

## **Status Report to Town of Lynnfield Board of Selectmen From Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee**

### **Executive Summary**

After many years of effort by the Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield, and MassDOT, a preliminary design has been prepared for a linear park/recreational path to connect the two towns. The proposed park/path extends along an unused rail-line from the Galvin Middle School in Wakefield to the Lynnfield/Peabody town line. The path would comprise a 12-foot-wide paved path, except for a raised boardwalk through Reedy Meadow.

A number of concerns have been raised by local residents, including public safety, costs to the town, environmental effects, and effect on property values. After extensive review, the committee has found safety for transportation would be enhanced and that recreational paths have low rates of crime. The evaluation of environmental effects by MassDOT and the design consultant team are considered relatively low (due to the existing trail bed) and that the project can be permitted. For example, this path will traverse Reedy Meadow and will be designed and built with stringent environmental standards. Several studies in other areas suggest that property values are not adversely affected once a trail is put into use; proximity to a recreational trail is often used as a positive attribute in real-estate advertising.

The project has reached the 25% design stage. A public hearing will be held by DOT to receive public input within the next few months. Input from the hearing will be included within the final 25% design report. Before the project can be constructed, further engineering design and permitting would be necessary. Because of this additional work, Lynnfield will need to address future costs associated with the project before additional progress can be made.

Despite prior action that allows the Selectmen to enter into a long-term lease to use the rail right of way, Lynnfield would need to formally authorize expenditures for the final design work that will cost approximately \$300,000. The cost of construction for the Lynnfield portion of the path is approximately \$5,500,000<sup>1</sup> and will be paid for by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Lynnfield residents will need to balance the value of a linear park/recreational path through their community against the initial costs of completing design and ongoing maintenance costs. This Status Report was authored by the Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee and provides essential background information on the proposed project to inform citizens about the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The estimated cost for construction of the entire two-town project is currently estimated to be \$9.2 Million with funding anticipated to be 80% from federal sources and 20% from state sources. See also page 6 of this report.

## Purpose of this Report

This report was prepared by the Town of Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee to summarize our work to date. The Committee comprises nine volunteers appointed by the Board of Selectmen and has a scope of work (Appendix A) adopted by the Board in March 2017.

Our Mission Statement reads as follows:

*“The mission of the Recreational Path Committee is to identify linear corridors that offer opportunities for conversion into trails, assess potential for development and study the feasibility and design of such a trail conversion. The Committee is to help identify and address the many questions and concerns that the residents of Lynnfield may have regarding any potential project.”*

Our report provides a brief history of recreational path planning and design in the Town of Lynnfield and, consistent with the Committee’s charge, summarizes research and findings on topics common to recreational path projects<sup>2</sup>. These topics include cost, funding, public safety, property values, and the environment.

Our research indicates that the only recreational path opportunity in the Town of Lynnfield to be currently feasible is the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail. This path occupies a 4.4-mile corridor that begins at the Galvin Middle School on Main Street in Wakefield and extends to the Lynnfield/Peabody Town line<sup>3</sup> (Figure 1). Approximately 1.9 miles of the trail is located in Wakefield and 2.5 miles in Lynnfield. Because this trail opportunity has advanced from conceptual planning to project feasibility to 25% design, it is the primary focus of current Town discussions. As such, the topics addressed in our report will include the Committee’s fact-finding relevant to this project.

While the Committee recognizes more work needs to be done before the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail can be constructed, including additional design work, permitting, and final approvals by the Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield, the report identifies potential next steps as a basis for further discussion and progress on this project. Should other recreational path opportunities in Lynnfield be deemed feasible through future planning and engineering studies, the Committee will explore them as directed by the Board of Selectmen.

The Recreational Path Committee has scheduled a public information and design workshop

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<sup>2</sup> The information contained in this report was gathered from publicly available sources, several of which are posted on the Town of Lynnfield website.

<sup>3</sup> More detail regarding past studies is provided in a subsequent section; key studies are posted on the Town website.

on March 27, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Lynnfield Middle School to present this information and solicit feedback from the community. In addition, in the next few months the Recreational Path Committee will consult with the various town committees including:

- Conservation Commission,
- Finance Committee,
- Planning Board,
- Master Plan Committee, and
- Recreation Commission.

As of the date of this report, the Recreational Path Committee has initiated conversations with the Conservation Commission staff and the Planning Board.

## Background and History

This section presents some background on Lynnfield residents' interest in promoting bikeways and pedestrian trails. Several of the source documents that are cited are available on the Town of Lynnfield website.

Improved bicycle and pedestrian transportation corridors have been the focus of community concern and studies for many years. The 1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan (Open Space Plan) included the results of a survey of town residents completed in 1997 in which more than one third of the households in town responded. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents stated that they supported the acquisition and preservation of land for overall conservation purposes. Trails for biking and hiking were among the amenities identified as the most desired recreation facilities.

The Vision for Lynnfield articulated in the 2002 Lynnfield Master Plan includes this statement: "A network of paths will traverse the town and connect many of its important locations to support pedestrians and bicyclists. This will help to alleviate some of the traffic and parking congestion currently experienced by town residents." The Master Plan is undergoing revision; no information, including discussion of paths or trails has yet been made available.

## Recreational Path Alternatives Evaluated to Date

Bikeway alternatives evaluated in Lynnfield included expanded use of existing streets. Available information indicates that the evaluation concluded that the Town's streets were not suitable for recreational paths in part because most could not be widened. Since streets are not suitable recreational paths, they are not the focus of current resident interest or the scope of our Committee. Other recreational path alternatives were not deemed feasible in studies done to date. This section summarizes key studies and explains why the Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail to Trail Project is more advanced than other alternatives evaluated.

A recreational path in the Trog Hawley area was discussed by a prior recreational path committee several years ago but this path would have required new construction in Beaver Dam Brook Reservation. The Reservation consists of over 56 acres of conservation land and 137 acres of land owned by the Lynnfield Center Water District. The land, which contains Beaver Dam Brook, forms much of the watershed and recharge areas for the Lynnfield Center Water District well fields. The protection of these wetlands is considered essential. This area is also a Groundwater Protection Overlay District.

Lynnfield was part of the 2005 North Suburban Regional Bicycle Transportation Plan (NSRBTP) encompassing the towns of Lynnfield, North Reading, Reading, Wakefield, and Wilmington<sup>4</sup>. Nineteen routes were identified and evaluated; four of the routes included segments in Lynnfield. The only alternative recommended for Lynnfield was the Wakefield-Lynnfield corridor (identified as Bike Route 8, Wakefield Center to Peabody City Line via Railroad Right-Of-Way). The recommendation was based on a number of factors, including the corridor being a rail trail and not a shared roadway; MBTA ownership of the corridor and willingness to enter into a 99-lease agreement with the Town of Lynnfield for a nominal fee; and the corridor's potential to contribute to the regional bikeway system. A summary of the 2005 report, as well as the full report, are available on the Lynnfield Town webpage for the Recreational Path Committee.

### Wakefield/Lynnfield Corridor Alternative

The NSRBTP's favorable recommendation of the Wakefield-Lynnfield alternative meant that the corridor could proceed to the feasibility study/conceptual design phase with funding from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) under the Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP). In 2007, The Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail Feasibility Study was completed by Fay, Spofford & Thorndike<sup>5</sup>. The major issue identified and discussed as part of the Study is "the challenge created by utilizing the existing rail bed to cross Reedy Meadow." However, addressing this challenge was identified as "the most rewarding, as this will provide the trail user with tremendous views as well as access to a vibrant marsh system."

After successful efforts by local members of the state congressional delegation to secure Transportation Bond Bill funding in 2008, the project was subsequently placed on the DOT/STIP funding list. In addition, the legislature allocated funding for the initial (25%) design process. Support for Rails to Trails Projects continues in the current administration:

*"Our administration has prioritized the statewide trails system, which connects communities and improves quality of life throughout the state, and I am grateful to our partners for working to ensure these trails are available for generations to come."*  
Governor Baker September 9, 2017<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This report is posted on the Town of Lynnfield website.

<sup>5</sup> This report is posted on the Town of Lynnfield website.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/news/baker-polito-administration-awards-18-million-to-support-49-community-recreational-trail>

## Status of the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail Project

The current project began the design process in 2010 with a contract between the Town of Wakefield and the engineering design team led by WorldTech Engineers. Wakefield has managed the contract and funding on behalf of itself and the Town of Lynnfield. This phase of the design process follows a proscribed progression according to DOT procedures. The project, known as MassDOT project 607329, is currently nearing the end of the initial engineering design process, called the 25% design phase.

### Project Design and Permitting

The proposed project continues to undergo initial design under the direction of MassDOT. The work, which is nearly completed, is being performed by a team led by the engineering consultant WorldTech. A draft 25% design was released for DOT review in March 2017. The 25% design package included preliminary engineering design of the trail, an environmental notification and certain design details such as road crossings.

DOT has provided the design team with comments; the design team has provided responses and a meeting to resolve any outstanding issues was held January 23, 2018. DOT will hold a public hearing on the 25% design in spring 2018; the purpose of the hearing is to receive input intended to improve on the design at this early engineering stage.

The next phase is called the 75% engineering design and involves refining the 25% engineering design and obtaining various permits. Upon completion and DOT approval of the 75% design, the project would undergo final engineering to incorporate permit conditions. Among details to be incorporated into the 75% engineering are design details of screening along private property and the terminus within Lynnfield. A range of screening options can be considered. The terminus is now the point where the existing railroad Right-of-Way (ROW) crosses the Peabody town line, but there is no direct access to a public road at that point. A more logical terminus for this phase of the project may be either at Pillings Pond Road or at Lynnfield High School. Both screening and the terminus are important topics for the information and design workshop planned by the Committee.

The final engineering design and permit conditions would then be incorporated into a bid package that would be the basis for construction. As discussed below, the Town would be responsible for additional design and permitting costs but DOT would provide funding for construction of the final design.

## Right of Way Agreement

The Project would be built on an easement that follows property currently owned by MBTA. An easement or other legal agreement, such as a 99-year lease, would need to be executed by the MBTA and the Town for the portion of the project in Lynnfield. The RPC has obtained “typical” ROW documents from MBTA and has provided a brief overview in the sections below. Other legal issues, such as liability for conditions within the ROW and extension of the 99-year lease, for example, are beyond the purview of the Committee and should be evaluated by the Town Counsel.

## Remaining Project Costs and Potential Funding Strategies

As of February 5, 2018, the cost of construction of the entire two-town project is estimated at \$9.2 million<sup>7</sup>; the estimated cost of construction would become further refined as design and permitting progresses. DOT will be responsible for all construction costs, including increases in the original estimates caused by inflation or approved design changes. This project is planned to be funded through the 2021 Transportation Improvement Program for the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield are each responsible for addressing their share of the cost to complete the trail design and permitting (during the 75% design process); according to Wakefield officials, the total cost for the two towns is estimated to be approximately \$500,000. Lynnfield will also need to address the costs of acquiring temporary (construction-related) easements along the Lynnfield segment. Once the project is completed, both towns will need to maintain the rail trail.

If the Town wishes to advance the project, the next step is to identify and secure funding to complete the design. Potential sources for funding and any requirements for matching funds from the Towns are listed at the end of this section. However, there will still be a funding gap for the engineering costs even if all identified funds are available. The Towns can work with the local legislative delegation to determine if Transportation Bond Bill funding can help close the gap, but it is reasonable to anticipate that Lynnfield and Wakefield will need to support the project with some local funding.

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<sup>7</sup> WorldTech Engineering, Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail draft 25% Design and (https://hwy.massdot.state.ma.us/ProjectInfo/Main.asp?ACTION=ViewProject&PROJECT\_NO=607329)

**Cost Issues for Subsequent Phases of the Proposed Project**

<b>Project Phase</b>	<b>What is involved</b>	<b>Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>Funding</b>
75% Design and permitting	Work is performed by an engineering consultant to DOT standards; the Towns would need to agree on a process for overseeing and managing the consultant. Involves federal, state, and local agencies and occurs during the 75% design process based on the issues identified in the 25% design.	\$0.5M	To be determined
Final Design	Includes the development of plans and specifications for the construction bidding package.	Included in the 75% design cost	Same as 75% design
Construction	MADOT is responsible for putting the contract out to bid, selecting the construction firm, and managing the construction contract.	\$9.2M <sup>8</sup>	Federal. Current plan is 2021 TIP.
Construction Easements	During construction, use of adjacent property may be necessary to provide for work-space along the margin of the existing rail road property, typically to allow for construction of screening or other temporary activities. Definition of workspace needed outside the existing MBTA property would occur during the 75% design process. The Town is responsible to assess the value of property and acquire temporary easements as needed.	Estimated to be \$15,000 to \$40,000 based on similar projects	Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield are responsible for their respective portions.
Insurance (during Operation)	The Town may obtain liability insurance for liability for circumstances for which it is not protected under state law.	To be determined	Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield are responsible for their respective portions.
Operation and Maintenance	A Management Plan to address ongoing needs such as public safety, trash control, and clearing of fall and spring debris is expected to be developed if the project advances.	Anticipated to be minimal, based on the experience of other communities and input of the Town of Lynnfield DPW	Towns of Lynnfield and Wakefield are responsible for their respective portions.

<sup>8</sup> The current cost estimate may be adjusted depending of the Final Design. DOT will provide funding of the final estimated construction cost plus a 10% contingency.

### Potential Funding Sources for Elements of a Rail Trail

Program	Use	Opportunity Timing	Amount
MA Recreational Trails Program	Design/construction Trail stewardship Youth Corps/Volunteer training	Annual	\$50,000 10% match typical <sup>9</sup>
Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund	implementing projects to build and improve multi-use trails	Annual	\$40,000 No match
People for Bikes, Community Grants	bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives	Annual	\$10,000 No match
Donations by Local Business	Maintenance	Ongoing	To be Determined
Local Volunteers	Maintenance	Ongoing	To be Determined

## Environmental Considerations

As part of Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail Feasibility Study issued by Fay, Spofford & Thorndike in September, 2007, LEC Environmental Consultants (LEC) of Wakefield conducted a field investigation to confirm information from existing source materials and expand the natural resource database associated with the rail trail corridor. A discussion of the environmental resources associated with the rail corridor and regulatory information pertaining to these resources was presented in their report. The report stated:

“Development of this corridor into a rail trail will require measures to avoid and minimize impacts to adjacent environmental resources. Site-specific designs aimed at the protection of these resources will be needed to enable a rail trail to coexist within this diverse resource base. This corridor provides an excellent opportunity to educate its users about the importance of natural resources conservation.”

As documented in the previous section, the project corridor parallels and traverses several environmentally sensitive areas. Accordingly, the project will require environmental analysis and review permit applications to be filed in accordance with local, state and federal statutes and regulations.

The Feasibility Study lists the anticipated environmental review for the project:

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<sup>9</sup> Any funding or labor provided by the town during the term of the grant qualifies as match.



- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)
- Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (MGL. c. 131 s 40), its implementing Regulations (310 CMR 10.00), and Lynnfield Wetlands Protection By-Laws
- Federal Clean Water Act (33 U. S. C., part 1344) and Regulations (33 CFR and 40 CFR)
- Massachusetts Clean Water Act (MGL, c. 21, §.26-53) and Regulations (314 CMR 4.0)
- Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MGL. c. 131A., MESA) and its implementing Regulations (321 CMR 10.00) 2

The likely permits include:

- Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- Authorization under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (if needed)
- Filing pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act
- Permit or Variance from the Lynnfield Conservation Commission pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Lynnfield Conservation Commission Bylaw, and the Lynnfield Environmental Bylaw
- NPDES General Permit for Discharges from Construction Activities

DOT believes that the project may be permitted with protection measures such as the boardwalk through Reedy Meadow as well as standard construction phase environmental protection conditions.

As is typical for transportation projects, the permitting process would occur concurrently with the 75% design and final design process. Permits must be obtained prior to commencement of construction.

## Safety Considerations (Physical Safety, Crime and Fire Damage)

There are two areas of consideration under the topic of safety. One deals with the benefits that are associated with alternative means of transportation that come with the introduction of a recreational path that is not on the street or adjacent to roadways (sidewalks). The other is the impact that the introduction of a recreational path has on public safety in terms of crime.

### Physical Safety

Publicly available information shows that alternative routes of transportation have been a serious concern in Lynnfield for many years. A desire for a safe recreational environment is a top issue for families and others in our community. As discussed below, distracted drivers, bike-car collisions are on the rise. Unfortunately, parts of Lynnfield's roads and sidewalks are in disrepair and continue to be a safety hazard for bicycling, walkers, runners, and infant strollers. Below is a summary of national and local information relating to physical safety.

1. "One in four deaths in motor vehicle crashes involve people walking or bicycling, according to the MassDOT. As our work and lives and even leisure move ever faster and the pressure escalates to respond immediately to e-mails or Face book post, lawmakers around the country are trying to rein in the mobile madness."

(Source: "Step by Oblivious Step" Boston Globe, 11/13/2017)

2. "Some of the largest auto insurers in MA are raising their rates on average between 3 and 6 percent this year, arguing that drivers distracted by their smartphones are getting into accidents more often. The rate increases this year follow steep rises in 2016 of between 6 and 9 percent. But after an accident, the state's drivers see among the largest average increases in the country, according to surveys done by consumer website."

(Source: <https://www.insurancequotes.com>)

3. Deaths from motor vehicle crashes in Massachusetts during the first half of this year were about 21% higher than two years ago and about 46% higher than 2013. "People are using their devices and not paying attention to the roads" [Massachusetts Highway Safety Director]. 180 people statewide were killed in vehicle crashes during the first six months of 2017 according to the National Safety Council. MA has run public awareness campaigns to urge people not to travel on roads while distracted but it's an uphill battle.

(Source: "Mass Rate of Traffic Deaths Remains High Boston" Boston Globe, 8/16/2017)

4. "Two studies from the University of California, San Francisco including one published in JAMA (Journal of American Medical Association) in 2015 analyzed more than 15 years of national data from 100 emergency rooms and found that bike-related traumatic injuries increased by 28% over the period. Mount Sinai St Luke's Trauma Center has seen severe injuries that included shattered bones, facial trauma and damaged organs. In three years from 2014-2016, bike-related traumas treated at St Luke's increased by 34.5%" Dr. Charles Cook, Chief of Trauma and Emergency Surgery at Beth Israel Deaconess was reported to be taken aback that the number of bike-related traumatic injuries as a proportion of overall traumatic injuries quadrupled from 1%-4% in 2015.

(Source: "Trauma Doctors Raise Concerns about Biking" Wall Street Journal, 10/12/2017)

5. Concerning the safety impact from potholes and uneven asphalt, Dean Champion from Somerville sent a letter to the Boston Globe regarding his experience. On his way home from the doctor caring for his elbow which was healing from a bike accident on the roads, he hit a pothole on Boylston Street near the Public Garden and Four Seasons Hotel causing a jolt to his handlebars that broke his thumb. (Source: "For cyclist, it's one broken bone after another" Boston Globe 9/8/2017).

## Crime and Fire Damage

1. "... turning a corridor into a trail will not increase the level of crime in the area. If anything, placing a trail on or alongside a rail corridor generally decreases the likelihood of crime because it draws the public to the area for recreation. There are more people out on a

trail than along an unmanaged, unmaintained, unused corridor with overgrowth. In a nutshell: unused corridors attract criminals, rail-trails do not.”

(Source: From an email to the Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee from the Northeast Regional Office of the Rail Trail Conservancy <https://www.railstotrails.org/about/about-us/>, 4/13/2017)

2. The Rail-trails and Safe Communities Study concluded that residents adjacent to existing rail-trails experienced much less crime than was anticipated by residents near proposed rail-trail projects. Most adjacent property owners reported that rates of vandalism, burglary and trespassing had remained the same or decreased since the opening of the trail. Past studies, survey results, letters from law enforcement officials, and comparisons to national crime figures summarized in the *Rail-Trails and Safe communities The Experience on 372 Trails* report indicate that rail-trails are safe compared to other public spaces. Simple common sense preventative measures are recommended to ensure the lowest possible levels of crime to assure rail-trails remain much safer than many other environments. The findings of this report demonstrate that converting a former rail corridor into a trail will have a positive rather than negative effect on their community.

(Source: [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/docs/rt\\_safecomm.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/docs/rt_safecomm.pdf))

3. FBI Crime Statistics. The most recently available data on crime rates is over 20 years old. Nevertheless, the findings from that period are striking. These data support the more recent arguments (see item #2 above) that rail trails provide safe places for people to use. Unfortunately, crime can happen anywhere. The data suggest that crimes happen much less frequently on rail trails.

**Table 1** Comparisons of Incidence Rate of Major Crimes on Rail-trails to U.S. Crime Rates.

CRIME	1995 National <sup>1</sup>		Rail-Trails <sup>2</sup>		1995 National <sup>1</sup>		Rail-Trails <sup>2</sup>		1995 National <sup>1</sup>		Rail-Trails <sup>2</sup>	
Mugging	335	0.53 (1995)	0.30 (1996)	102	0.00 (1995)	0.01 (1996)	19	0.00 (1995)	0.01 (1996)			
Assault	531	0.58 (1995)	0.34 (1996)	293	0.02 (1995)	0.01 (1996)	203	0.01 (1995)	0.01 (1996)			
Forcible Rape	43	0.04 (1995)	0.00 (1996)	29	0.00 (1995)	0.01 (1996)	26	0.01 (1995)	0.01 (1996)			
Murder	11	0.04 (1995)	0.01 (1996)	4	0.01 (1995)	0.01 (1996)	5	0.01 (1995)	0.01 (1996)			

1. Note: Rates per 100,000 population; FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 1995. 2. Note: rates per 100,000 users; RTC survey results.

4. Lynnfield Fire Chief, Mark Tetreault confirmed the fire department is working with WorldTech (the engineering firm designing the trail) to ensure that the portion of the rail trail that runs through Reedy Meadow will be accessible by fire-fighting equipment. The existing equipment is too heavy and wide to cross Reedy Meadow. The Fire Chief recommended a less expensive solution with a couple of ATVs. The material for bridging across Reedy Meadow—the boardwalk—should be fire resistant.

(Source: Interview with Lynnfield Fire Chief Mark Tetreault, November 27, 2017)

## Summary of Safety Considerations

Bicycle safety is an issue in this region. With nearly 27,000+ miles of open and project rail-trails, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has evaluated trail users’ safety and trail neighbors’ concerns about crime because they are critical to the creation of a successful trail. Their

work has shown that crime on rail-trails is not a common occurrence. Data from the FBI (though dated) supports these claims. With respect to the proposed Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail, it would provide a safe transportation corridor and recreational environment away from traffic and distracted drivers, safe access to schools and a healthier community with dedicated space for fitness and outdoor recreation.

## Effect on Property Values

What is the effect of a rail trail on local residential property values? This question is of great concern to homeowners and is probably of greater concern the closer one lives to any proposed trail. In this section we review the available evidence to attempt to answer this question.

1. There are numerous studies indicating that rail trails enhance the quality of life in the communities through which they run. Specifically, homes close(er) to rail trails have become increasingly desirable as evidenced by shorter periods on the market during sale and in some evaluations, higher selling prices than homes further away. A number of these studies can be examined at:

[http://brucefreemanrailtrail.org/trail\\_plans/rail\\_trail\\_studies.html](http://brucefreemanrailtrail.org/trail_plans/rail_trail_studies.html).

2. As to the value of creating a “sense of place” in communities, REALTORS® are finding that homebuyers and owners are looking to live in places where there is a variety of public spaces; and they seem to be willing to pay more for homes near those places. According to Houselogic, a desirable public park or other recreational open space boosts the property value of nearby homes by 8%-20%. One study looked at 16,400 home sales within 1,500 feet of 193 public parks in Portland, Ore., and found these boosts to home values:

- Natural areas: \$10,648
- Golf courses: \$8,849
- Specialty parks: \$5,657
- Urban parks: \$1,214

In addition, a study of residents who live near a bike trail found:

- 29% believed that the existence of the trail would increase the selling price of their home
- 57% of the residents felt that the trail would make the home easier to sell
- 57% of these residents had lived in their homes prior to construction of the trail
- 29% of those surveyed were positively influenced by the trail in their decision to buy the home

Of the real estate agents interviewed in the same study:

- 73% believed that a home adjacent to a trail would be easier to sell
- 55% agreed that the home would sell for more than a comparable home from a different neighborhood
- 82% of real estate agents used the trail as a selling point
- 100% believed trails are an amenity to the community around it

(Source: <http://spacestoplaces.blogs.realtor.org/2015/10/14/placemaking-the-role-of-and-value-to-realtors/>)

3. There is evidence that rail trails do not have a negative impact on property values. For example, homes near the Minuteman Bikeway and Nashua River Rail Trail sold at 99.3% of the list price and sold in 29.3 days as compared to 50.4 days for other area homes. In addition, references to bike trails are used as selling points for residential property. Some regional examples are provided below.

**Boston Sunday Globe** Real Estate (“Address” section featuring pros and cons to differentiate property attributes) highlights:

- a. May 7, 2017 highlighted “Pro” a photo of a rider at Bedford Depot Park, the end of the line for the Minuteman Bikeway that goes all the way to Cambridge. The two homes featured were priced at \$1.325M and \$1.424M.
- b. June 25, 2017 highlighted the town of Lexington and one of the “Pros” is the Minuteman Bikeway. The two homes featured were priced at \$849K and \$1.349M.
- c. July 30, 2017 “Home of the Week” town home complex overlooks the Merrimack River and priced at \$1,395M. “Pro” Photo includes the rail trail which runs by the complex.

**Boston Globe “Magazine” May 7, 2017** “Upfront” section highlighted “A Bike Path Runs Through It”. One home in Marlborough Pro: The Assabet River Trail, a 5.6 mile bike path that winds through Hudson and into Maynard. The second property in Somerville highlighted Pro: “just two blocks from Davis Square Somerville community path which links up with the 9.7 mile Minuteman Bikeway at Alewife.”

Approximately 2,009 MLS real estate listings have added to the “Area Amenities” check box list a new category indicating the presence of either a bike path or a walk/jog trail due to the effect on local residential real estate values. (Source: Craig Della Penna, Associate Broker at the Murphys Realtors in Northampton, MA)

4. Peter McLaughlin Hennepin County, Minneapolis Commissioner notes: “The amount of real estate investment that’s sprung up around the trail in the last decade has been unbelievable and property values along the corridor have gone up 90% or more.”

(Source: Rail Trail Conservancy rail trail of the Month: October, 2015

<https://www.railstotrails.org/trailblog/2015/october/16/minnesota-s-midtown-greenway>

### Summary of Property Values Section

The material provided in this section suggests that the presence of a bike path/rail trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect. Studies listed in the bibliography have shown that neighbors of many bike paths/rail trails believe that the quality of life of their neighborhood has been improved, that the trails were a good use of open space, and in the case of abandoned railways were an improvement from before the trails went in. This research indicates that there is a significant portion of the population that sees bike paths as an “amenity” and will seek out residences near trails, parks, and other natural resource areas. (safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\_bike/docs/rt\_safecomm.pdf)

Some studies express that those recently moving into areas near bike paths are generally more favorable to them than those who have lived in neighborhoods before the construction of a trail. In some areas a large majority of neighbors are very happy with the trails, even some who were originally opposed to their construction. Whether or not a bike path is generally beneficial for a locale depends on a number of factors. There are numerous examples in the literature that indicate overall success depending on attention to design and maintenance and addressing issues and problems with property (Source: [http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trail\\_Study\\_51-property-value-bike-paths-residential-areas.pdf](http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trail_Study_51-property-value-bike-paths-residential-areas.pdf))

## Summary of Findings and Potential Next Steps

The Recreational Path Committee finds that successful operation of recreational paths hinges on good design, sound maintenance practices<sup>10</sup>, and the resolution of property concerns. Recreational paths with these characteristics are considered to be community assets, without negative impacts to community safety, natural resources, and the value of property in their proximity.

- For Many years Lynnfield residents have indicated their support for increasing recreational path opportunities in our Town.
- After many years of time and effort, the Town is now focused on the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail project, because it is the project that has been shown to be most feasible.
- Research indicates that there are no compelling reasons to believe that property values in the immediately surrounding areas of a new recreational path will be adversely affected on a long-term basis.
- In addition to offering active outdoor recreation benefits, the project can serve as a safe transportation corridor between local schools and other recreation areas.
- Research in other areas shows that crime and public safety are not adversely affected by the construction of a recreational path.
- Environmental mitigation will be addressed through permitting and incorporation of conditions in the final project design.
- Engineering studies have shown that the project can be constructed, and it is ready to advance to permitting and final design when additional design funding can be secured.

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<sup>10</sup> Maintenance of the rail trail within Lynnfield would be the responsibility of the Town.

- The Commonwealth will pay for construction costs of whatever project design is approved as the final design.

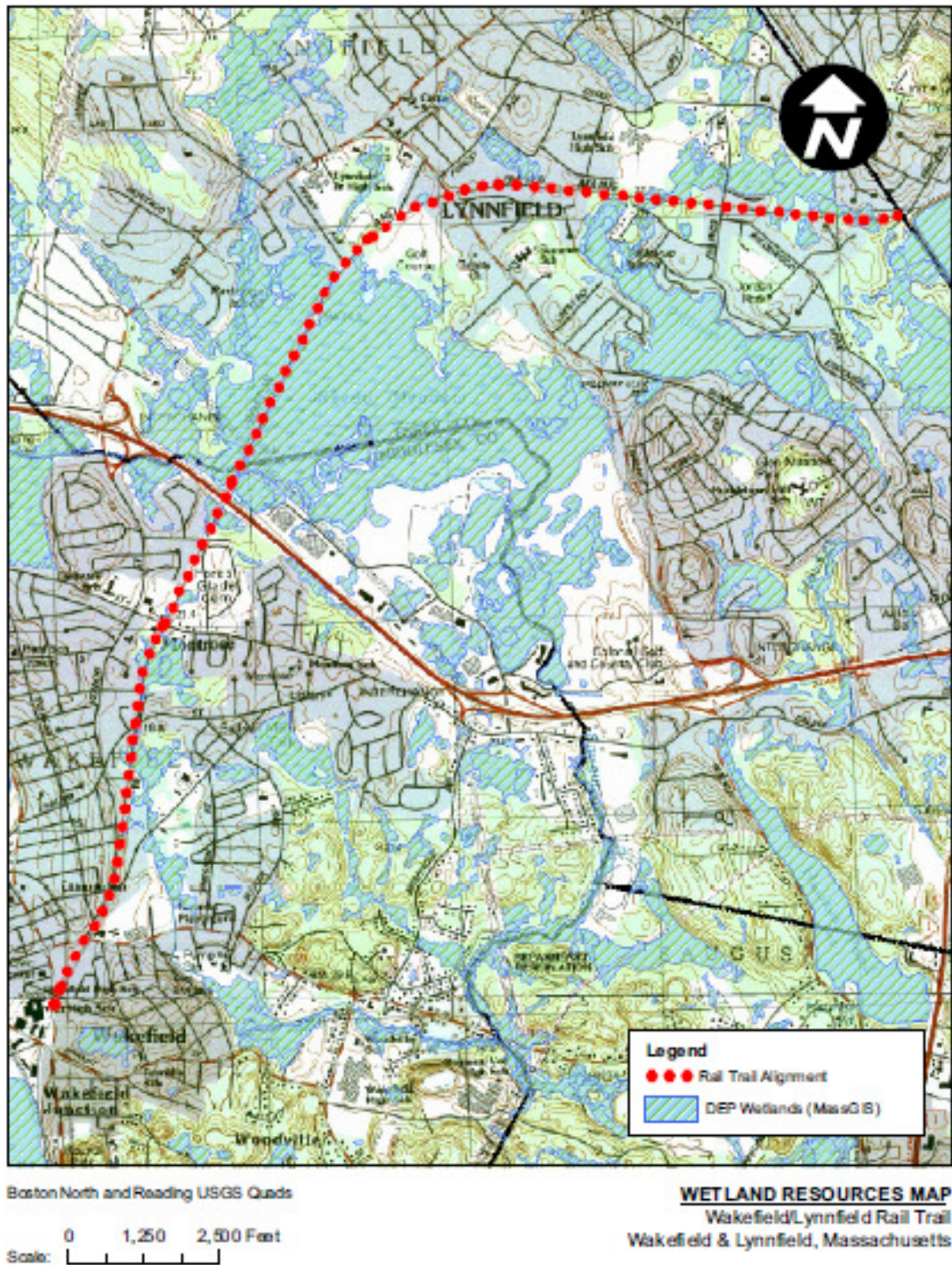
Additional funding is needed for the next design and engineering phase. The Recreational Path Committee recommends that Town officials develop a funding strategy and secure funding, working cooperatively with officials in the Town of Wakefield. Simultaneously, Lynnfield Town officials should engage in public education to maximize community input on the design and operation of the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail project. The Board of Selectmen should consider bringing the project to voters for approval of funding for completion of the next phase of design and permitting when a better estimate of engineering fees is available

The Board of Selectmen may also consider directing the Recreational Path Committee to develop a Preliminary Recreational Path Management Plan in consultation with Town administrative staff and relevant town committees and commissions.

With this process in mind, the Recreational Path Committee has scheduled a public information and design workshop on March 27, 2018 at 7:00PM at the Lynnfield Middle School to present this information and solicit feedback from the community.



Figure 1<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> From Fay, Spofford & Thorndike. 2007. *Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail Feasibility Study*



## **Sources of Information for Issues of Public Interest**

### **Environment**

Fay, Spofford & Thorndike. Wakefield. 2007. Lynnfield Rail Trail Feasibility Study.

### **Safety**

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Lusk, Anne C et al. 2011. Risk of injury for bicycling on cycle tracks versus in the street. *Injury Prevention*; 10.1136/ip.2010.028696

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Seattle Engineering Department. 1987, Evaluation of the Burke-Gilman Trail's Effect of Property Value and Crime

Vogt, Christine et. al. 2008. Cutting Edge Research in Trails and Greenways – Michigan's project. Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies, Michigan State University

Hilfer, Susanna. 2007. The Impact of Rail Trails on Nearby Residential Property Values: A Case Study of the Minuteman Bikeway and Lexington, Massachusetts. Salem State University

Center for Urban Policy and The Environment. 2003. Public Choices and Property Values, Evidence from Greenways in Indianapolis.

**Additional reference materials**

Planners Collaborative, Inc. 2002. Town of Lynnfield Master Plan.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation. 2011. Bicycle Facilities Inventory Report

## **Appendix A**

### **THE RECREATIONAL PATH COMMITTEE TOWN OF LYNNFIELD**

#### **Mission Statement**

The mission of The Recreational Path Committee is to identify linear corridors that offer opportunities for conversion into trails, assess potential for development and study the feasibility and design of such a trail conversion. The Committee is to help identify and address the many questions and concerns that the residents of Lynnfield may have regarding any potential project.

#### **Responsibilities and Functions**

There are a number of issues on which the Town must come to a consensus that will affect how a trail conversion proceeds. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- Conceptual design of the trail, including dimensions of the trail and materials used to construct the trail,
- Financial resources to design and construct the trail,
- Environmental issues,
- Impact on and concerns of abutters to the trail,
- Engineering and safety concerns, including street crossings and bridges,
- Parking and other amenities needed to support a recreational trail
- On-going maintenance and other costs the Town must consider

The Committee will develop a process for addressing all these issues and concerns through public meetings and public hearings. This may include the commission of a formal study by an engineering firm that specializes in trail conversions.

#### **Membership and Officers**

All appointments shall be for an indefinite term, until the Board of Selectmen feels the mission of the Committee has been accomplished, or that membership needs to be changed in order to keep the work progressing. The Board of Selectmen will appoint a temporary Chairman. A permanent Chairman and clerk shall be elected by the membership of the Committee. The Clerk shall ensure that all meetings are properly posted and that minutes of each meeting are kept. Minutes of the Committee's work shall be prepared and made public by the Committee promptly, with copies filed with the Town Clerk and sent to the Board of Selectmen on a regular basis.

#### **Compliance with State and Local Law**

The Recreational Path Committee is responsible for conducting its activities in a manner that is in compliance with all relevant State and Local Laws and regulations including but not limited to the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, and Conflict of Interest Law.