

# Northampton Rail-trail News

Friends of the Northampton Trails and Greenways, Inc. (<http://www.fntg.net>) Volume 2, Spring/Summer 2007

## Updates from the trail

It's been an interesting couple of months weather wise here in Northampton. Our January trail walk through downtown took place on a somewhat surreal 70 degree sunny day. In mid-April it was snowing (but I'm thankful that the DPW cleared the rail trail, as they did all winter). Our trail cleanup a week later took place on a beautiful 70 degree day.

While New England has always been famous for having unpredictable weather ("spring sometimes comes at night"), there's an increasing consensus that a climate crisis is occurring, and that with it will come increasing instability of the weather and environment.

The expanding network of rail-trails in Northampton can help us to move away from a total reliance on the fossil fuels that are causing the buildup of greenhouse gases. Whether it's using the trails to commute to work in Amherst or Easthampton, walk to school from Leeds, or access the Broad Brook trailhead for a hike, these paths serve critically important transportation and recreation needs.

I'm excited about what's happening to make this connected system a reality. Major projects underway for this network include:

**Norwottuck connection** the State Department of Conservation and Recreation is putting the final touches on the Damon Road to Woodmont connector (1/2 mile).

**Roundhouse to Earle St** this project was put out to bid last year, and should start construction this summer. When completed, it will connect Downtown to the Smith College physical plant and Route 10 (with eventual continuation to Easthampton and the Manhan Rail Trail).

**Rail with Trail along King Street** this project is a major priority, as it will provide a connection between the Norwottuck trail and downtown, with a fence separating the trail from the active rail line.

**Leeds extension** this project would extend from Look Park to the Williamsburg line, providing connectivity between Leeds School and the JFK Middle School.

The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways, organized in 2006, helps to support these trails by raising funds and awareness, pushing for their continued development, educating and encouraging new users of the trails, creating resources to improve them (such as our recently published map), and organizing fun, community-building activities.

As a member organization, FNTG is strengthened by its broad-based community of members who join because they, like you, are interested in seeing our trails in Northampton flourish. FNTG volunteers have been working on a number of projects, including the distribution of our map of the expanding network of trails, organizing trail tours, attending Conservation Commission meetings, and coordinating with other organization on joint projects.

The growing network of trails in Northampton is a very special resource in our community, and it is worthy of our support. The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways (FNTG) exists for just that purpose. We urge you to join or renew your membership, and support our efforts to continue to improve these trails.

*Nicholas Horton  
President, FNTG*

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# Greenways and sustainable development

Planning for sustainable communities is a complex process addressing economic, environmental and societal dimensions. Greenways and spacespaces, including rail trails, play a key role in successful efforts to improve our quality of life and decreasing impact on the environment.

## Greenways Masterplan Jackson County, NC

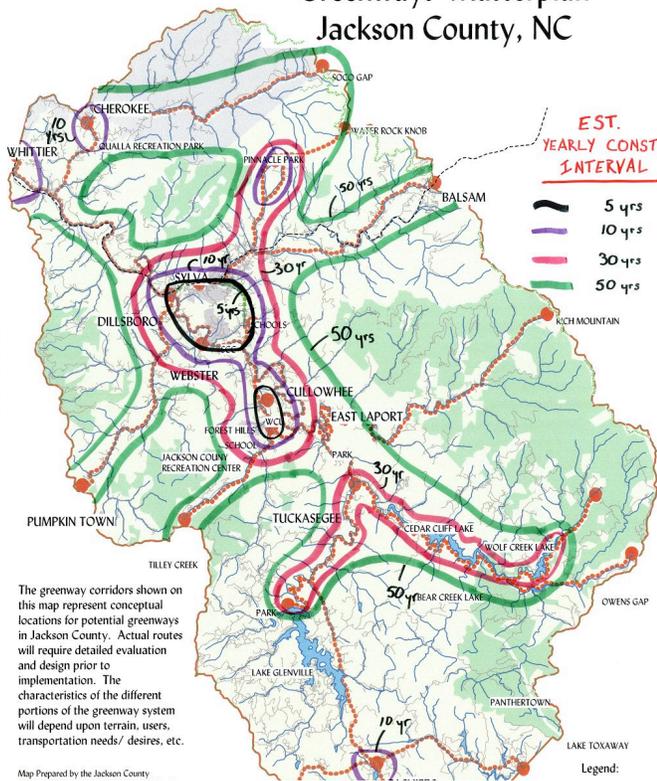


Figure 1: sample greenspace plan

FNTG sponsored a talk on Monday, November 13th on this topic by Jack Ahern, Professor and Chair of Landscape Architecture at UMass Amherst. Jack pro-

## Tuesday evening tours

Have you ever noticed where Calvin Coolidge got his start in municipal government, by negotiating for a rail crossing in Florence? Do you know that this future President of the United States rode in style from Northampton to the statehouse in Boston on the Mass Central Rail line when he became Governor of the Commonwealth?

Have you ever wondered what happened to the train yards on both sides of King Street? Or are you curious about the old wooded building with a sliding door close

vided an accessible overview of theories and practices of landscape ecology with examples from nearby as well as around the world that we can apply in Northampton. His talk, littered with amazing images, focused on the creation of *green infrastructures*, an emerging design concept for cities and towns that utilizes a system of hybrid hydrological/drainage network with protected or opportunistic green areas to provide a city-wide plan for different ecological functions.



Figure 2: sample clustered development with green infrastructure

Greenspaces and greenways, of which rail trails are only one type, can also be designed in such a way that help to protect water quality. Integrated networks of greenways linking parks, neighborhoods, and other special places lead to a higher quality of life, a healthier environment, and increased economic advantages.

The results help to sustain diverse and healthy wildlife, recreation and transportation along with built environments, and can and should be incorporated into design efforts here in Northampton and beyond.

to the trail? Did you always walk past that rusted metal pole with the tipped up metal flag, and wonder what it signaled?

These are just some of the clues to Northampton's railroad past that I learned about during Craig Della Penna's Bike tours last summer, and they are starting up again this summer on Tuesday nights, starting May 1st.

On the first Tuesdays of May, June, July and August, Craig and the riders will start at the Sugar Maple Inn

and head west on the Northampton Bikeway to explore Leeds and the future trail along the Mill River.

On the second Tuesday of those months, Craig will be heading East from the Sugar Maple Inn to explore the almost completed construction of the extension of the Norwottuck Rail Trail from Damon Road to King St.

Third Tuesday tours will head down to Easthampton to the Manhan Rail Trail from the Oxbow in Northampton, and discuss the history of the Manhan Rail Trail as well as the planned extension to Route 10 and Downtown Northampton.

The fourth Tuesday tours will explore the Norwot-

tuck Rail Trail and discuss plans for the extension to Boston along the old Mass Central Rail line.

All rides will begin promptly at 6:15pm. All rides will be for beginner or intermediate riders, though probably not for children younger than teenagers. No heavy hills will be encountered. Some on road portions will be part of each ride. See <http://www.fntg.net> for a flier with information about how to sign up and where to meet (or call 413-575-2277). These tours are co-sponsored by the Appalachian Mountain Club. Kudos to Craig for organizing these tours!

## Spring trail cleanup

Our thanks go out to the several dozen volunteers who came out on Saturday, April 21st to join the work party organized to clean the Northampton rail-trail. This year, the weather cooperated, and a great number of bags of trash, glass, and miscellaneous items that didn't belong found better homes. A spirit of fun permeated the day, while some important spring cleaning took place. The trail looks great!

Prize for best find went to Mary Fraser, who unearthed what appeared to be a pre-historic guitar, com-

plete with case. Mary also coordinated recycling efforts, which diverted 7 bags of bottles and cans from the landfill.

Particular thanks go to Molly Hale, Susan Voss, David Axelrad, Stan Pollak and Craig Della Penna for making this event happen, as well as to the DPW for use of a dumptruck to cart away the debris.

*Julia Riseman, Secretary, FNTG*

## Your dollars at work

In the fall of 2001, many people in the City came together to try and match a generous challenge grant donation from a local family for trail betterments in the city. The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways remains committed to helping raise money to support City of Northampton trail development efforts. We have successfully completed the sixth year in this annual effort.

Money raised in past years helped to design and pay for the pedestrian traffic signal at Stop and Shop, acquire corridor in Leeds, design the Ice Pond Trail, and finalize plans for the extension from City Hall to Earle Street.

This year, we raised more than \$3,000 for trail design

costs, including the design for the tunnel underneath the active rail line behind King Street near Wendy's, and the City is using these funds to move this project forward.

We greatly thank the generous donors, whose dollars were matched 1-1 by the challenge grant. The total of \$6,000 sent a strong message to city leaders that our trails and greenways are an important priority. We continue to thank the City Council and Mayor for their support of the expansion of these trails. City dollars also leverage state and federal funds, which typically require projects to be fully designed.

*Susan Voss, Treasurer, FNTG*

## Upcoming events

**week of May 14th** *Bike Week* see <http://www.pvpc.org> for a calendar of events.

**Tuesday, May 15th** *Trail tour on bike (four separate tours repeating on Tuesday nights throughout the summer)*

One of a series of free guided biking tours of the trail network taking place on the first, second, third and fourth Tuesdays in May, June, July and

August. All rides involve some road portions. See <http://www.fntg.net> for a flier with information, and call 413-575-2277 to sign up.

**Wednesday, May 16th, 2007** *Mass Central Rail Trail wildflower tour (Central Massachusetts)*

Spot spring wildflowers and more along the Mass Central Rail Trail. Meet at the Oakdale trail en-

trance on Route 140 in West Boylston at 1 PM. Contact leader Robert Bertin (508-755-6321) with questions (organized by Wachusett Greenways).

**Thursday, May 17th, 2007** *biking and walking tours*

As part of Bike Week, the FNTG will be coordinating a special set of biking and walking tours (your choice!) of the downtown Northampton trail network at 5:00pm. We will be gathering at Forbes Library. To RSVP, contact Nick Horton at 413-587-0430 or [nicholas\\_horton@yahoo.com](mailto:nicholas_horton@yahoo.com).

**Saturday, May 19th, 2007** *BBC trail work day*

Everyone is welcome to help maintain the Broad Brook Coalition trails, contact Dave Hershops ([dhershops@verizon.net](mailto:dhershops@verizon.net), 584-0180) for more info.

**Sunday, May 20th, 2007** *Manhan Rail Trail breakfast*

Support our friends in Easthampton and enjoy a delicious breakfast (7:30-11:00am).

**Sunday, May 20th, 2007** *Airline Rail Trail bike ride*

Spot spring wildflowers and more along the Mass Central Rail Trail. Meet at the Oakdale trail entrance on Route 140 in West Boylston at 1 PM. Contact leader Robert Bertin (508-755-6321) with questions (organized by Wachusett Greenways).

**Friday, June 1st, 2007** *Nashua River Rail trail ride*

The Nashua River Rail Trail in Ayer is a scenic 20 mile round trip ride. Meet at the trailhead parking lot in Ayer at 9:45. Register with leader Hank Ouellette (508-829-5341). Organized by Wachusett Greenways.

**Monday, June 11th, 2007** *Rhode Island Rail Trail ride*

Ride the East Bay Bike Path from Providence to Bristol, RI. Contact leader Sharon Hsu (508-829-6528) to register and coordinate carpools (organized by Wachusett Greenways).

**Thursday, June 28th, 2007** *Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways meeting/MCRT*

The FNTG will be meeting in conjunction with the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail project at 3:00pm (for your choice of biking or walking tours), then reconvening at 5:00pm at the Northampton Brewery, followed by a no-host dinner at 6:00pm. To RSVP, contact Nick Horton at 413-587-0430 or [nicholas\\_horton@yahoo.com](mailto:nicholas_horton@yahoo.com).

**Tuesdays in June, July and August** *Trail tours*

More Northampton and surrounding trail tours; see description for May 15th.

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