



TOWN OF WINCHESTER

INCORPORATED JULY 2ND 1753



1 Richmond Road • Winchester, New Hampshire 03470
Voice: (603) 239-4951 • Fax: (603) 239-4710 • TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964
selectmen@winchester.nh.gov • www.winchester-nh.gov

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Dear neighbor of the Ashuelot Rail Trail,

Many of you have heard that the Town of Winchester in conjunction with the Winchester Trail Riders, Monadnock Rail Trail Collaborative, Towns of Hinsdale & Swanzey, City of Keene, and a variety of user groups have begun restoring the Ashuelot rail trail to improve its usage for the benefit of all communities. At this time we thought it best to reach out to you to 1) be clear on intention and uses of the trail, 2) understand how and what is happening, 3) funding of the work, 4) ownership, rights-of-ways, and responsible parties, 5) to answer any questions you may have and 6) to recruit anyone who would like to help. We will post updates on the town website and facebook page and will plan an in-person meeting in the future based on your feedback.

- 1) A rail trail is an economic engine for towns, most notably if it runs through its downtown and connects with other interests (businesses & natural features). Winchester offers its downtown, the beautiful Ashuelot River and Pisgah State Park. There is significant data that proves rail trails & recreation brings in billions of dollars each year in this country and millions into the state. Trails expand opportunities for outdoor experiences, raises property values and promotes a healthy lifestyle.
- 2) The town Master Plan, Charette, and planning and economic plans all reference the advantages the town has with rail trail. The SWRPC produced a study in 2020 following a yearlong initiative with towns in Cheshire County that connect to the Ashuelot Rail Trail. This report identified the users (bicycle, hiking, equestrian, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and snowmobiling), conditions of the trail, funding opportunities, health, economic and transportation benefits, and plans for the future. In expanding upon the past 30 years of work the Winchester Trail Riders have done on the trails, the following restoration will be done: ditching to improve drainage, brush hogging including the 10ft canopy, culvert repair, creating parking areas and trail heads, surface improvements of crushed stone, and signage for safety, wayfinding, & for respecting private property. Work will only be performed within the rights-of way.
- 3) The funding for this restoration comes in many forms. It comes from local clubs, users, private donations, businesses, the state, municipalities, and grants. Volunteer work is also vital for accomplishing the work. The town has established a Capital Reserve Fund and grants have been applied for to assist in this multiyear project.
- 4) The state of NH acquired the property from B&M Railroad in 1994. There was a stipulation decreed at the time of transfer that the trails are for non-motorized uses except snowmobiles. ATV's and motorbikes are prohibited on the rail trail. The right of way width of the rail bed is 82.6 ft, and in some areas wider. We have maps of the rail bed if anyone would like to view them. The actual travel width is 14ft with a 10ft canopy. All this means that no personal property or obstructions can be within the rail bed right-of- way. Examples could be fencing, boulders, sheds or junk vehicles. Please verify your abutting property has not encroached upon the railbed right-of-way. The State of NH Trail Bureau & DOT, the town and the Winchester Trail Riders have the right to maintain the rail trail and address any encroachment issues.

Please contact Margaret Sharra at 239-4951 x6 if you have any questions or would like to help. Thank you for your support in making Winchester better every day!

Non-Motorized Vehicle Access

The Cheshire, Ashuelot and Fort Hill Rail Corridors were all purchased using Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds. TE funds are subject to 23 U.S.C. 217.

- Title 23, Highways § 217, Bicycle, transportation and pedestrian walkways.
 - (h) Use of motorized vehicles. -- Motorized vehicles may not be permitted on trails and pedestrian walkways under this section, except for:
 - (1) maintenance purposes;
 - (2) when snow conditions and State or local regulations permit, snowmobiles;
 - (3) motorized wheelchairs;
 - (4) when State or local regulations permit, electric bicycles; and
 - (5) such other circumstances as the Secretary deems appropriate



Above information received from

Christopher Gamache

NH Bureau of Trails

Note: Transportation Enhancement Program issued by USDOT Federal Highway Administration, State managed by NHDOT, SWRPC.

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_enhancement/

Title 23 U.S.C. 217 Bicycle and Pedestrian Legislation

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/legislation/sec217.cfm

Rail Trail Benefits*

- Creating Value and Generating Economic Activity
 - Increase Real Estate Value
 - Increase Tourism
- Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation
 - Increase bicycle and walking commute
- Improving Health through Active Living
 - Increase Active Living
 - Improve Health
 - Lower Medical Costs
 - Reduce Deaths



* <http://www.greenways.com/benefits-of-greenways>

What Does Reconstruct The Trail Mean?

Upgrade and Improve the trails to a standard that is suitable for walkers, bikers, hikers, runners, and equestrian of all ages.

- Note: Most of the rail trail today is suitable for snowmobiles.
- Working Drainage Ditches
- Working Culverts
- 10-14' Wide Trail Surface *
- Crushed Stone Trail Surface
- Crowned Trail Surface
- Mowed including min. 10' Canopy *
- Gates at Road Crossings
 - Prevent Motorized Access
 - Prevent Dumping



* AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities