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To Whom It May Concern

I am the owner and operator of Gearworks Cyclery in Leominster, MA., which is the largest bicycle shop in the north central Massachusetts area. I am writing to express my support for the development of Squannacook River Rail Trail (SRRT) which will provide further recreational opportunities for area residents as well as providing for a safe alternative transportation corridor where none currently exists.

When I was growing up in the 60's and 70's, my family used to visit my grandparents in Arlington, Mass. Their house was on a dead end, and abutted an old abandoned railway. The corridor was overgrown with weeds, small trees and a lot of trash. It was unsightly and unsafe. In 1992 this corridor became the Minuteman Rail Trail. I need not go into the value that has had to our community.

Today, as the owner of a local shop for the last 20 years, my staff and I have listened to countless stories from our customers about how much they use and enjoy the local rail trails. To state the obvious: yes the rail trails are good for our business. However, in line with our philosophy, it is the rider and their enjoyment of riding that always comes first. Rail trails, more than any other location, promote a safe comfortable place to take in the outdoors and get exercise. It is also a great way for families to spend time together. This past June, on Father's Day, I asked my 4 teenage daughters what they wanted to do for Father's Day. They wanted to ride their bikes on The Nashua River Rail Trail. Not because they thought I wanted to, but because they wanted to. We had, like so many times before, a great day together.

With the increase in the quantity of traffic and the amount of distraction while driving, being a pedestrian on the road has become increasingly more dangerous. Cell phone use has taken this issue to a whole new level. People are afraid of being hit while riding (or walking) on the road, and I can't blame them. As a seasoned rider of 35 years it is concerning to me as well. Rail Trails put people at ease and allow them to enjoy being on a bike.

Thank You


Gene Kalajian