



Northampton Rail-trail News

Friends of the Northampton Trails and Greenways, Inc. (<http://www.fntg.net>) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that supports the expanding network of rail-trails in Northampton, Massachusetts. Volume 2, Fall 2007

End of year updates and reflections

It's been another busy year for the expanding rail trail network in Northampton. This network serves critically important multipurpose transportation and recreation needs, and is growing in some exciting ways. I remain enthusiastic about what the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways and partners are doing to make this connected system a reality.

Map publication We've distributed almost all of our brochures, and are in the process of reprinting a larger supply for next year. We remain thankful for our sponsors (Bidwell ID, Serio's, Cooper's Corner, Hott Productions, Northampton Bike, Sugar Maple Trailside Inn and last but not least Craig Della Penna, Realtor) and encourage you to thank them for their support when you patronize them!

Signage projects In conjunction with MassBike/PV, we submitted a grant proposal to create kiosks at trailheads and around town describing the trail network. We're also working with the City of Northampton and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to provide on-road signage to help people navigate between the Norwottuck extension and the Northampton bikeway.

Ecotourism The Highland Communities Initiative of the Trustees of Reservations along with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism have been promoting *green tourism* as a means of connecting ecologically and socially conscious travelers with like-minded activities, locales and businesses. Their green steering committee has been promot-

ing rail trails and bike touring, and addressing some of the impediments that can be overcome with continued work. Locally Northampton Bike (on Pleasant Street), the Sugar Maple Trailside Inn (on Chestnut Street) and Trailside Bike (in Hadley) offer bike rentals for trail touring.

There are also some exciting local developments:

Norwottuck connection the State Department of Conservation and Recreation put the final touches on the Damon Road to Woodmont connector (1/2 mile), including the bike/ped crossing of Damon Road. Even before the dust had settled, the trail was actively used.

Roundhouse to Earle St/Grove St. Bids from this project were opened on July 24th, and construction should start in the spring of 2008. When completed, it will connect Downtown to the skateboard park/Felt Building/Smith College physical plant by the old State Hospital and Route 10 (with eventual continuation to Easthampton and the Manhan Rail Trail). This trail crosses the diverted Mill River south of Route 66, and is an amazingly picturesque greenspace.

Rail with Trail parallel to King Street this project remains a major priority, as it will provide a connection between the Norwottuck trail and downtown, with a fence separating the trail from the active rail line. The path will start from near Wendy's with access from King Street across from Acme Auto, and continue southward crossing North

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Street at the overpass, have a trail connection before Main Street, then continue on a new bridge above the truck eating bridge. It will continue past Union Station and connect with the Roundhouse project behind the Northampton Brewery. Some design work is still needed to finalize the plans (more details in our fundraising appeal letter). This project is included in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which determines how state transportation projects are prioritized, and has been put out to bid for MassHighway.

Leeds extension this project would extend from Look Park to the Williamsburg line, providing connectivity between Leeds School and the JFK Middle School. This project is scheduled to be started once the intersection of Route 9 and Bridge St. is rebuilt.

Norwottuck resurfacing The Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory Board (with appointed members from Belchertown, Amherst, Hadley and Northampton) has been actively discussing how to resurface the Norwottuck (which has suffered extensive root damage in recent years as well as the continued

problems of glass that was included in the original construction). Federal funds have been designated to pay for this reconstruction work.

The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways, organized in 2006, helps to support these trails by raising funds and awareness, pushing for their continued development, educating and encouraging new users of the trails, creating resources to improve them (such as our recently published map), and organizing fun, community-building activities.

As a member organization, FNTG is strengthened by its broad-based community of members who join because they, like you, are interested in seeing our trails in Northampton flourish. Please consider donating to our winter appeal for trail design and/or signage, as well as joining or renewing your membership. If you have ideas for projects, or want to volunteer, please contact us. Thanks for your support!

*Nicholas Horton
President, FNTG*

Trail abutter award

There are lots of wonderful things to see and do along the Northampton rail trail network. A number of homes and businesses that are contiguous to the trail have made improvements to beautify or add amenities to these recreation and transportation paths. To acknowledge these efforts, we have established an annual award for the best trail abutter.



Figure 1: Earthen (cob) bench at 6-8 High Street

Our first recipient of this award are the residents of 6-8 High Street in Florence.



Figure 2: Lending library and mailbox at 8 High Street



Figure 3: Telephone connection

These enterprising abutters have opened up their fence with a bike-wheel window, established a lending library, provided phone service and an air-pump and constructed an earthen bench to provide some shade and rest. The *Daily Hampshire Gazette* stated that "Weary bikers, heat-slowed walkers and anyone just looking for a shady spot to sit out the dog days should head west along the bike path and take a seat on a new earthen bench that is as beautiful as it is comfortable."

Artisan April Weeks provided the inspiration for the cob bench, which was constructed by a group of more than 20 people over a 3 month period.

Kudos to the residents of Six-Eight High Street, for making the Northampton trail network even better.

If you have nominations of abutters for us to highlight in the future, please let us know.

Julia Riseman
Vice-President, FNTG

News clippings

There has been some great press coverage in recent months of the local trail network. I particularly enjoyed the piece by David Lyon from the *Boston Globe* entitled "Bobolinks, kielbasa dogs on a Massachusetts bike trail". The article in the travel section reviewed the Norwot-tuck trail from Belchertown to Northampton, and compared it quite favorably to the gridlock and strip-malls of Route 9.

The Rails to Trails Conservancy featured the Manhan Rail Trail in Easthampton in their fall magazine. There was a great picture of their 150 foot-long mural and a plug for the Art Walk Easthampton.

The *Daily Hampshire Gazette* featured a piece on the efforts by Keri Camarigg and her "merry band of middle school students" from JFK as they explored the Northampton Bikeway on mountain bikes. Two years ago this was added as a non-traditional activity for kids at the school, thanks to a grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the JFK PTO to purchase 14 bikes and helmets. According to Camarigg, "we're out there riding in the fall until the snow flies, and we're back again as soon as the snow melts."

Nicholas Horton, President of FNTG, was interviewed by the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* in August when

the bids for the trail from the Roundhouse parking lot to the intersection of Earle and Grove Streets were unveiled. Horton stated that paving the path will make it more accessible and inviting, and will expose a number of beautiful vistas. It will also make people think differently about places they used to avoid.

An article in the Smith College *Sophian* highlighted the work of the Bike Kitchen, which is offering a low cost bike rental program as well as a free bike repair program to students.

A series of articles in October detailed new efforts by the state to expand and upgrade the statewide bike trail network. State Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles stated that "Bike trails involve modest investments of public resources but pay enormous dividends in public health and well being. A small program of investment, over time and with mostly federal dollars, can result in an extensive network of trails where citizens can walk, ride bikes, and enjoy the great outdoors."

Judith Cardell
Secretary, FNTG

Your dollars at work

In the fall of 2001, many people in the City came together to try and match a generous challenge grant donation from a local family for trail improvements in the city. This past year, we raised more than \$3,000 for trail design costs, including the design for the tunnel underneath the active rail line behind King Street near Wendy's. The City is using these funds to move this project forward (see article on page 1). These targeted contributions were matched by a generous donor. Donations of this type send a strong message to city leaders that our trails and greenways are an important priority. City dollars also leverage state and federal funds, which typically require projects to be fully designed with local funds.

The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways remains committed to helping raise money to support City of Northampton trail development efforts. We are now kicking off our 6th winter appeal.

We are now asking for your support as we raise money for two worthwhile projects: (1) finalizing the design for the "rail with trail" paralleling King Street

and (2) improving signage throughout the city.

I hope that you are able to support our efforts to improve the trail network by making a donation to our winter appeal.



Figure 1: Bike Signage in London, England

Donations of \$50 or more will also renew your membership for next year, while allowing trail design and improvements to proceed.

Susan Voss, Treasurer, FNTG

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