

What is the Metacomet Greenway?

A proposed multi-use trail approximately 17 miles long that will connect the towns of Walpole, Norfolk, Wrentham, Plainville and North Attleboro. The Trail will accommodate a variety of uses such as bicycling, walking, jogging, and cross-country skiing.

Welcome to the Metacomet Greenway

Dear neighbors,

We wanted to introduce ourselves... Metacomet Greenway is a group of resident volunteers who have organized over the last several months to identify the trail path of an old railroad line that may eventually run adjacent to your property. As such we wanted to make you aware of our efforts with the hope that you too would join us and support our efforts. At the same time, we wanted to share some information we hope will ease some of the concerns you may have. We understand the potential to have a community trail in your "backyard" is not on every homeowners' wishlist. While some of our members happen to be trail neighbors who support the idea of the greenway, we can appreciate the concern of many other trail neighbors within the community. Within this flier, we hope to provide you with some first hand information about our ideas, even though they are still in the beginning stages of planning, and we hope we can answer some of your initial questions. We invite you to be as involved as you wish and we will make sure some of your ideas are a focal point in the design and construction of the Metacomet Greenway.

Please search for us on Facebook to see updates on upcoming meetings. We encourage you to join us and share any concerns, in a respectful manner. If you are not on social media and would like updates on meetings, we ask that you e-mail us and we will do our best to provide updates. From the very formation of this group of community members from Walpole, Norfolk, Wrentham, Plainville and North Attleboro we have always had a goal of being transparent with those who will be directly impacted by the greenway. We hope you will work with us to provide the community with a multi-use recreational trail we all can enjoy and be proud of!

Greenway Benefits

Recreational trails are known to provide multiple benefits, including significant safety benefits, to the towns along the corridor. The Greenway provides safe routes to schools, recreational parks, shopping, increased tourism, economic benefits, historical preservation, and a boost to health and well-being.

Mitigating Trail Neighbor Impacts

While it is widely expected that a greenway will provide an array of benefits to residents and businesses of the region, it will undoubtedly mean that some residents will see an increase in people traveling through their neighborhoods or, in some areas, near their properties. However, reducing the impacts of those travelers can be achieved through direct resident input and careful design.:

- Careful placement of amenities such as parking, trailheads, benches and picnic areas can attract users to specific sites, while the absence of such amenities encourages them to travel straight through to sections that host such amenities.
- Fencing, shrubbery and other mechanisms can be installed to provide some measure of privacy and security. As a precaution, fences are frequently erected along trail corridors to protect abutting landowner from the impacts of a newly developed path or trail. It is interesting to note, however, that abutters often create access points from their property to the trail, often with a lockable gate, or in some instances remove the fence altogether.
- It will be of utmost importance to post signs about rules and trail etiquette along the bike/ped route, where respect for abutting private property should be clearly stated.
- Engineers, town officials and local residents can work together to identify sites where installing lighting (and possibly surveillance cameras) may be desirable, as they may alleviate abutter concerns and proactively reduce impacts before they occur.

Who is involved?

The Friends are a group of citizen volunteers that have organized as of June 2020 to spread community awareness and gain support, and also to assist the municipalities in their efforts to bring the vision of the trail to use.

Common Concerns

Creating a bike/pedestrian path within or near existing residential development is cause for concern among some property owners, this can be amplified when the proposed trail will travel in close proximity to the homes of trail neighbors. Typical concerns raised by homeowners include the potential increased crime, noise and litter, a decrease in property value and a decrease in privacy. While these concerns are valid and must be addressed to minimize homeowner impacts, studies conducted on similar paths across the country indicate that these fears are unsupported by experience:

Rail-Trails and Safe Communities: The Experience on 372 Trails. National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, January 1998.iii Tammy Tracy & Hugh Morris.

“Stories of trails attracting drug dealers, murderers and rapists are perpetuated by trail opponents with only a handful of newspaper headlines to back up their assertions rather than empirical research.”

- “The research that has been conducted, along with anecdotal evidence, suggests that converting an abandoned rail corridor to a trail actually tends to reduce crime by cleaning up the landscape and attracting people who use the trail for recreation and transportation.”
- “The study found that incidents of vandalism and burglary did not increase as a result of the trail.
- “The rate of vandalism and break-ins to adjacent property was well below the neighborhood average. Police said that they did not anticipate crime being a problem as long as motor vehicle use on the trail was prohibited, citing that the separation of a criminal from his/her escape vehicle as being a primary deterrent.”
- “Bedford Police began riding bikes along the Bedford to Lexington portion of the Minuteman Trail (as a part of public relations campaign. Approximately a year and a half later, they initiated a unique youth patrol, the Bedford Police Explorers to assist them. After completing first aid and CPR certification, the Explorers began conducting daily patrols of the trail wearing police t-shirts and carrying radios and first aid kits.”

Home Sales Near Two Massachusetts Trails, Jan. 25, 2006.iv Craig Della Penna.

- “Municipalities through out the United States have found economic benefits in Bike Trails within close proximity to residential areas.”
- “Homes sales were examined in the seven Massachusetts towns through which the Minuteman Bikeway and Nashua River Rail Trail run. Statistics on list and selling prices and on days on the market were analyzed. The analysis shows that homes near these rail trails sold at 99.3% of the list price as compared to 98.1% of the list price for other homes sold in these towns. The most significant feature of home sales near rail trails is that these homes sold in an average of 29.3 days as compared to 50.4 days for other homes.”

Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2004.v

- “A 1998 study of property values along the Mountain Bay Trail in Brown County, Wisconsin shows that lots adjacent to the rail sold faster and for an average of 9 percent more than similar property not located next to the trail.”
- “Realizing the selling power of greenways, developers of the Shepherd’s Vineyard housing development in Apex, North Carolina added \$5,000 to the price of 40 homes adjacent to the regional greenway, Those homes were still the first to sell.”

Bike Path Phobia: Selling Skeptics on Urban Greenway Bike Paths, Parks & Recreation 2000.ii Tod Schneider

- “A number of studies have now shown that urban greenway trails do not increase crime and, in fact, are commonly regarded as improvements by adjacent property owners. Comparisons of mugging, assault, rape, and murder make it quite clear that rail-trail crime rates are almost non-existent on a per capita comparison to other areas.”