

# Squannacook River Rail Trail raising funds and awareness

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Squannacook Greenways board members Steve Meehan and Don Klein walk the rail trail with Irene Congdon and her family in June 2016. The family day on the rail trail was Irene's suggestion.

By Anne O'Connor

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TOWNSEND -- Thanks to a cadre of passionate volunteers, a new rail trail is closer to being built.

It's been a long haul, but the Squannacook River Rail Trail, just 3.7 miles long, is looking like reality. Organizers have \$91,000 in the bank and have another \$30,000 pending in grants.

As a condition of accepting some of the grant money, Squannacook Greenways promised to keep children involved with the trail, said Bill Rideout, a greenways director.

Even before the permitting is done for construction, they are being true to their word. A Family Day on June 3 offers free activities and discounted rates on boat rentals at Harbor Pond from Nashoba Paddler.

Youngsters will have a chance to explore the section of trail between Townsend center and the Harbor while going on a scavenger hunt and taking a tree identification challenge.

The path parallels Route 119 from Townsend center before running between Townsend Road and the Squannacook River as far as the Bertozzi Wildlife Management Area in Groton.

Since the dedicated group started tossing the idea around in 2002, plans for the trail have evolved. They considered pavement, but planning a stone dust surface saved millions in possible construction costs.

The almost 4 miles of stone dust trail has an estimated construction cost of \$150,000 with \$10,000 set aside for emergency repairs.

The multi-use trail will be on the bed of the abandoned Peterborough and Shirley Railroad.

Part of the cost will be covered by salvaging the rails, Rideout said, but there will be a cost to dispose of the ties, which have creosote.

Engineering alone for each mile of the planned paved Bruce Freeman trail comes in at \$100,000, Rideout said. A 4.88 mile section of that trail, including an overpass in Acton above Routes 2A and 119, comes in at \$9.9 million.

The persistent cyclists have trail angels that kept things moving.

"We've had a lot of help," Rideout said. "We very much appreciate it."

Wachusett Greenways, responsible for 19 miles of stone dust trail on the Central Mass Rail Trail, provided fundraising and engineering guidance.

Some donations were small. A buy-a-brick campaign raised \$20,000. Others were larger.

Donors purchased six granite benches, at \$5,000 each, in support.

Cycle enthusiast Terry McNabb, who owned McNabb Pharmacy in Townsend, will be remembered by one of those monuments.

Another 13 donors, so far, will have their names inscribed on a granite pillar for a donation of \$1,000.

Board members wrote grants. Over the years, the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, the Bruce Anderson J. Foundation, New England Grassroots Environment Fund and, twice, the state Department of Conservation and Recreation contributed. The Townsend Historical Society granted an easement through the parking lot of the Harbor Church for access to a sidewalk leading to traffic lights to cross South Street.

Townsend will build the sidewalk between the church and South Street. The funds were designated for sidewalks on 119 before the rail trail was planned.

If the town is not ready to build when the trail gets built, Squannacook Greenways is prepared to put down stone dust along the route of the sidewalk to keep things moving, Rideout said.

To donate or for more information, visit [www.squannacookriverrailtrail.org](http://www.squannacookriverrailtrail.org).

The Family Day will be Saturday, June 3 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Meet at the Depot Street entrance in Townsend center. Parking is available in the municipal lots on Jefts Street and behind Memorial Hall. The rain date is Sunday, June 4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Follow Anne O'Connor on Twitter @a1oconnor.

Read more: [http://www.nashobavalleyvoice.com/townsend\\_news/ci\\_31006323/squannacook-river-rail-trail-raising-funds-and-awareness#ixzz4iVLcDwsF](http://www.nashobavalleyvoice.com/townsend_news/ci_31006323/squannacook-river-rail-trail-raising-funds-and-awareness#ixzz4iVLcDwsF)