because although residential development is on the rise, the area is still rural enough to offer several possibilities for new trail systems. Scenic farmland vistas and two magnificent rivers (the French and Quinebaug) make the Subregion a desirable place for hiking and enjoying the rural character typically associated with New England.

CMRPC also wanted to build off the enthusiasm generated by previous trail planning efforts in the Subregion, namely the "Big X" trail in Sturbridge and the efforts of the Grand Trunk Trailblazers. The Trailblazers have championed the pending State purchase of the inactive Southbridge Branch railbed for use as a multi-purpose rail trail. The expansion of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor to include several of the Subregion's communities (Webster, Dudley, Oxford, Charlton, Southbridge, and Sturbridge) has also generated interest in expanding recreational opportunities and historic preservation.

## **II. The Process:**

CMRPC began this trail planning effort in October 2000 by identifying local and regional contacts that may have an interest in the project. Local officials were contacted, as were regional land trusts. State and federal land managers in the region were also contacted. All interested parties were invited to a project kick-off meeting held on the afternoon of November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at the Charlton Town Hall (see Appendix A for the meeting notice). Attendees were briefed on the project and several trail ideas were discussed at this time. The seven towns involved agreed to work with CMRPC to update a map depicting protected lands and existing trails.

The months of December and January were spent meeting individually with the seven communities to update the Commission's GIS protected lands/trails coverage. The idea being that we need to know what's on the ground now before we start planning any new trail systems. During this time, several members of the Grand Trunk Trailblazers, a regional trails advocacy group, stopped into CMRPC's office to brief staff on the history of trail planning in the subregion.

Once CMRPC finished meeting with the seven towns to update the GIS protected lands/trails coverage, interested parties (now a mailing list of over 65 people) were invited to a "trail brainstorming" session, held the afternoon of February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001, at the Dudley Town Hall. This meeting was very well attended, with over 40 people participating, including a local representative to the State Legislature (see Appendix A for meeting notice). The scope of the project was again explained to the attendees, and work began in earnest to identify five trail possibilities to investigate as part of this study. Several GIS maps depicting protected lands/trails in the subregion were spread out on a table and participants spent over an hour sketching out trail possibilities. By the end of the session, the following five trails were selected for further investigation:

1. The Old Grand Trunk Line as it extends through Dudley & Webster in a west-to-east direction.
2. The Wolf Swamp/Wells State Forest Loop in north Sturbridge.
3. The Old Stage Coach Trail that begins at the Quinebaug River and extends east through Dudley to Nichols College.
4. The Dresser Hill Road Bicycle Route that begins in Dudley and extends through Charlton in a south-to-north direction until linking up with the Mid-State Trail.
5. The Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad that roughly follows the French River through Webster, Oxford, and Auburn.

The months of March and April were spent meeting individually with the towns to sketch out the preferred locations of the five trails through their communities. CMRPC staff met with local open space planners to sketch out the trail locations on blown-up USGS topographic maps. As the communities of Webster, Dudley, and Southbridge share several of the five trails to be investigated, a joint meeting was held on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, to sketch out preferred trail locations.

Field walks for three of the off-road trails were conducted during the month of May. CMRPC staff gathered together volunteers to walk the trails and map them using a Global Positioning System (GPS). The volunteers took field notes to identify the conditions of the land and any physical impediments that will need to be dealt with when constructing the trails. Field walks were conducted for:

- The Wolf Swamp/Wells State Forest trail loop (5/7/01);
- The Old Stagecoach trail (5/11/01); and
- The Grand Trunk trail in Dudley (5/16/01), as it breaks off from the historical location and extends to the French River in the southeast corner of town.

Field walks were not conducted for the Dresser Hill Road trail because this would be an on-road bicycle route. The railbed for the Boston & Albany Railroad was clearly visible from aerial photographs, thus it was determined that a site walk was not necessary (although Auburn volunteers did walk their portion of the trail taking valuable field notes).

The next step in the process was to identify who owns the land along the four off-road trails. Due to project budget constraints, local volunteers were solicited to help with compiling the property owner inventories. This effort took place over June and July. CMRPC staff spent the summer months reviewing the information gathered during the field walks, as well as the property owner inventory information. CMRPC staff spent the month of August putting together this report, including putting together a series of “conclusions and recommendations” for each trail.

The subregion’s trail planning enthusiasts were invited to a meeting to discuss the project results in early September. The meeting was held at the Sturbridge Town Hall on the afternoon of September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (see Appendix A for meeting notice). At this meeting, CMRPC staff discussed the information gathered as part of the trail investigation process, and a discussion was held on the “conclusions and recommendations”, as in, what it will take for the towns to make these five trails a reality. The results of this discussion have been integrated into the final report that you are reading now. The final report was distributed to the seven communities in mid-October 2001.

### **III. Inventory of Study Area's Existing Trail System:**

All seven of the Subregion's communities have existing trail networks somewhere in town, most of which are off-road (hiking/walking/cross-country skiing) trails associated with protected open space. A brief description of each community's existing trail networks is presented below. A graphic depiction of the study area's existing trail system can be seen on the Southwestern Subregion Trail Connection Map on the following page (existing trails are shown in red).

A. Auburn: Although the Town contains over 716 acres of permanently protected land (town, state & federal lands), there is only one formal trail system existing on the ground in Auburn. The Conservation Commission manages the 80-acre Gilbert Stockwell property on the eastside of Town, off of Barnes Street. A trail runs through the property, part of which is a former gravel pit. Cross-country skiers have been known to make use of Packachoag Meadows and the Packachoag Park Golf Course, however, no formal trails exist at these sites.

B. Oxford: The Midstate Trail passes through Oxford in a west-to-east direction, primarily along local roads. The Midstate Trail travels the length of Worcester County from Ashburnham near the New Hampshire line to its southern terminus at the Douglas State Forest/Rhode Island border. The Midstate Trail Committee manages the Trail and annually organizes volunteers to keep the trail clean and well marked. There is also an extensive trail system within the Hodges Village Dam property in the center of Town. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) manages the 874-acre property and its trail network is used extensively for a variety of recreational activities.

C. Webster: Although the Town owns a number of permanently protected open space parcels, the only existing trails in Webster are associated with the Memorial Beach property at Webster Lake. The Town's Recreation Department manages the trails at this site.

D. Dudley: The Town contains roughly 1,777 acres of permanently protected open space, however, most of this is farmland protected under the State's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program and is not available for recreational purposes. There is an extensive trail system within Ardlock Acres, a 94-acre property south of Indian Road managed by the Dudley Conservation Commission. The Ardlock Acres trail system represents the Town's most extensive trail system open to the general public.

E. Charlton: The Midstate Trail passes through Charlton in a north-to-southeast direction. Much of Charlton's portion of the Midstate consists of off-road trails, although several local roads are also used. An extensive trail system can be found all around the Buffumville Reservoir recreation area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) manages the 488 acres of the Buffumville Reservoir, and its trail network is extensively used for a variety of recreational activities. There is also an interior trail system within the Capen Hill Nature Sanctuary (managed by a non-profit), although the system has never been mapped.

F. Southbridge: The Town's primary trail network lies within the Westville Dam Recreation Area, a 93-acre flood control project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Grand Trunk Trail is the primary trail on this property, and it extends into neighboring Sturbridge on the northern side of the Quinebaug River. The US Department of the Interior recently designated the Grand Trunk Trail as part of the National Trails Network. The Town has also completed a section of the planned Quinebaug River Heritage Nature Trail south of the Quinebaug River. This portion of the trail links downtown Southbridge with the Westville Lake Recreation Area. Plans are in the works for connecting the Grand Trunk Trail and the Heritage Nature Trail via a footbridge over the Quinebaug River in Sturbridge.

G. Sturbridge: Much of the Town's "Big X" trail plan has been completed. The southeast spoke of the Big X begins in Sturbridge (an extension of the Grand Trunk Trail) at the Westville Lake Recreation Area and continues along the Quinebaug River (the floodplain under ACOE jurisdiction). As mentioned above, plans are in the works for connecting the Grand Trunk Trail (north of the River) and the Heritage Nature Trail (south of the River) via a footbridge over the Quinebaug River, just off River Road in Sturbridge. The northeast spoke of the Big X is an on-road trail along Charlton Street and then Route 49. The southwest spoke of the Big X consists of Route 15 (Haynes Street & Mashapaug Road), although this portion has not been formally designated by the Town at this time. The northwest spoke of the Big X will continue along the Quinebaug River once complete. Route 148 is the only portion of the northwest spoke that is currently being used. There is an extensive trail network within Wells State Park, a 1,470-acre nature area managed by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). There are also trails within the Streeter Point Recreation Area, located at the southern end of Long Pond. The dirt road that encircles Alum Pond is also used as a trail. There are trails within the Breakneck Brook Wildlife Management Area (managed by the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife), however, they have never been formally mapped.

#### **IV. Trails Being Planned by the Local Communities:**

Several of the subregion's communities have trail projects at various levels of the planning stage. Some are planned for the immediate future, while others are identified for the long-term. A brief description of trails being planned by each of the subregion's communities is presented below. A graphic depiction of the study area's planned trails can be seen on the Southwestern Subregion Trail Connection Map (planned trails are shown in blue).

A. Auburn: There are no trail systems being actively planned by the community at this time, although the potential does exist within some of the Town's larger open space holdings such as: Eddy Pond, Granger Ledges, and the Gilbert Stockwell Property.

B. Oxford: There are no trail systems being actively planned by the community at this time, although the potential does exist within some of the Town's larger open space holdings, such as the Merrill Pond Wildlife Management Area.

C. Webster: The Town owns a 40-foot sewer easement along the French River, north of Hill Street. Webster is investigating the possibility of turning the easement into a "greenway" that would be accessible from downtown Webster. A portion of the Old Grand Trunk railbed (east of Webster Lake) has potential as a future trail, with connections leading into neighboring Douglas, as well as Connecticut and Rhode Island.

D. Dudley: The most significant trail project in the works for Dudley is the inactive Southbridge Branch, an abandoned railroad bed owned by the Providence & Worcester Railroad (P&W). For the past several years, the State has been negotiating with P&W on a purchase price for the abandoned railbed. This project represents one of the region's most highly anticipated rail-trail projects (see Southbridge entry below for more details).

E. Charlton: There are no trail systems being actively planned by the community at this time, although the potential does exist within some of the Town's larger open space holdings such as the Bennett Meadows Wildlife Management Area. It should be noted that some of Charlton's non-profit organizations are investigating new trail possibilities, and the Town is lending its support to these efforts. The Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust is looking to create a trail that would connect with the Buffumville recreation area's interior trail system, and the Masonic Home is working with the Charlton Recreation Commission to create a trail on its property.

F. Southbridge: Since the early 1990's, the Town has been planning on using the inactive Southbridge Branch (owned by P&W) for a trail system that would extend south into neighboring Dudley, then into Thompson, Connecticut, and conclude with a loop to the north into downtown Webster. All told, this railbed is eleven miles in length. As mentioned above, the State is currently negotiating a purchase price for the railroad right-of-way. Funds for purchasing the railbed have been appropriated by the State Legislature, but have not been obligated at this time. Another planned trail is a downtown riverwalk that will be part of the

Department of Defense's redevelopment of the American Optical site. This downtown riverwalk has the potential to link up with the inactive Southbridge Branch, should a trail system ever come to fruition here.

G. Sturbridge: There are two segments of the Town's "Big X" trail in the planning stages: the first is a trail beginning in the Fiskdale area (off of Route 148) that will extend along the Quinebaug River until it reaches the existing trail near the ACOE floodplain land along Westville Lake. The second is a spoke of the Big X that will begin in the downtown area and extend in a southwest direction along Route 15. Connecting the Big X to the East Brimfield Lake recreation area has also been discussed.

## V. Potential Trails Investigated as Part of This Study:

The primary purpose of this project was to investigate several potential trails that would link together the communities of CMRPC's Southwest Subregion. Early on in the process, project participants were asked to suggest several new trails that CMRPC could investigate for this project. The one stipulation was that the trails had to further the idea of a regional trail network, that is, a system of trails linking together the communities of the subregion.

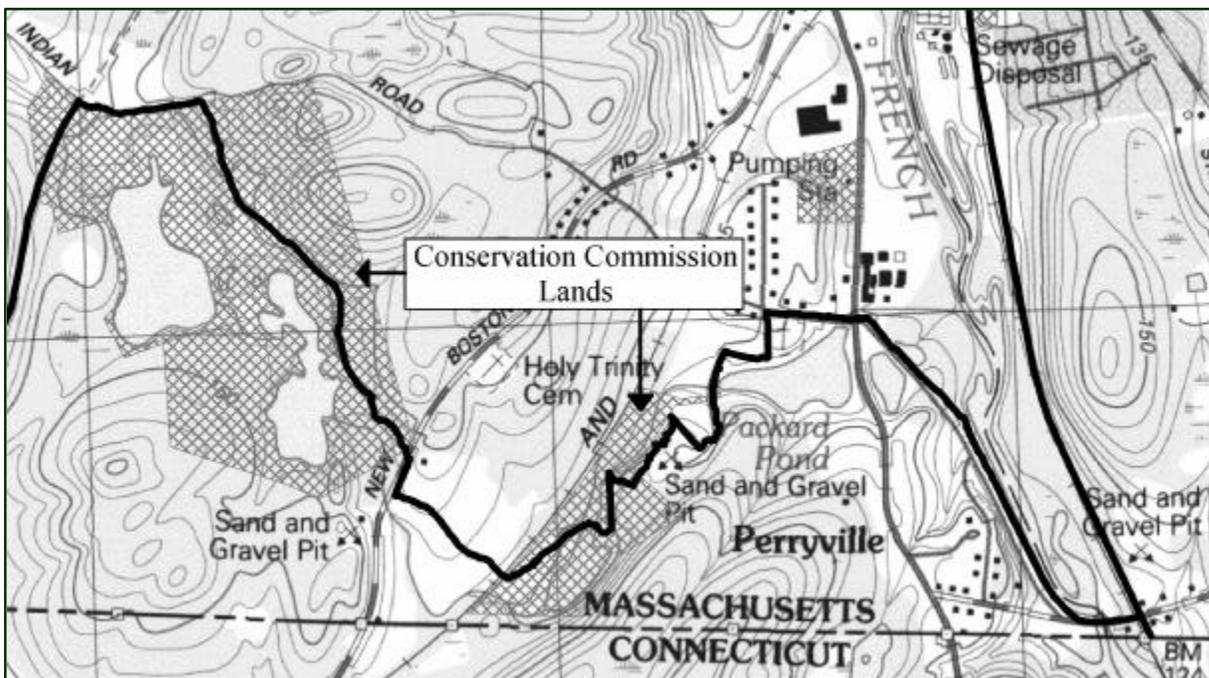
The results of the feasibility study are presented below. There is a section for each potential trail investigated as part of this study, along with a location map of each trail. A region-wide depiction of the investigated trails can be seen on the previous Southwestern Subregion Trail Connection Map (potential off-road trails are shown in orange, while potential on-road bicycle routes are shown in an orange-hatch pattern).

1. Old Grand Trunk Railroad Bed (potentially linking Southbridge, Dudley, and Webster): This is the old railbed for the Grand Trunk Railroad. The railbed was roughed out on the ground during the early 1900's; however, no tracks were ever laid down because the project's chief financier died in the sinking of the Titanic! Bits and pieces of the railbed can be identified in Southbridge (along with some bridge abutment work), however, this portion of the railbed is too urbanized to resurrect for use as a trail. The possibility does exist to re-establish the railbed as a trail in the rural southwestern corner of Dudley, near the Quinebaug River. In Dudley, the railbed begins at the end of Fish Road. The railbed stays north of the Quinebaug River and extends east throughout the lower half of town. Traditionally, the railbed extended into the Chaseville area, or what is now considered to be the urbanized portion of Dudley. A bridge was never built for the railbed to cross the French River, however, the remnants of the railbed can still be found in downtown Webster and again on the eastern side of Webster Lake.

The Dudley portion of the railbed does have potential for use as a trail, potentially forging a tri-town link: Southbridge-Dudley-Webster. Much of the railbed can still be identified on the ground in Dudley, and the Town owns close to two-thirds of a mile's worth of the railbed just north of the Farley Road area. The local trail planners for this project thought it best to make use of the railbed's traditional location until its intersection with Indian Road. From this point on, the traditional railbed location extends through the Chaseville area. Rather than try to resurrect the trail through the urbanized Chaseville area, the local trail planners thought it best to re-route the trail down to the French River in a southeastern direction. This will enable the trail to utilize a large tract of Town-owned land (Ardlock Acres), as well as take the hiker through a very historic area (Perryville). CMRPC and local volunteers did not walk the entire length of the railbed through Dudley, instead focusing their efforts on re-routing the trail from Indian Road to the French River. The railbed, from its start in west Dudley to Indian Road, is in fairly good shape. All that will be needed on the ground is some brush removal and trail markings. From Fish Road to Indian Road, the trail crosses twenty-five (25) properties: twenty-three (23) of which are under private ownership, and two (2) under Town ownership (the 2/3 mile railbed north of the Farley Road area). A list of property owners along this portion of the railbed can be found in Appendix B.

CMRPC met with local volunteers on May 11, 2001 to map the re-routed portion of the trail. A Global Positioning System (GPS) unit was used to map points along the trail, and local volunteers took field notes along the way. The re-routed portion of the trail begins along Indian Road in back of the Town's current transfer station. People will have to park near the Highway Department building unless another parking area can be created. The trail will continue along Indian Road in an easterly direction for roughly 700 feet, until it connects to a path in Ardlock Acres (protected open space under the jurisdiction of the Dudley Conservation Commission). The Dudley Preservation Society recently sponsored a clean-up of this area. The Grand Trunk trail will make use of several existing paths in Ardlock Acres. The trail will extend through Ardlock Acres in a north-to-south direction for a length of roughly 3,000 feet, until its intersection with New Boston Road. The Pesthouse Ponds will be to the west of the trail. The trail will need to be clearly marked through Ardlock Acres, as there are numerous trails that branch off the main north-to-south trail.

The trail will continue across New Boston Road in a southeasterly direction for roughly 1,000 feet, until reaching a cul-de-sac, which is Blue Heron Drive. At this point, the trail begins again in a forested area just east of the cul-de-sac. The trail continues in a northeasterly direction for roughly 700 feet until it crosses a brook and a dam at the top of the small pond. The trail continues northeast for a length of 1,200 feet until reaching Packard Pond. This portion of the trail is all on what will soon be Conservation Commission land (open space given to the Town as part of the Brookstone Village and Perryville Village subdivisions). Upon reaching the eastern side of the Packard Pond, the trail is flooded with knee-deep brook water. Some sort of brook crossing (perhaps a footbridge) will be needed to bring the hiker north of Packard Pond.



Upon crossing the brook, the trail will extend along the northern edge of Packard Pond (through the backland of the Perryville Cemetery) for a length of 1,100 feet, until reaching Carpenter Road. From this point, the trail crosses Carpenter Road and extends southeast along the entire length of Lower Perryville Road (half a mile) until its intersection with Perryville Road. Lower Perryville Road is paved and in good shape for use as a trail. Traffic is prohibited from the road as the bridge that spans the channel is closed and needs \$350,000 worth of repairs. The Town does not believe that repairing the bridge is worth the cost and would rather see the road and adjacent lands used for recreational purposes. Upon reaching the end of Lower Perryville Road, the trail will connect to the Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad and continue north between the French River and the railbed all the way to the Oxford town line. The Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad was the fifth potential trail investigated as part of this study, and its findings are presented under Item #5 of this section. From Indian Road to the French River, the trail will cross over twelve (12) properties. Of these properties, eight (8) are currently under Town ownership, two are in the process of being transferred to the Dudley Conservation Commission, and three are under private ownership (see Appendix B for property owner inventory).

### **Old Grand Trunk Railroad Bed - Trail Conditions**

<b>Location in Feet</b>	<b>Condition of Trail Spur</b>	<b>Proposed Site Work</b>
700 feet east along Indian Road from its intersection with the railbed.	Good condition.	Mark trail.
3,000 feet south through Ardlock Acres, to New Boston Road.	Good condition.	Minimal brush clearing, mark trail path.
1,000 feet southeast until Blue Heron Drive cul-de-sac.	Good condition.	Minimal brush clearing, mark trail path.
700 feet northeast to brook and dam.	Brush.	Clear brush and mark trail path.
1,200 feet northeast to Packer Pond.	Brush, knee-deep water in front of Packard Pond.	Clear brush, investigate options for crossing the brook (footbridge may be needed).
1,100 along northern edge of Packard Pond until Carpenter Road.	Brush and debris.	Clear brush, remove debris, and mark trail path.
One half mile southeast along Lower Perryville Road to Perryville Road and French River.	Roadway is in good shape for use as a trail.	Mark trail path and remove roadside debris.

Conclusion and Next Steps: The feasibility of creating a trail along the Grand Trunk railbed is quite high. The Indian Road/French River spur of this trail is something the Town can start moving on immediately. In addition, the Town controls the future of the Lower Perryville Road, which is currently closed to traffic. Establishing a trail along the remainder of the railbed (from Fish Road to Indian Road) should be a long-term goal.

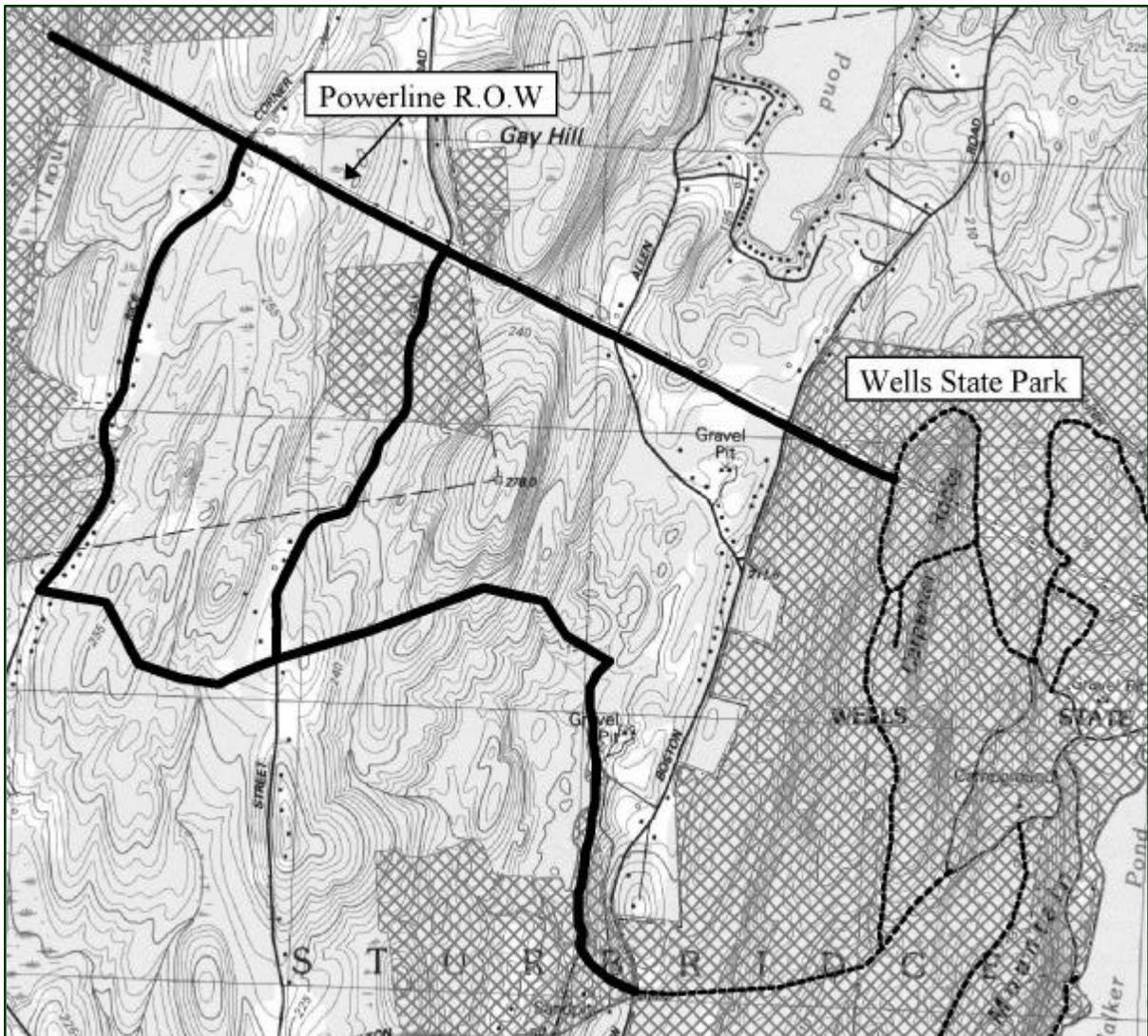
*Property Owners:* The Town will soon control ten of the twelve properties along the Indian Road/French River trail spur. Regarding the remainder of the railbed (Fish Road to Indian Road), the Town will have to deal with numerous private property owners (23) for this particular section of the trail. The Town will also incur some legal costs when preparing easement agreements with private property owners.

*Potential Users and Site Development Implications:* The trail would be most suitable for low impact recreation activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing. Ultimately it is the Town who will decide what types of recreational activity to allow on the Indian Road/French River trail spur, as the Town owns the majority of the properties involved. If the Town wanted to allow more intensive recreation activities such as horseback riding, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles, then additional site work will be needed, especially at stream crossing locations. User organizations (equestrian associations, snowmobile clubs, etc.) are usually quite willing to pitch in and help build a trail if they know they will be able to use it once completed. Involving the potential users can help the town save money in trail maintenance costs. User groups often “adopt” a trail segment, helping with maintenance and monitoring its use. A list of area recreation organizations can be found in Appendix C

*Site Work:* Developing the Indian Road/French River trail spur should be a relatively low-cost proposition. For the most part, this trail spur makes use of existing trails and road rights-of-way. The topography is relatively flat and dry, except near the Packard Pond area. In terms of groundwork, a minimal amount of brush will need to be cleared along the trail. Signage and trail markings will also be needed. The Town may want to remove some of the “colorful” graffiti that’s been spray-painted along the roadway. Volunteers should be able to accomplish most of the groundwork as a community service project. Some sort of brook crossing (perhaps a footbridge) will be needed to bring the hiker north of Packard Pond. The brook crossing has the potential to be quite expensive. The Town may have to raise funds and/or pursue grant opportunities if a footbridge is deemed necessary. Appendix D of this report contains some grant programs the Town may want to investigate.

2. Wolf Swamp/Wells State Forest Trail Loop (potentially linking Sturbridge and Brookfield): CMRPC staff mapped this potential trail on May 7, 2001, with assistance from a member of the Sturbridge Open Space Committee. CMRPC staff used a GPS unit to accurately locate specific points along the trail. This potential trail would begin as an extension of the existing trail system within Wells State Park. One of the park’s trail spurs ends at the intersection of New Boston Road and Hamilton Road, just west of the park. From here, the trail would extend across New Boston Road onto property owned by the Hamilton Rod & Gun Club, a private hunting club. From this point on, brush will have to be cleared to create a path for the trail.

After 500-feet into the Rod & Gun Club property (the larger of the Club’s two parcels), the trail will extend north for a length of roughly 3,000-feet, or to the top of the pond. Brush will have to be cleared along the entire 3,000-foot length in order to make a path for the trail and trail markings will need to be installed. Initially, it was proposed that the trail loop underneath the pond (to the south), however, walking the site indicated that it would be more feasible to have it loop above the pond (to the north).



From the top of the pond, the trail will extend directly north across private property for a length of just over 800 feet (there's an old gravel pit to the east). Once again, brush will need to be cleared along this section. At this point, the trail will connect to an existing path that is actually an abandoned town road. This path appears to be a continuance of the right-of-way that is adjacent to the northern end of the Gun Club property, although the path is not shown as a right-of-way on the Sturbridge tax maps. This path is fairly well established (stone walls on either side) and shows evidence of use by all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

The trail will continue west along the old road's path for a length of 500 feet. At this point, the trail will continue northwest along an established path for a length of approximately 700 feet (on private property), until the point where one can see the foundation of an old house and some outbuildings. From here, the trail will extend southwest for half a mile, crossing a stream (via an old stone bridge) until it reaches Cedar Street (all on private property). From the old house foundation to Cedar Street, brush will have to be cut back along the entire

length of this trail spur. Upon crossing the stream, the trail will go uphill until it reaches Cedar Street. From Wells State Forest to Cedar Street, the trail crosses five parcels under private ownership, two of which are owned by the Gun Club (see Appendix B for property owner inventory).

From the trail's intersection with Cedar Street, there are two options for completing the loop:

*Option #1:* The first option would be to walk north along Cedar Street, crossing into Brookfield until reaching Hamilton Forest (under the management of the Division of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement - DFWELE). Shortly after leaving Hamilton Forest, the roadway intersects with the powerline right-of-way (owned by National Grid USA Inc.). The potential exists to use the powerline right-of-way to get back into Wells State Forest by walking it in a southeasterly direction. The hiker will be back in Wells State Forest upon crossing new Boston Road.

*Option #2:* The second option for completing the trail loop would be to extend the trail across Cedar Street until reaching Arnold Road. At this point, the trail would proceed north along Arnold Road into Brookfield until reaching the powerline right-of-way. In Brookfield, the Wolf Swamp Wildlife Management Area (managed by DFWELE) abuts the roadway to the west. Upon reaching the powerline right-of-way, the hiker can get back to Wells State Forest by walking along the right-of-way in a southeasterly direction.

If the Town were to pursue the Arnold Road trail loop option, there will be several issues to address when taking the trail from Cedar Street to Arnold Road. Upon leaving Cedar Street and heading west, an old right-of-way can be picked up 800 feet into the trail (passing an abandoned mobile home along the way). Brush will have to be cleared along this trail spur to create a path for the trail. The trail would continue in a northwesterly direction along the old right-of-way for a length of roughly 950 feet. The trail will reach a brook halfway along this trail spur and the right-of-way becomes quite muddy here. Upon crossing the brook, the right-of-way is overgrown and cannot be clearly identified until the crest of the hill (500 ft. from the brook crossing). The trail will continue 800 feet to the northeast until reaching several piles of debris. At this point, the trail extends 750 feet to the west until it connects to Arnold Road via a right-of-way that provides access to a rear lot.

All told, four parcels under private ownership will need to be crossed to bring the trail from Cedar Street to Arnold Road (see Appendix B for property owner inventory). A tabular summary of the conditions along the proposed trail is presented on the following page.

### Wolf's Swamp/Wells State Forest Trail Loop - Trail Conditions

Location in Feet	Condition of Trail Spur	Proposed Site Work
500 feet west off of New Boston Road.	Proposed trail location covered by brush.	Clear away brush and establish trail path.
3,000 feet north.	Brush.	Clear brush.
800 feet north.	Brush.	Clear brush.
500 feet west.	Path for abandoned town road, in good condition.	Re-grade to establish trail path.
700 feet northwest (to old house foundation).	Path in good condition.	Mark trail.
2,500 feet southwest to Cedar Street.	Brush, stone bridge crosses stream.	Clear brush, assess stability of stone bridge.
*800 feet west from Cedar Street.	Brush.	Clear brush.
*450 feet west.	Stream crossing. Path is muddy and unstable.	Stabilize stream crossing; footbridge may be needed.
*500 west to crest of hill.	Path runs through a cleared field.	Clear a path, mark trail location.
*800 feet northwest.	Several piles of debris and some brush.	Clear debris and brush.
*750 feet west to Arnold Road.	Fairly good condition.	Minimal brush clearing, mark trail location.

\* = Trail spurs associated with Option #2.

Conclusion and Next Steps: The Wolf Swamp/Wells State Forest Trail Loop is quite feasible. The topography of the land is relatively even and dry (except for the two stream crossings). In terms of groundwork, a significant amount of brush will need to be cleared to create a path for the trail and the area around the stream crossings will need to be stabilized. Signage and trail markings will also be needed. Roughing out the trail would make an excellent community service project.

*Property Owners:* In terms of planning logistics, the Town would only have to deal with four property owners plus the Power Company for Option #1, and four additional property owners if Option #2 is chosen. Rather than buying a right-of-way for the trail (expensive), it is suggested that the Town try to negotiate easement agreements with the property owners so that a portion of their land could be used for the trail. The Town will incur some legal costs when preparing easement agreements with the private property owners. The Opacum Land Trust in Sturbridge may be able to provide technical assistance to the Town in terms of how to work with property owners to prepare suitable easement agreements for the trail.

*Potential Users and Site Development Implications:* With a minimal amount of site preparation, the entirety of the trail could be used for cross-country skiing in the winter months and hiking the remainder of the year. Although ATVs currently use the old town road

path, it would not be wise to allow their use past the stone bridge unless the bridge is large enough and strong enough to support ATVs. This may require some analysis by a structural engineer. If the Town chooses to continue the trail from Cedar Street to Arnold Road, it will need to ban horses and motorized vehicles due to the stream crossing's instability. It should be noted that motorized vehicles of any sort are banned within Wells State Forest, per regulations of the Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

Ultimately, it will be the Town that decides what types of recreational activities to allow on this trail. However, some of the private property owners may ask to have certain types of recreational activities banned from their property as part of granting an easement agreement. The types of users allowed on the trail will also dictate the amount of site work necessary. Typically, more intensive recreational activities (ATVs & horses) require more extensive site preparation and a higher degree of on-going maintenance. If the Town wanted to allow more intensive recreation activities, then additional site work will be needed especially at stream crossing locations. User organizations (equestrian associations, snowmobile clubs, etc.) are usually quite willing to pitch in and help build a trail if they know they will be able to use it once completed. Involving the potential users can help the town save money in trail maintenance costs. User groups often "adopt" a trail segment, helping with maintenance and monitoring its use. A list of area recreation organizations can be found in Appendix C

*Site Work:* Creating this trail for hikers and cross-country skiers should be a relatively low-cost effort, since most of the site work for this trail involves brush cutting and marking the trail. Volunteers should be able to complete the vast majority of the site preparation work. The stream crossing and bridge crossing will need to be evaluated in more detail, and these impediments have the potential to be the most expensive items for this trail project. The Town may need to raise funds or pursue grant opportunities if the stream crossing and bridge stabilization projects prove too costly. Appendix D of this report contains some grant programs the Town may want to investigate when considering funding options for this trail.

3. Old Stagecoach Trail (potentially linking Southbridge and Dudley): CMRPC staff mapped this trail on April 27, 2001 with assistance from a local volunteer and a staff member from the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). Once again, a GPS unit was used to map the trail's location. The trail is known as "the Old Stage Coach Trail" because it was actually used by stagecoaches during the 1800's. The trail begins near the Quinebaug River in West Dudley.



The trail begins off of Durfee Road, which is an offshoot of Fish Road. Durfee Road is nothing more than an unpaved path for about half a mile beginning at the Fish Road intersection. The first 300 feet of the trail (heading east on Durfee Road) is quite steep and would not be suitable for anything but hiking. The topography levels off somewhat for the next 1,000 feet (still heading east). At this point, the trail will have to cross a small brook. The land adjacent to the brook is quite muddy, and the trail will need to be elevated in order to ford the brook. There is also some debris in close proximity. The trail continues to the east for another 1,400 feet until reaching the paved portion of Durfee Road. An animal farm can be seen at this location.

Beginning at the start of Durfee Road's pavement, the trail will continue along either side of the road for approximately one quarter of a mile, until reaching a "Stewardship Forest" sign. The trail continues along Durfee Road for another 650 feet until it intersects with Lempicki Road (Northwest Cemetery will be on the right). At this point, the trail goes off-road and continues in a southeasterly direction for a length of 800 feet until reaching Ziemba Road. Ziemba Road is posted with a "no trespassing" sign at this location. All of the land in this location (and the entirety of the trail thus far except for the Durfee Road right-of-way) is privately owned. At Ziemba Road, it is unclear where to continue the trail because there is no visible path. The trail is shown on the USGS topographic maps as continuing east until reaching Route 31 (Dresser Hill Road). Along the trail, Route 31 is roughly a quarter of a mile from Ziemba Road.

After crossing Route 31 and walking east for 300 feet, the trail is gated and posted as "no trespassing". CMRPC did not attempt to map the trail from this point on; however, the USGS topographic maps show the trail continuing in a southeasterly direction for roughly half a mile until reaching a stream known as "Tufts Branch". It is not known whether there is a place along the trail to cross this stream.

Just beyond the Tufts Branch, the trail connects to Foskett Road near Dudley Center. Foskett Road then connects to Dudley-Southbridge Road. Taking a right at Dudley-Southbridge Road brings the hiker to Dudley Center Road, and Nichols College is slightly less a quarter of a mile south. The majority of the trail will be located within the right-of-ways for several town roads, however, the trail does cross over eleven (11) properties under private ownership (see Appendix B for property owner inventory). ). A tabular summary of the conditions along the proposed trail is presented on the following page.

### Old Stagecoach Trail - Trail Conditions

<b>Location in Feet</b>	<b>Condition of Trail Spur</b>	<b>Proposed Site Work</b>
300 feet east along path for Durfee Road.	Proposed trail location is quite steep.	Mark trail path.
1,000 feet east along path for Durfee Road.	Pile of trash. Small brook to be crossed.	Remove trash pile. Stabilize brook crossing (may need footbridge).
1,400 feet east until reaching the paved portion of Durfee Road.	Path is in fairly good shape.	Mark trail path.
2,000 feet along Durfee Road until intersection with Lempicki Road.	Good condition.	No work needed, other than marking trail path.
800 feet southeast to Ziemba Road.	Brush. "No Trespassing" sign at Ziemba Road. Unclear where to pick up trail from this point.	Clear brush. Mark trail location on the other side of Ziemba Road. Property owner would need to remove posted sign.
One quarter mile east to Route 31.	Brush.	Clear brush and mark trail.
300 feet east.	Brush. Trail is gated at this point and a "No Trespassing" sign is present.	Clear brush and mark trail. Property owner would need to remove posted sign and gate (or allow people around it).
Half a mile southeast to Tufts Branch.	Brush and trees within trail path. Tufts Branch to be crossed.	Clear brush and remove trees in path. Evaluate options for crossing Tufts Branch (footbridge may be needed).
100 feet east to Foskett Road.	Brush.	Clear brush.
Foskett Road to Dudley-Southbridge Road (take a right).	Good condition.	No work needed.
Dudley-Southbridge Road to Dudley Center Road (take a right).	Good condition.	No work needed.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Quite frankly, the Old Stagecoach Trail does not have a high degree of feasibility as a trail system. The grade along the first section of the trail is quite steep and would not be suitable for anything but hiking. Although the Town controls the Durfee Road right-of-way, there are eleven (11) private property owners to deal with along the off-road portion of the trail (from Lempicki Road to Foskett Road). Several properties along the off-road portion of the trail are currently posted "no trespassing" and one has a gate blocking the trail's path. Often, private property owners who post their properties are not very

amenable to granting trail easements across their property. In addition, the location of the trail is hard to pick up at several locations. The Town would be better served focusing its efforts on developing the Grand Trunk Trail.

4. Dresser Hill Road Bicycle Route (potentially linking Dudley and Charlton): The idea for this trail is to utilize Route 31 (Dresser Hill Road) through Dudley and Charlton as a bicycle route that would link to the Midstate Trail just south of where it crosses the Mass Pike (I-90) in Charlton. The bike route could begin at two locations in Dudley. The first point of origin could be Route 31 where it intersects with Dudley-Southbridge Road in west Dudley. Although Route 31 extends south through Dudley to the Connecticut state line, this portion of Route 31 is not suitable for use as a bike route. The road has too many curves, the topography of the landscape is too hilly, and trees/brush obscure sight distance, making this stretch of Route 31 unsafe for bicycle travel. However, Route 31 north of the Dudley-Southbridge Road intersection does have potential as a bike route. The road straightens out, the topography has a gentle rise to it, and sight distance is much better. As a second point of origin, the bicycle route could begin a little further south on Route 31 and connect to the Old Stage Coach Trail (discussed under Item #2 of this section), but this would depend on Dudley actually following through on a trail that has marginal feasibility.

The trail will follow Route 31 through Dudley and Charlton in a south-to-north direction, until Route 31 intersects with North Main Street in Charlton. The trail will then head north along North Main Street, until its intersection with Northside Road (a.k.a. Stevens Road). The trail will then follow Northside Road, utilizing a cow tunnel to cross under Route 20. Upon crossing under Route 20, the trail will continue north along Stevens Road until it connects to the Midstate Trail just south of the Mass Pike. North Main Street, Northside Road, and Stevens Roads are all local roads under Charlton's jurisdiction.

Route 31 is considered a State numbered route, as the State owns the road's right-of-way. However, the towns are responsible for the road's day-to-day maintenance. The Route 31 right-of-way is fifty (50) feet wide, with a variable paved width (20 feet to 24 feet, depending on location). MassHighway is planning a \$2.3 million pavement reclamation project (re-paving) for Route 31 in the year 2002. However, limited highway funds may delay this project until the following year. The pavement reclamation project is listed as a "Regional Priority" project in the most recent version of CMRPC's regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), but only if additional State funds become available.

Under the Federal Highway Administration's road classification system, Route 31 is considered to be a "Rural Major Collector". Bicycle routes are permitted along such roadways, as long as they are low-volume roads (no more than 2,000 vehicles per day). CMRPC's Transportation staff conducts annual traffic counts throughout the Central Massachusetts region and has collected the following traffic volume information for Route 31.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Route 31 Total Traffic Volume (northbound &amp; southbound)</u>	<u>Date of Traffic Count</u>
Dudley, north of Connecticut state line	861 vpd	10/7/99
Charlton, north of Dudley town line	1,583 vpd	8/5/99
Charlton, north of Flint Road	4,716 vpd	5/22/00
Charlton, between Burlingame Rd. & Muggett Hill Rd.	9,663 vpd	5/22/00

The above traffic count data indicates that traffic volume increases along Route 31 as one gets closer to the center of Charlton. Since the majority of Route 31 through Dudley and Charlton has daily traffic volumes less than 2,000 vpd, Route 31 would not automatically be disqualified for a bicycle route just because the traffic counts close to Charlton Center are over the 2,000 vpd limit.

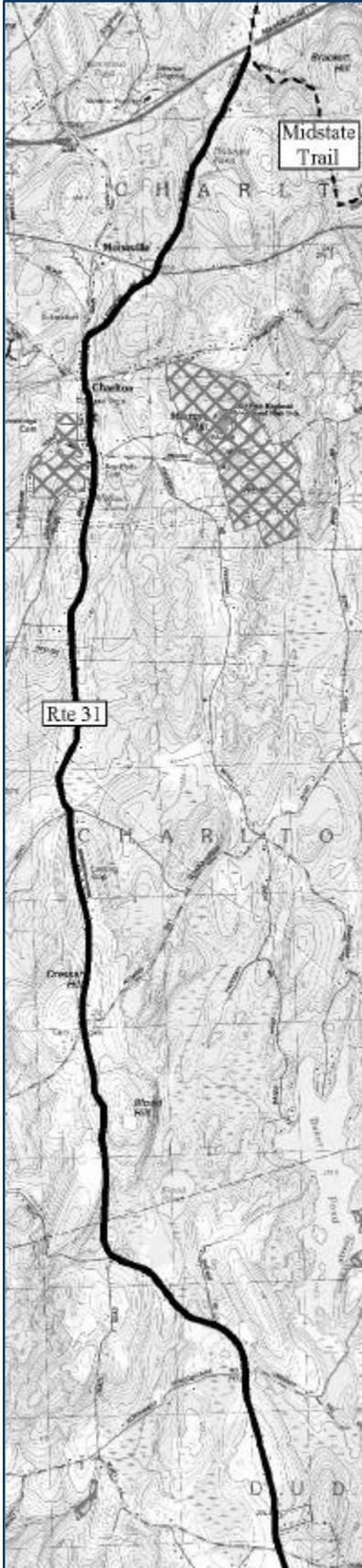
The primary resource for bicycle route planning is the MassHighway document entitled, Building Better Bicycling: A Manual for Improving Community Bicycling Conditions, 1999 Edition. In an effort to outline the necessary steps for creating community bicycle routes, the terminology needs to be clarified:

**BIKEWAYS:** This is an all-inclusive term for any road, street, path, or way which in some manner is specifically designated for bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes (cars & trucks).

**BICYCLE LANE:** This is a portion of a roadway that has been designated by striping, signing and pavement marking for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. They are mostly found in urban settings. The minimum required width of a bicycle lane is five feet. Bicycle lanes are usually one-way and carry traffic in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic.

**BICYCLE PATH:** This is a bikeway that is physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier. Bicycle paths can be within a highway right-of-way, or completely off-road (abandoned railroad beds and/or utility easements).

**SIGNED BICYCLE ROUTE:** This is a system of off-road bicycle paths and on-road bikeways that shows the preferred route for bicycle use. They are typically used to connect destinations (connecting parks to downtowns and tourist destinations). Many signed bike routes are of the “shared roadway” variety discussed on the following page.



**SHARED ROADWAY:** Where adequate roadway width does not exist for the designation of a stand-alone bicycle lane, or where its designation is not necessary, a wide curb lane can provide travel space for bicycle traffic. Most highway engineers agree that 14 feet of pavement is the minimum width necessary to allow a bicyclist and motorist to share the same lane without conflict, although MassHighway recommends between 15 to 16.5 feet. For roadways with shoulders, the preferred shoulder width is between 4 feet and 8 feet, depending on such factors as sight distance, average daily traffic, and posted speed limits.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

The most likely option for establishing a bicycle route along Route 31 would be a shared roadway, signed bicycle route. That is, cyclists would share the road with vehicle traffic, staying on the shoulders of the road. The shoulders on either side of Route 31 are currently not wide enough to meet MassHighway’s standards for accommodating bicycle traffic. Widening Route 31 for a signed bicycle route would be prohibitively expensive.

The most feasible option for establishing a signed bicycle route along Route 31 would be to wait until MassHighway plans a full reconstruction of the roadway, and integrate a signed bicycle route into the design phase. It is too late to add a signed bicycle route into MassHighway’s pavement reclamation project for Route 31, as the design work has been completed. The Route 31 pavement reclamation project, once completed, will likely extend the road’s service life for at least another ten years. At this point, MassHighway *may* consider a full-blown reconstruction project for Route 31. At such point in time that MassHighway does begin planning for the complete reconstruction of Route 31, Charlton and Dudley would need to petition MassHighway to integrate a signed bicycle route into the project’s design phase. Under this scenario, the towns would be responsible for design costs and MassHighway would be responsible for reconstruction costs. It would be the Charlton and Dudley Boards of Selectmen who would make the petition to MassHighway.

If Charlton and Dudley wanted to press MassHighway to begin the design work for a full-blown reconstruction of Route 31, it is quite likely the towns would be required to pay for the design work, although MassHighway would still

be responsible for reconstruction. Thus, whether the State initiates a reconstruction of Route 31 or the towns initiate such a project, the towns will have to pay the design costs for a bicycle route. Design work for a highway reconstruction project usually costs in the neighborhood of a quarter of a million dollars, or at least ten percent of the estimated construction cost. Thus, it would make good fiscal sense for Charlton and Dudley to take the long-term approach for establishing a signed bicycle route along Route 31, and wait for MassHighway to initiate a full-blown highway reconstruction project. Once this happens, the towns can petition MassHighway to integrate a signed bicycle route into the project's design phase.

It should be noted that, by State law, **all roads** in the Commonwealth are open to bicycle travel (except limited access highways). Thus, cyclists can make use of Route 31 as it exists today, and many do. Towns need not go through MassHighway's formal bicycle route designation process unless they want to use federal highway money for establishing a bikeway, bicycle lane, or bicycle path. Another reason for pursuing a formal bicycle route designation from MassHighway is to have the State pay for bike route/share the road signage.

Communities are free to promote the use of their roadways as bicycle routes in a less formal manner. The Midstate Trail makes use of numerous roadways to complete its length, none of which have gone through MassHighway's formal bicycle route designation process. Many local Open Space & Recreation Plans promote the use of local roads as preferred bike routes. There are several published bike route maps that already show Route 31 as a preferred bike route. Rubel Bike Maps Inc. publishes the Central Massachusetts Bicycle and Road Map - Bed & Breakfast Guide on an annual basis, and Route 31 (as well as many other local roads in Charlton & Dudley) is shown as a "recommended bicycle route". The Rubel guide includes a map of the region that depicts recommended bicycle routes along local roads having low traffic volumes. The guide also provides information on points of interest that can be found along bicycle routes. Their maps can be found on-line at: [www.bikemaps.com](http://www.bikemaps.com).

The bottom line is that Charlton and Dudley can informally promote the use of Route 31 as a preferred bicycle route without going through MassHighway's formal bicycle route designation process and without incurring any liability. Maps depicting preferred bike routes are generally regarded as informational guidance and do not guarantee the safety or condition of the roadway. Improving Route 31 to better accommodate bicycles should be a long-range goal for Charlton and Dudley. When the opportunity arises to reconstruct Route 31, the towns should petition MassHighway to integrate a signed bicycle route into the design phase.

5. Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad (potentially linking Webster, Oxford, and Auburn): The Webster Branch of the old Boston & Albany Railroad was abandoned in the early 1970's as part of the federal Hodges Village Dam flood control project in Oxford. The trail leading to the railbed will begin in the southwestern corner of Webster and extend north through downtown Webster, into Oxford, through the Hodges Villages flood control property, and conclude in Auburn just south of the Mass Pike along the western shoreline of Dark Brook Reservoir.



From Webster to Auburn, the trail will be roughly 11.5 miles in length. As mentioned previously, CMRPC staff and local volunteers did not conduct a site walk for the Webster Branch Trail, as the railbed's location is still quite visible from aerial photographs. Auburn volunteers did walk their Town's section of the railbed and provided CMRPC with valuable field notes.

The re-routed Grand Trunk Trail will connect to the Webster Branch Trail by walking across Perryville Road (over the French River) into Webster. Once in Webster, the trail will be located between the active Providence & Worcester rail-line to the east and the French River to the west. Webster owns the majority of land between the P&W rail-line and the French River, although three parcels are under private ownership (see Appendix B for property owner inventory). Upon crossing into Webster via Perryville Road, the trail will extend north between the French River and the active P&W rail-line until reaching Hill Street. Along this stretch of the trail, there is a small wetland area (roughly 125 linear feet) on one of the privately owned properties that will need to be forded. This wetland area will need to be investigated more closely as the trail may be able to continue along the edge of the railroad embankment to the left (east). In addition, a path for the trail will need to be cleared from Perryville Road until reaching the existing trail located on the Webster sewage treatment plant property (a length of roughly 2/3 of a mile).

The cleared path located on the Webster sewage treatment plant property extends north until reaching Hill Street. The trail will continue west along Hill Street back into Dudley, and then north along Chase Avenue. The trail will continue along Chase Avenue across the bridge and back into Webster. Chase Avenue becomes Pleasant Street north of Main Street. The trail will continue north along Pleasant Street, crossing a bridge back into Dudley onto Oxford Avenue. The trail will continue north along Oxford Avenue, then onto Cemetery Road, and then back onto Oxford Avenue (all in Dudley). Oxford Avenue extends along the Dudley/Oxford town line north of downtown Webster. The abandoned railbed can be picked up along Oxford Avenue in northwest Webster. The trail will continue north along the railbed into the Town of Oxford.

Once in Oxford, the trail will link into an existing trail system within the Hodges Village Dam property, maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). The trail will need to make use of Howarth Road (at its intersection with Charlton Street) in order to access the Hodges Village Dam property. The railbed from Webster to Hodges Village Dam needs some site work. There will be a minimal amount of brush clearing and debris removal, but the biggest work item here will be to

restore the grade. The railbed shows evidence of ATV use. The railbed currently contains numerous ruts and moguls that will need to be smoothed over with gravel or stone dust, depending on the intensity level of the uses proposed for the trail.

The trail will continue north through Hodges Village Dam where the existing trails are in very good shape. The Army Corps allows all variety of recreational activities on its interior trail system and these trails are exceptionally well maintained. Once out of Hodges Village Dam, the trail will continue into the North Oxford/Oxford Heights area. Upon crossing Route 56, the trail will use an old railroad bridge to cross the French River. This bridge will need to be examined closer, as a site walk was not conducted for this portion of the trail. The bridge will need a structural evaluation for use as a pedestrian crossing. Once over the river, the trail will extend through a well-developed area between Routes 12 & 20. Upon crossing Route 20, the trail will follow the abandoned railbed north into Auburn where it will conclude on Auburn Water Department land just south of the Mass Pike (I-90) along the western shoreline of Dark Brook Reservoir.

National Grid USA (local office in Westborough) owns the railbed's right-of-way north and south of Hodges Village Dam. Upon leaving Hodges Village Dam and heading north into Auburn, the conditions of the railbed deteriorate dramatically. As with that portion of the railbed to the south of Hodges Village, the railbed to the north is full of ruts and moguls, and shows evidence of ATV use. There is a beaver dam near the trail's end in Auburn that will have to be removed or forded in some manner.

As the trail extends through Oxford and Auburn, there are several street crossings that will need to be clearly marked, and crosswalks should be considered for the heavily traveled roads. There are nine road crossings in Oxford: Old Webster Road (twice), Glenwood Road, Dudley Road, Charlton Street, Clara Barton Road, Route 56, Turner Road, and Route 20. There are two road crossings in Auburn: Albert Street and Tinker Hill Road.

*The Big Picture - Other Trail Connections and Potential Spurs:* It should be noted that the Webster Branch Trail has the potential to link with the Midstate Trail as it passes through the Hodges Village Dam property, as well as the inactive Southbridge Branch in downtown Webster. As mentioned in the previous section, the State has been negotiating with the P&W Railroad for the purchase of the inactive Southbridge Branch for use as a rail trail. With the Grand Trunk trail through Dudley as an additional possibility, the Webster Branch Trail could tie into three significant trail systems, thus making it one of the region's premier trail links. Yet another possibility is having the Webster Branch trail continue south into Connecticut, eventually tying into the Gateway Visitor Center being planned by the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Inc. The visitor center is being planned for a parcel of land located in Thompson, Connecticut, just off I-395, Exit 100. The possibility also exists to connect the visitor center's trail system to trails within the Douglas State Forest.

It should also be noted that the Town of Webster owns a 40-foot sewer easement along the French River beginning at Hill Street and extending north along the river throughout the entirety of downtown Webster. The Town would like to develop this easement as a "Greenway" that would be open to the public, thus making use of an underutilized resource

(the river). The Town plans on developing this Greenway over the next two years as part of a downtown revitalization project funded by a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant from MassHighway. It would be quite feasible to have a spur come off of the Webster Branch Trail and extend along the French River into downtown Webster, behind Main Street.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Using the abandoned Webster Branch railbed as a trail is quite feasible. Although the tracks and ties have been removed, the railbed will need to be re-graded south and north of Hodges Village Dam. The trail will require a minimal amount of brush clearing and debris removal. A small stretch of wetland will have to be forded in Webster (south of Hill Street), and a beaver dam will have to be removed or forded towards the end of the trail in Auburn.

*Easement Agreements versus Rights-of-Way Purchase:* Purchasing the railbed's right-of-way will be quite expensive and should only be considered if necessary. Rather, it is suggested that the towns try to work with the private property owners (primarily the Power Company) to arrange easement agreements for the trail. CMRPC would be glad to arrange a meeting between the towns and the Power Company to discuss a trail easement along the railbed's right-of-way. If suitable easement agreements cannot be arranged, then outright purchase should be considered. If outright purchase is needed, the towns should consult with the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and MassHighway to see if these State agencies might be willing to act as the purchasing agent. As one can imagine, purchasing portions of the railbed's right-of-way will take a great deal of time and may be quite expensive.

*Potential Users and Site Development Implications:* Once again, the amount of site work needed for the trail will depend on what types of recreational activities will be allowed. As part of an easement agreement, the Power Company may want to restrict some types of recreational uses from its portion of the trail. The trail will need a minimal amount of site work to make it usable for hikers and cross-country skiers, just some re-grading, brush clearing, trash removal, and trail markings. It should be noted that the ACOE allows horses, snowmobiles, and all-terrain vehicles within the Hodges Village Dam trail system. If the towns wanted to allow such uses on the entirety of the 11.5-mile trail, then additional site work will be required (see below).

*Potential as a Rails-to-Trails Project:* The Webster Branch railbed would make an excellent "rails-to-trails" project. Such projects turn abandoned railroad beds into multi-use trails. A rails-to-trails project would involve stabilizing the entirety of the trail to make it usable for a variety of recreational activities such as: hiking, jogging, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and all-terrain vehicles. This is often times an expensive proposition, well beyond the financial resources of the three communities. Rail trails are eligible for federal funding, and the towns may want to work with MassHighway and CMRPC to investigate the possibility of including this rail trail project on the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), perhaps under the Transportation Enhancement Program.

Working with MassHighway on accessing federal funds for a rail trail project can be a difficult and time-consuming process. According to a report of the Massachusetts Senate

Committee on Post Audit and Oversight (“Getting on Track” published May 2001), there are close to 100 bicycle and pedestrian projects awaiting approval or funding from MassHighway, thus a substantial backlog exists. Even if the towns were to immediately move forward with a rail trail plan for the Webster Branch, there are a number of similar projects ahead of them awaiting action from MassHighway.

The State’s construction requirements for rail trail projects are another hindrance. MassHighway often requires rail trails to be paved. According to a study conducted by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, paving a rail trail will cost, on average, \$250,000 per mile. MassHighway, if pressed by the host communities, may allow the use of stone dust (soil cement or granular stone) as a surface. According to the Rails to Trails Conservancy, a mile of stone dust trail can cost as little as \$60,000 per mile. If the affected communities wish to pursue a rail trail project for the Webster Branch, they should work with the aforementioned Rails to Trails Conservancy, who have a field office at Union Station in Worcester. The Conservancy will be able to work with the towns to formulate a game plan for the rail trail project, including the preparation of cost estimates and funding strategy. Appendix D of this report contains some grant programs the towns may want to investigate when considering funding options for this trail.

## **VII. Conclusion:**

Growth is coming to the Southwest Subregion of Central Massachusetts, and it is important for the towns to pursue feasible trail planning projects while the potential still exists. As land continues to be subdivided and developed throughout the subregion, opportunities for new trail systems will be diminished. This study investigated five potential trail systems and tried to answer the following questions for each trail:

- Where will the trail go?
- What on-the-ground impediments will have to be dealt with?
- Who owns the land along the trail?
- What will the towns have to do to make these trails a reality?

This study does not represent a detailed feasibility study with construction drawings and cost estimates. Rather, this study represents a preliminary or “first cut” analysis of whether the trails are feasible or not. The towns will still have a lot of work to do to make these trails a reality:

- Easement agreements with the private property owners;
- Policy decisions on what types of uses to allow on the trails;
- Organizing volunteers to do the site work;
- Trail marking and signage; and
- Fording streams and wetlands

For the majority of potential trails investigated as part of this study, making them a reality will depend more on volunteer willpower and determination than the availability of financial resources. Three of the potential trails will need a minimal amount of site work to make them usable for hikers, joggers, cross-country skiers, and other low impact recreational activities.

As mentioned previously, the more intensive the recreational activity, the more site preparation and on-going maintenance is needed. In some cases, the larger private land owners (i.e., the Power Company) may wish to preclude certain recreational uses as part of negotiating an easement agreement with the communities. The towns will have to show some flexibility when negotiating easement agreements with private landowners, taking great care to consider the landowners concerns while balancing them with the needs of the community.

In terms of building the trails and maintaining them on an on-going basis, communities are encouraged to make use of the region’s trail user organizations (equestrian associations,

snowmobile clubs, etc.). These groups are usually quite willing to pitch in and help build a trail if they know they will be able to use it once completed. Involving the potential users can help the town save money in trail maintenance costs. User groups often “adopt” a trail segment, helping with maintenance and monitoring its use. Other civic groups should also be solicited for assistance with trail construction and maintenance. Civic groups are also quite skilled in raising funds for some of the more expensive trail amenities such as footbridges and entry signs. Also, don’t be afraid to approach local businesses for assistance. Many local businesses are looking for ways to give back to their host communities, whether through service projects or financial assistance.

In terms of funding, there are few state and federal grant programs for new trail development. Federal transportation funds represent the largest pot of money; however, the substantial backlog of bicycle and pedestrian projects awaiting action from MassHighway indicates that new trail development projects will have a lengthy wait for State funding. Appendix D of this report contains a list of grant opportunities for trail development. One significant funding source of note is the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor. The National Parks Service manages the National Heritage Corridor Program at the federal level. The Quinebaug-Shetucket Corridor was established in 1994 and expanded to include a portion of central Massachusetts in 2000. All of the communities in the Southwest Subregion fall within the Corridor’s expanded boundaries, with the exception of Auburn. The purposes of the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor are to encourage grassroots efforts for the preservation and restoration of significant historic and natural assets, foster compatible economic development (including tourism), and *enhance recreational opportunities*. With close to a million dollars per year of federal funding earmarked for the Corridor for each of the next ten years, the Corridor’s grant programs should be helpful in furthering the trail development projects investigated as part of this study.

A brief feasibility assessment of the trails investigated as part of this study is presented below.

1. Old Grand Trunk Railroad Bed (potentially linking Southbridge, Dudley, and Webster): The feasibility of creating a trail along the Grand Trunk railbed is quite high. The Indian Road/French River spur of this trail is something that Dudley can start moving on immediately. Most of the trail spur occurs on existing paths and roadways, and most of the properties involved are (or soon to be) under the Town’s jurisdiction. Site work will be minimal, with the exception of crossing the stream in front of Packard Pond. Establishing a trail along the remainder of the railbed (from Fish Road to Indian Road) should be a long-term goal for Dudley, as there are multiple private property owners to work with.

2. Wolf Swamp/Wells State Forest Trail Loop (potentially linking Sturbridge and Brookfield): This potential trail loop is also quite feasible. Sturbridge will only have to deal with a few private property owners in order to obtain easement agreements for the trail. Although the amount of site preparation work will be substantial, much of it can be accomplished by volunteer labor. The stone bridge will need to be evaluated further and a method of fording the stream will need to be devised. This is a project that Sturbridge can pursue immediately.

3. Old Stagecoach Trail (potentially linking Southbridge and Dudley): This potential trail has limited feasibility. The grade along the first section of the trail is quite steep and would not be suitable for anything but hiking. Although Dudley controls the Durfee Road right-of-way, there are eleven (11) private property owners to deal with along the off-road portion of the trail. Many of the private property owners have posted their properties “no trespassing”, and one has a gate blocking the trail’s path. Usually, private property owners who post their properties are not very amenable to granting trail easements across their property. In addition, the location of the trail is hard to pick up at several locations. Dudley would be better served focusing its efforts on developing the Grand Trunk Trail.

4. Dresser Hill Road Bicycle Route (potentially linking Dudley and Charlton): Creating a bicycle path along Dresser Hill Road does have some feasibility, but only as a long-term objective (10-15 years). Charlton and Dudley will need to wait for MassHighway to initiate a full-blown reconstruction of Dresser Hill and then petition MassHighway to integrate a signed bicycle route into the design phase. In the meantime, the towns can informally promote the use of Route 31 as a preferred bicycle route without going through MassHighway’s formal bicycle route designation process and without incurring any liability.

5. Webster Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad (potentially linking Webster, Oxford, and Auburn): Using the abandoned Webster Branch railbed for a trail is quite feasible, and the possibility exists to tie this trail into several existing and planned trail systems. However, a significant amount of site work will be needed for this project. Although the tracks and ties have been removed, the railbed will need to be re-graded south and north of Hodges Village Dam. The portion of the trail south of Webster’s sewage treatment plant will have to be roughed out. In addition, a small stretch of wetland will have to be forded in Webster (south of Hill Street), and a beaver dam will have to be removed or forded towards the end of the trail in Auburn. The Webster Branch railbed would make an excellent “rails-to-trails” project, however, pursuing this option will increase the project’s overall cost because of the necessary site work and the requirements of MassHighway.

The towns of the Southwest Subregion have an excellent opportunity to create two regionally significant trail systems. If the towns follow through on their planned trails and pursue some of the trails investigated as part of this study, the potential exists to create a west-to-east trail system that would run from Sturbridge all the way into downtown Webster. This potential trail would make use of the Sturbridge “Big X” trail plan, the old Grand Trunk railbed, and the Indian Road/French River trail spur.

The potential exists to create a significant south-to-north trail system along the old Webster Branch railbed through Webster, Oxford, and Auburn. The Webster Branch trail has the potential to link into the Midstate Trail as well as the planned Southbridge Branch rail trail should this project ever come to fruition. A further possibility is having the Webster Branch trail continue south into Connecticut, eventually tying into the Gateway Visitor Center being planned by the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Inc. The visitor center is being planned for a location in Thompson, Connecticut, just off I-395, Exit 100. The possibility also exists to connect the visitor center’s trail system to trails within the Douglas State Forest.

CMRPC hopes to build upon these additional trail possibilities when its trail-planning program focuses on the Blackstone Valley area, possibly as early as the fall of 2002. CMRPC will spend the better part of 2002 evaluating new trail possibilities within its northern subregion.

In order to turn “potential” into “reality”, the towns of the Southwest Subregion will have to conjure up the willpower, manpower, and funding to make them happen. A great deal of patience and persistence will have to be practiced along the way. Towns are advised to take these projects step-by-step, while keeping the big picture clearly in view.

**Southwest Subregion  
Inter-Community Trail Connection  
Feasibility Study**

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## Acknowledgements

This project could not have been completed without the dedication, guidance, and assistance of numerous public officials, local committees, civic organizations and interested citizens. CMRPC would like to extend a special thank you to:

The Sturbridge Open Space Committee  
The Sturbridge Conservation Commission  
The Auburn Natural Resources Planning Committee  
Wayne Nicholas, Auburn Town Planner  
Auburn Parks Commission  
Auburn Conservation Commission  
Hamer Clarke, Southbridge Highway Superintendent  
Kevin Flynn, Southbridge Economic Development Director  
Karen Gauvin, Charlton Conservation Administrator  
Michelle Buck, former Charlton Town Planner  
Cynthia Cooper, Charlton Planning Board  
William Donnelly, Oxford Conservation Administrator  
Joseph Zeneski, Oxford Town Planner  
Suzanne Horne, Dudley Town Administrator  
Chet Kulisa, Dudley Health Inspector  
Dudley Planning Board  
Dudley Parks and Recreation Department  
Dudley Conservation Commission  
The Dudley Preservation Society  
The Grand Trunk Trailblazers  
Roger Hunt, Quinebaug Rivers Association, Inc.  
Reverend David Bradley, Dudley  
Robert Craver, Webster-Oxford-Dudley Chamber of Commerce  
Stanley Duszlak, Webster Town Engineer  
John Desmond, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
Howard Fife, Department of Environmental Management  
Russ Cohen, MA Riverways Program  
Thomas Chamberland, Army Corps of Engineers  
Representative Mark Carron  
And everyone else who attended our meetings, volunteered for the site walks, provided information, or showed an interest in the project!

### CMRPC Staff:

Stephen Wallace, Senior Planner  
Melissa Aldrich, GIS Analyst

Paul Samara, GIS Coordinator  
Timothy Smith, Planning Intern



Wolf Swamp/Wells - Sturbridge										
<u>Map</u>	<u>Lot (street #)</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Owner/ Mailing Address</u>	<u>Estimated Trail Length Through Parcel (feet)</u>						<u>Parcel Size (Acres)</u>
16	233	New Boston Rd.	Hamilton Rod & Gun Club INC/ PO Box 954 Sturbridge MA 01566	340						6.24
16	24	Hamilton Rd.	Hamilton Rod & Gun Club INC/ PO Box 954 Sturbridge MA 01566	1,530						138
16	247	New Boston Rd.	Philip D Jowlan PO Box 694 Sturbridge MA 01566	1,911						25.3
6	7	Allen Rd	Fred and Joanne Plumpton/ Northhill 5404 865 Central Ave. Needham, MA 02192	2,762						274.7
10	278	Cedar St.	Ralph and Anida Tavernier/ 278 Cedar St Fiskdale, MA 01518	1,063						9
10	269	Cedar St.	Edward and Melissa Cilandic/ PO Box 93 Sturbridge, MA 01550	765						12.35
10	271	Cedar St.	John Hughes 3 Locust St. Douglas, MA 01516	1,485						88
10	232-A	Arnold Rd.	Albani and Nina Bousquet/ 222 Main Street Southbridge, MA 01550	346						8.58
10	234-A	Arnold Rd.	John and Laurie Hughes/ 3 Locust St Douglas, MA 01516	279						0.27
<b>Stagecoach Trail - Dudley</b>										
<u>Map</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Owner/ Mailing Address</u>	<u>Estimated Trail Length Through Parcel (feet)</u>						<u>Parcel Size (Acres)</u>
18	17-1	Durfee Rd.	May William G Erin E/ 46 Central Turnpike, Sutton MA 01590	743						82.02
18	5	Ziemba Rd	Menzone Michael P/ 414 West Main St. Dudley MA	124						3.02
18	Lot 5-1	Ziemba Rd	Menzone Michael P/ 414 West Main St. Dudley MA	184						
18	8	Ziemba Rd.	Ziemba Joan B and Zeimba Edward A/ PO Box 44 Quinebaug, CT 06262	322						83.33
18	91-2	Dresser Hill Rd.	Chito Michael L. Theoktisti/ 784 Quinebaug Rd. Quinebaug CT 06262	850						19.7
18	87	Dresser Hill Rd.	Myers Daniel S./ 250 Dresser Hill Rd. Dudley MA 01571	322						2.91
19	48	Dresser Hill Rd.	Antos Edward and Antos Marion E./ 35 Julio Drive, Apt 318 Shrewsbury, MA 01545	175						1.43
19	50-1	Dresser Hill Rd.	Yacuzzi Thomas and Linda/ 215 Dresser Hill Rd. Charlton, MA 01507	40						13.12
24	8	Dresser Hill Rd.	Candella Joseph/Trustee, Dresser Hill Rd Realty Trust, #6 Meadowbrook Rd. Sherborne, MA 0	1,795						
24	12	Healy Rd.	Elliot & Kathleen Williams, #79 Healy Rd., Dudley, MA 01571	525						
19	Lot 3-1	Foskett Rd	Frederick Dennis and Barbara/ 16 Foskett Rd. Dudley, MA 01571	280						2.25
<b>Webster Branch RR - Auburn</b>										
<u>Map</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Owner/ Mailing Address</u>	<u>Estimated Trail Length Through Parcel (feet)</u>						<u>Parcel Size (Acres)</u>
59	18	Tinker Hill Rd.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	3,330						
65	40	15 Blake Street	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,250						
<b>Webster Branch RR - Oxford</b>										
<u>Map</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Owner/ Mailing Address</u>	<u>Estimated Trail Length Through Parcel (feet)</u>						<u>Parcel Size (Acres)</u>
6-B	A-4	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	644						
6-B	B-8	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	1,697						
8	B-2	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	1,680						
8-A	B-18	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,210						
11	A-7	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	1,036						
11-B	A-19	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	3,195						
8-A	B-9	Leicester Street	Army Corp of Engineers	807						
33	A-8	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,930						
46	B-9	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,520						
57	A-6	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	974						
57-A	B-8	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	703						
58	B-2	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA/ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,097						

<b>Webster Branch RR -</b>	<b>Webster</b>									
<u>Map</u>	<u>Lot</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Owner/ Mailing Address</u>	<u>Estimated Trail Length Through Parcel (feet)</u>						<u>Parcel Size (Acres)</u>
7	1	Perryville Rd	Webster-Dudley Realty Corp C/O Gabor, Valerie/ 100 Llewellyn Road, Montclair NJ 07042	270						
7	2	Perryville Rd	Town of Dudley/ Scholfield Ave, Dudley MA 01571	253						
6	1	NA	Craver Point Realty Trust, C/O Ed Craver/ 616 Grecken Green, Peachtree GA 30269	2,100						
5	1	NA	Town of Webster/ Town Hall, Webster Massachusetts 01570	1,324						
4	1	NA	Town of Webster/ Town Hall, Webster Massachusetts 01570	1,154						
3	1	Hill St	Baumritter Corp Dudley Div. Of Ethan Allen Inc	908						
2	1	Hill St	Baumritter Corp Dudley Div. Of Ethan Allen Inc	1,220						
20	5	Railroad R.O.W.	National Grid USA./ 25 Research Drive Westborough, MA 01582	2,175						

## Appendix C

### List of Contacts

#### Appalachian Mountain Club, Worcester Chapter

Worcester, MA 01602  
Tel.: (508) 797-9744  
Web: [www.outdoors.org](http://www.outdoors.org)

#### Environmental League of Massachusetts

14 Beacon Street, Suite 714 Boston, MA 02108  
Tel: (617) 742-2553 Fax: (617) 742-9656  
Email: [elm@environmentalleague.org](mailto:elm@environmentalleague.org)  
Web: [www.environmentalleague.org](http://www.environmentalleague.org)

#### Greater Worcester Land Trust

Colin M. J. Novick, Project Director  
172 Shrewsbury Street Worcester, MA 01604  
Tel: (508) 795-3838  
Web: [www.ultranet.com/~gwlt/gwlt.html](http://www.ultranet.com/~gwlt/gwlt.html)

#### Land Trust Alliance

Northeast Program  
P.O. Box 792 Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-0792  
[national offices]  
1311 H Street NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: (202) 638-4725  
Web: [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)

#### Massachusetts Audubon Society

Environmental Affairs Office, Worcester, MA 01604  
Tel.: (508) 755-8899  
208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773  
Tel.: (617) 259-9500 or (800) AUDUBON  
Web: [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)

#### MassHighway Bicycle Coordinator

Josh Lehman Tel: (617) 973-7329  
Email: [Josh.Lehman@state.ma.us](mailto:Josh.Lehman@state.ma.us)

#### Mass. Dept. of Env. Management (DEM)

Howard Fife  
Wells State Park  
(508)347-9257

#### Executive Office of Env. Affairs

John Desmond, Watershed Team Leader  
French-Quinebaug Watersheds  
627 Main Street  
Worcester, MA 01608  
508-767-2787

#### DEM - Region 3 Headquarters

Route 110, P.O. Box 155  
Clinton, MA 01510  
Tel: (978) 368-0126 or (508) 792-7715  
Jennifer Howard, Greenways Coordinator  
Office of Natural Resources  
136 Damon Rd. Northampton, MA 01060  
Tel: (413) 586-8706 ext. 18  
Email: [Jennifer.Howard@state.ma.us](mailto:Jennifer.Howard@state.ma.us)

#### Massachusetts Dept. of Env. Protection

Central Regional Offices  
75 Grove Street, Worcester, MA  
Tel.: (508) 792-7683

#### Mass. Division of Conservation Services

Web: [www.magnet.state.ma.us/dcs.dcs.htm](http://www.magnet.state.ma.us/dcs.dcs.htm)  
Tel: (617) 727-1552  
Jean Robes, ext. 544; Jennifer Soper, ext. 292

#### New England Forestry Foundation

P.O. Box 1099 283 Old Dunstable Road  
Groton, MA 01450  
Tel: (978) 448-8380 or (888) 367-3780  
Email: [neff@neforestry.org](mailto:neff@neforestry.org)  
Web: [www.neforestry.org](http://www.neforestry.org)

#### Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor

Charlene Perkins Cutler, Executive Director  
107 Providence Street  
P.O. Box 161 Putnam, CT 06260  
Tel: (860) 963-7226  
Email: [quinebaug-shetucket@snet.net](mailto:quinebaug-shetucket@snet.net)  
Web: [thelastgreenvalley.org](http://thelastgreenvalley.org)

#### Rails to Trails Conservancy

Craig P. Della Penna, New England Representative  
2 Washington Square, Suite 200, Union Station  
Worcester, MA 01604  
Tel: (508) 755-3300  
Email: [rtcnewengland@transact.org](mailto:rtcnewengland@transact.org)  
Web: [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org)

Regional Environmental Council, of Central MA

172 Shrewsbury Street  
P.O. Box 255 Worcester, MA 01604  
Tel: (508) 799-9139  
Email: [rec@ma.ultranet.com](mailto:rec@ma.ultranet.com)

Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse

1100 17th Street NW, 10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: (877) GRNWAYS  
Email: [greenways@transact.org](mailto:greenways@transact.org)  
Web: [www.trailsandgreenways.org](http://www.trailsandgreenways.org)  
Note: free technical assistance, information, referrals

The Trust for Public Land

New England Regional Office  
33 Union Street, 4th Floor Boston, MA  
Tel: (617) 367-6200  
Web: [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

Mid-State Trail

Contact: Robert Elms  
#143 Nola Drive  
Holden, MA 01520  
508-829-5701  
[r-elms@worldnet.att.net](mailto:r-elms@worldnet.att.net)

Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Regional Office  
211 Temple Street  
West Boylston, MA 01583  
(508)835-3607

The Trustees of Reservations

Andrew Kendall, Executive Director  
Long Hill 572 , Essex Street  
Beverly, MA 01915-1530  
Tel: (978) 921-1944  
Web: [www.thetrustees.org](http://www.thetrustees.org)  
Note: assistance and advice on techniques, occasionally collaboration; includes exhaustive page of links to related organizations

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in MA

Hodges Village Dam - Oxford  
508-248-5697  
ACE- New England Division  
424 Trapelo Road  
Waltham, MA 02254  
(781)647-811

Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

10 Park Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
(800)447-MASS  
(617)727-3201  
[www.mass.vacation.com](http://www.mass.vacation.com)

Johnny Appleseed Trail Association

110 Erdman Way  
Leominster, MA 01453  
(978)534-2302  
[www.appleseed.org](http://www.appleseed.org)

Central Massachusetts Tourist Council

33 Waldo St.  
Worcester, MA 01608  
(508)753-2920  
[www.worcester.org](http://www.worcester.org)

Blackstone Valley Snowmobile Club

P.O. Box 7103  
Cumberland RI 02864

Blackstone Valley Snowmobile Association

Wayne Vaneburg  
P.O. Box 84  
Sutton, MA 01590  
(508)234-8560  
[wpvburg@netzero.net](mailto:wpvburg@netzero.net)

Easy Rider's Snowmobile Club

Dick Wolfe  
P.O. Box 271  
Marlboro, MA 01752  
(978)562-5001

Snowbirds Snowmobile Club

Dan Gould  
P.O. Box 28  
Spencer, MA 01562

Snowmobiler's United

Bill Alacandro  
6 Hazel Ave.  
Shrewsbury, MA 01541  
(508)842-6773

Opacum Land Trust

Contact: Carol Childress  
P.O. Box 233  
Sturbridge, MA 01566

Dudley-Oxford-Webster  
Chamber of Commerce

Robert Craver, Director  
P.O. Box 1277  
Webster, MA 01570  
(508)943-2777

Snowmobile Association  
of Massachusetts

Rena Sumner, Director  
1270 Whately Rd.  
Conway, MA 01341  
(413)369-8092  
[www.snowassocma.com](http://www.snowassocma.com)

Trailbusters Snowmobile Club

Craig Thompson  
P.O. Box 355  
East Brookfield, MA 01515  
(508)867-5916

Grandtrunk Trailblazers

C/O Ed Calcutt  
48 Shepard Rd.  
Sturbridge, MA 01566  
(508)347-3590

The Northeast Bicycle Club

Bob Evans  
34 Hillside Ave.  
Bedford, MA 01730  
[www.Notrtheastbicycleclub.org](http://www.Notrtheastbicycleclub.org)  
[Webmaster@NortheastBicycleClub.org](mailto:Webmaster@NortheastBicycleClub.org)

The Minutemen Road Club

Mike Umbrell (President)  
(508)881-3603  
[www.minutemenroadclub.com](http://www.minutemenroadclub.com)  
[umbrell@gateway.net](mailto:umbrell@gateway.net)

Barstable Pony Club

Robin Riso  
1067 Old Sandwich Rd  
Plymouth, MA 02360  
(508)224-8788

North American Trail Ride Conference

(President) Sallie Kudra  
(864)972-9125  
[Kudra@Clemson.edu](mailto:Kudra@Clemson.edu)  
[www.natre.org/reg5bod.html](http://www.natre.org/reg5bod.html)

New England Trailriders Association

(800)999-2003  
[Mstone@ix.netcom.com](mailto:Mstone@ix.netcom.com)

New England ATV Association

Steve Fuhrman  
[Srfuhrmann@aol.com](mailto:Srfuhrmann@aol.com)

New England Skiing Association

Bruce Teittinean  
795 Fisher Rd.  
Fitchburg, MA 01420  
(978)343-4104  
[SKI1@NET1PLUS.COM](mailto:SKI1@NET1PLUS.COM)  
[www.skicbsports.com/cmsg](http://www.skicbsports.com/cmsg)

# Appendix D

## Grant Opportunities

### Land Trust Alliance, New England Region

#### New England Land Trust Matching Grants Program

*Deadline:* August 31

*Purpose:* Organizational development, innovative or collaborative projects. Examples of organizational development include hiring consultants for plan development, procuring funds for additional training, increasing diversity of staff, reaching out to new constituencies, or integrating new technology. Examples of collaborative projects include hiring facilitator to merge land trusts, staff sharing, or developing a regional conservation easement.

*Eligible:* Members of the New England Region of the Land Trust Alliance.

*Details:* Up to \$5,000. Applicant(s) must demonstrate how the project will foster improvement after ten months. Collaborative projects may be awarded up to \$5,000 per participant but no more than \$20,000 total.

*Contact:* (202)-638-4725

### Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management

#### Recreational Trails Grants

*Deadline:* end of July.

*Purpose:* Assist maintenance of existing trails, development of trails or facilities, or acquisition of open space for the purpose of trail enhancement or establishment.

*Eligible:* Nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and municipalities.

*Details:* Requires 50 % match, administered by reimbursement, amounts vary from \$1,000 to \$20,000 or more.

*Contact:* Peter Brandenburg  
(617) 973-8740  
peter.brandenburg@state.ma.us

DEM/Forests & Parks  
100 Cambridge Street, 19th Floor  
Boston, MA 02202

*Application Posted:* < <http://www.magnet.state.ma.us/dem/trails/grants.htm> >

#### Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grants

*Deadline:* Unspecified.

*Purpose:* Innovative projects which advance the creation and promotion of greenways and trails in Massachusetts, with tangible results and broad community support. Examples include greenways and trail planning, mapping, education, and outreach.

*Eligible:* Government agencies, related entities.

*Details:* \$1,000 to \$5,000 and up to \$10,000 for multi-town projects.

*Contact:* Jennifer Howard, Greenways Coordinator (listed above)

### Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services

#### Reimbursement Grants

*Deadline:* June 1

*Purpose:* Promote environmental quality and the policies of MA Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, including such activities as preventing pollution, protecting/restoring environmental quality, or growth planning.

*Eligible:* Municipalities, etc.

*Details:* 52 % to 70 % of total project reimbursed, with a maximum grant of \$500,000. Project must be handicapped accessible.

*Contact:* (617)-727-1552 Jean Robes, ext. 544 and Jennifer Soper, ext. 292

### Self-Help Programs (urban and general)

*Deadline:* Unspecified.

*Purpose:* Preserve land and water resources, encourage outdoor passive recreation with public access.

*Eligible:* Municipalities, etc.

*Details:* Pays land acquisition or partial interest and associated costs, including appraisal, closing fees, and others, which must be absorbed by the applying municipality. [Any municipality of 35,000 residents or more may qualify for the Urban Self-Help Program]

*Contact:* (urban) Joan Robes (617) 727-1552 ext. 544 joan.rob@state.ma.us

(general) Jennifer Soper (617) 727-1552 ext. 292 jennifer.soper@state.ma.us

### Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor

#### Partnership Program

*Deadline:* October 1

*Purpose:* Improve environmental, historical, cultural, or recreational resources.

*Eligible:* Municipalities, schools, 503(c) non-profit organizations, regional planning commissions.

*Details:* \$500 to \$5,000.

*Contact:* (860)-963-7226