



Northampton Rail-trail News

Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways, Inc. (<http://www.fntg.net>) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that supports the expanding network of rail-trails in Northampton, Massachusetts. Volume 6, Spring 2011

FNTG: Spring events and updates

As I write this, there are still some lingering spots where snow was piled up that remain frosty. But spring is definitely in the air, and the trails are becoming accessible after a nasty winter. I was able to bike from Northampton to Easthampton using the new bridge spanning Route 10, and everything looked splendid. There are plans for a formal ribbon cutting at noon on Sunday, May 22nd (be sure to save the date!)

Planning and design of the tunnel to facilitate the connection to the Norwottuck Rail Trail (connecting from Woodmont to Damon Road then eastwards to Hadley, Amherst and Belchertown) continues, and is still on track to be completed as part of the return of Amtrak to Northampton in 2012/2013.

The Norwottuck Rail Trail from Hadley to Amherst is also in the process of being upgraded and resurfaced, with the design process underway.

In addition to our evening lecture on April 25th and the trail cleanup (see articles elsewhere in this newsletter), we hope to organize summer trail rides and tours.

In addition, we are actively working to update and reprint our map and brochure in conjunction with the Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail. A current draft of the map is included on the back of this page: comments and suggestions welcomed (deadline to send feedback to nicholas_horton@yahoo.com is April 18th). We're still seeking sponsors to purchase an ad, so send those suggestions along as well.

The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways was established in 2006 to help support this growing network of transportation and recreation paths. We appreciate your financial and volunteer support.

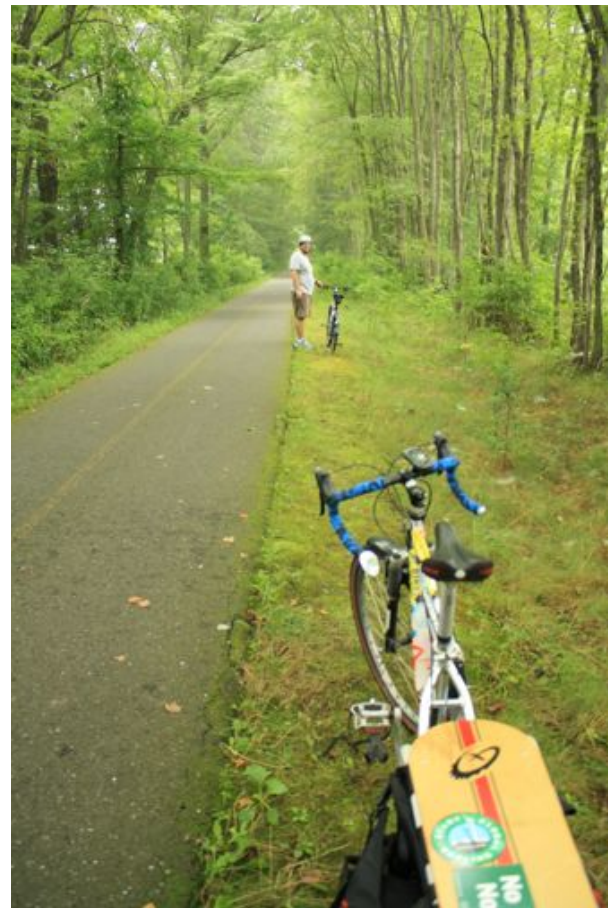


Figure : Along the Norwottuck (photo credit Katie Ferguson)

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Spring trail cleanup

All over Northampton, neighbors, school groups, friends, and clubs can help clean-up our city's rail trails for a fun morning of community service. Please come out Saturday morning, April 30th, starting at 9:30am to pick up trash along the trail! This is a fun way to get outdoors, meet some new people, and improve the quality of life in Northampton.

Last year was our first time that our annual trail cleanup went city-wide. More than 50 people volunteered their time to help clean these pathways of years of accumulated junk and trash. From Leeds to Damon Road, and King Street to Earle/Grove via downtown these people braved a somewhat chilly and cloudy day to collect trash and recycling. A wide age distribution

was apparent, with a number of spry elders and enthusiastic toddlers contributing to the effort. Their work created an impressive set of piles and made a huge difference in the look and feel of the trails.

This year, Paula Sakey and Nick Horton will be organizing the cleanup, and volunteers to lead sections throughout the city are needed. Gathering points on April 30th will include the intersection of the trail and Earle/Grove, Veteran's Field, King Street, Jackson Street, Hatfield Street, Chestnut Street and the intersection of Florence Street Mulberry Street in Leeds.

Julia Riseman, Secretary, FNTG

Trail Partners: Mill River Greenway

The Mill River Greenway is a working group of local citizens who aim to protect the Mill River watershed, preserve its cultural artifacts, enhance its biological health, and encourage recreational activity. They are working, along with other organizations and individuals to design and create a greenway along the river.

The Mill River watershed is huge. It consists of 52 square miles of Goshen, Williamsburg, and Northampton, as well as parts of Westhampton, Chesterfield, Ashfield, Conway, Whately, and Hatfield. The group notes that no other landscape feature was more important in shaping the ecology, history, and settlement patterns of the area, especially in Williamsburg and Northampton. Today, the river knits together a landscape of remarkable natural and cultural diversity and offers numerous recreational opportunities.

Their website (www.millrivergreenway.org) includes some amazing aerial imagery (due to Richard Shephard), historic maps, stories about floods as well as other background materials. A section of the site is devoted to recreation opportunities. This includes a first look at the Meekins Mill River Park on the grounds of the Meekins Library in Williamsburg center. While some in Williamsburg have opposed rail trails, the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways helped extend existing trails into that Town.

The Greenway organizers are hosting a party to celebrate the Mill River on Friday, April 15th from 5:00-7:00pm at Pedal to Properties (14 Strong Ave. in Northampton). All are welcome. More information can

be found at www.millrivergreenway.org.

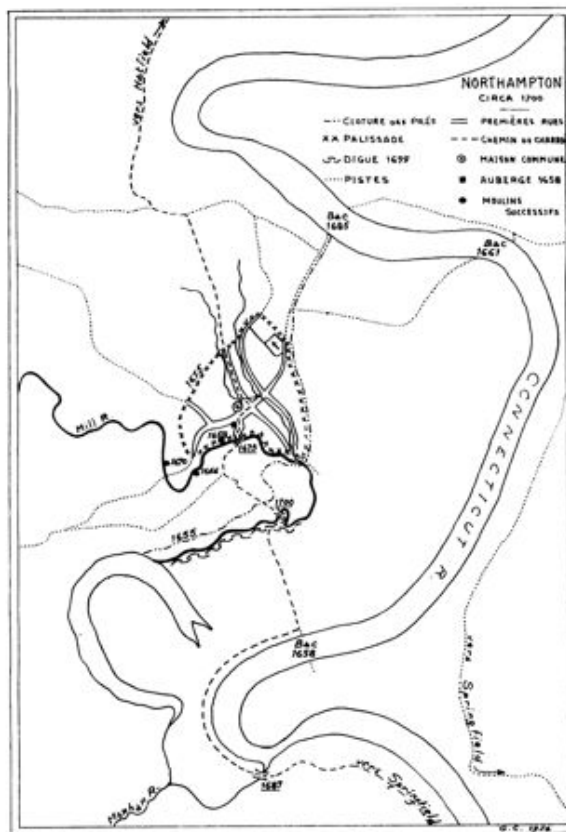


Figure : Northampton circa 1700 (by GRJ Cestre)

Spring lecture: Future of Northampton trails

We are pleased to announce that Wayne Feiden, Director of the Office of Planning and Development for the City of Northampton, will be our speaker at the spring lecture on Monday April 25th at 7:00pm at the Northampton Friends Meetinghouse (43 Center Street, 2nd floor). Wayne's talk will discuss *the Future of Northampton trails and greenways*. Wayne and many others within the city government have been working to create a spine of trails and greenways that connect to a wider system of linear paths. Through the creative use of mapping software and images, he will lead a virtual tour of the trail network, from Williamsburg to Hadley and Hatfield to Southampton.

Wayne will also discuss the ongoing effort to bring Amtrak back to Northampton (ideally by 2013: see <http://www.valleyadvocate.com/article.cfm?aid=11302>), as well as update everyone on a joint

project with MassBike and FNTG to install a set of kiosks with maps and information about the trails. While locations for the kiosks hasn't been finalized, there are plans to include them in highly trafficked areas to help orient those new to the network.

Wayne recently received a national award for his efforts around the development of our rail trail network. As recipient of the State Trail Advocacy Award for Massachusetts, he was singled out as an individual who has successfully influenced public policy relating to trail planning, trail protection, trail development, or maintenance. While many people have been working on these projects, with many key partners, none would have been possible without Wayne's unflagging leadership and vision. We hope that you can join us on April 25th for what promises to be an interesting and informative evening.

Hatfield trail in the works

Fred Contrada from *the Republican* newspaper wrote in November about plans to create a rail trail from Damon Road up into Hatfield.



Figure : Old Mill in Hatfield (photo credit Charlie Kellogg)

This project, which is supported by a \$5,000 grant to the City from Bikes Belong, builds on existing land and other parcels adjoining the Pan Am Railways tracks and

the Connecticut River.

While still early in the planning process, this is an exciting project that could connect to the Norwottuck Rail Trail through Industrial park or via bike lanes created through the proposed Damon Road reconstruction. The path is particularly attractive since once in Hatfield, there are a number of town roads that are ideal for biking.

Gina Nortonsmith wrote about this project on her blog (pedalparadise.wordpress.com), stating that *the Northampton to Hatfield trip is going to get easier to travel, and more beautiful and scenic*. She continues to note that the hardest part about riding in Hatfield is getting there, but the views along the way are splendid.

Looking for some ideas about rides through Hatfield? There are lots of online resources to help. Be sure to check out the following: <http://cyclingnewengland.blogspot.com/2011/03/more-rides-in-pioneer-valley.html> and <http://www.bikenewengland.com>.

See you on the trails!

Nicholas Horton, President

Your dollars at work

The combined efforts of FNTG and the City of Northampton have resulted in beautiful new trails and

bike paths that allow pedestrians and bikers to make their way into downtown Northampton. The experience

is already changing our view of the city and reorienting how we interact.

This year we received \$3,400 in donations for City of Northampton trail design and construction. Over our six year history, we've raised and forwarded more than \$18,000. Without detailed plans, the city cannot apply for state and federal funding to build these new paths and trails. These relatively small, targeted donations

leverage funds allocated by the Mayor and City Council and then turn into major capital projects through state and federal transportation dollars. Collectively, with our giving and memberships, we send a powerful message in support of these trails and speed up the process of getting more built. Thanks for your continued support!

Susan Voss, Treasurer

Ribbon cutting on Sunday, May 22nd

Be sure to save the date for a noon-time ribbon cutting on Sunday, May 22nd on the big bridge crossing Route 10. Plans are in the works to celebrate this new trail from Northampton to Easthampton, and you don't want to miss the festivities. Bike riders and walkers are invited to explore the new rail trail and art spots along the way. Riders can meet at 10am at Millside Park in Easthampton for bagels and musical performances, and then at

11:00am ride to the Route 10 Bridge. At noon, Mayor Higgins and Mayor Tautznik will cut the ribbon on the Bridge, and afterwards the procession will make its way to a concluding lunch at Veteran's Field in Northampton. The whole day promises to be a chance to explore and enjoy these new paths. Be sure to check the FNTG website (<http://www.fntg.net>) for details as the date nears.

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Return service requested