

To the residents of Dover:

At the May 7 Town Meeting, Article 11 will request \$5000 to continue the study of converting Dover's rail bed into a rail trail. The presentation to be given at Town Meeting is an enhanced version of the one presented at the Warrant Committee's Open Hearing on March 19, which has been on the Town website since then (scroll down the home page and then scroll through the Open Hearing presentations). The Dover Rail Trail Committee would like to provide some background information to you prior to Town Meeting.

Activity regarding the rail trail began 2 years ago. In November 2009 there was a presentation to the Dover Board of Selectmen and abutters (over 80 had been notified by mail of the meeting) by the Bay Colony Rail Trail Association (BCRT), a non-profit formed to explore a rail trail in Medfield, Dover and Needham. Other than requesting that the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization do a no-charge feasibility study there was no official action by Dover until June 2011, when the BOS created the Dover Rail Trail Committee (RTC) with the charge to "develop a **recommendation** for the conversion of the Bay Colony rail bed into a recreational trail by working with all relevant boards, committees and departments in Dover...The final product should be a thorough report presenting a balanced discussion of the pros/cons of the conversion and suggested policies for all issues that must be addressed."

In the Spring of 2011, the Planning Board released the results of the Master Plan Survey that had been distributed to all Dover residents during the winter. 681 citizens of Dover responded to the rail trail question: Would you favor converting the unused rail line passing through Needham, Dover, and Medfield into a "rail trail" for walking and biking across the three towns?

No	159	24%
Yes, if private property can be protected	263	40%
Yes, if funded privately and/or by grant	240	36%
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In addition, the BCRT sponsored a booth at the past two Dover Days Fairs and has accumulated a list of almost 100 Dover residents interested in a rail trail. Clearly, there was interest by Dover's citizens to explore a rail trail and the BOS responded by creating this committee.

Since June 2011, the activities of the RTC have been discussed at 17 Selectmen's meetings, including numerous pleas for volunteers (pro, con and neutral) to join the committee, a message that was also on the Dover website for months; two articles appeared in Globe West; and discussions were held with the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee. Minutes have been posted promptly on the Dover website. And, finally, for those interested in learning more, the RTC committee members have been available to speak to anyone interested in our progress.

The RTC requested that the Selectmen put this article on the Warrant in order to obtain a small amount of funds in case we need them as we conduct the study. We are **NOT** asking for a vote to build a rail trail. This warrant article only asks for funds to **study** the issue so Dover's citizens can be presented at the May 2013 Town Meeting (the current target date) with a complete study that addresses all the questions raised by Dover's residents, boards and committees. It will be fact-based and comprehensive.

The RTC does have a few working assumptions that have been publically discussed: the trail will NOT be paved, will fit into the rural character of Dover, and will cost the citizens of Dover very little money. Donations, grants, volunteer support and other non-profit opportunities are anticipated to cover the vast majority of the cost. Development of a detailed financial plan will, of course, be part of the study.

Although there are already 60 questions on our list to study, the committee will be reaching out to everyone in Dover for input. The more questions the better. The questions will be researched, looked at from a Dover-centric perspective, and information will be obtained from the many communities in Massachusetts that have dealt with these issues so we can learn from those who have already completed the process of making a decision about a local rail trail in their community.

This is a complex issue. The study should be done because over 700 citizens, through the survey and BCRT, have expressed their opposition, support or desire to truly understand the project before voting on its possible implementation. We urge you to support our efforts to provide you with a complete and thoughtful study and recommendation.

Thank you.

The Dover Rail Trail Committee

April 27, 2012