



Historic Trolley Line Conversion to Multi-use Path

Williams College
Environmental Planning Workshop

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**Research prepared for the Bennington County Regional Commission
(BCRC)**

Background and History

- Active trolley service between Williamstown, Pownal and Bennington
 - 1907-1929
- Inactive trail bed since
- Active section in Greenberg Headwaters Park
- 2003 Williams College Environmental Planning Report
- BCRC scoping study



**A Vision for an
Inter-State Recreational Path:
Williamstown, MA to
Pownal, VT**



Kenneth R. Brown '05, Mark A. Orlowski '04, Amanda C. Stout '04
Environmental Studies 302: Environmental Planning Workshop
Williams College
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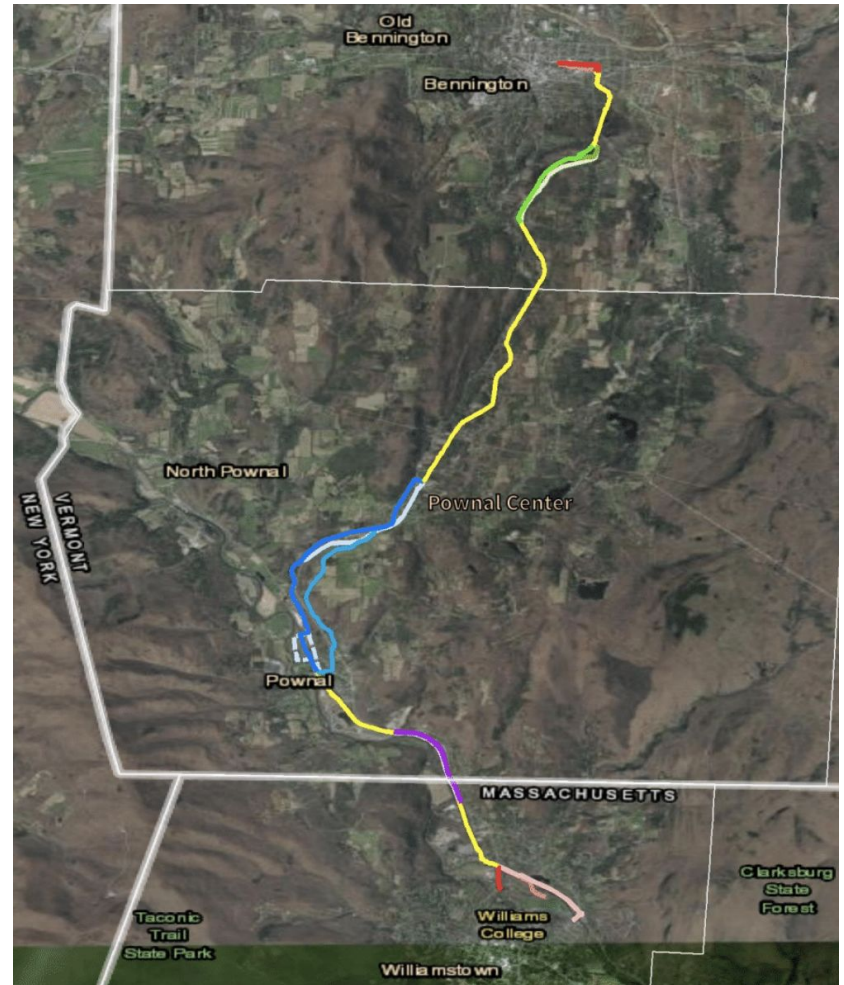
Benefits

- Economic Development
- Historic Restoration
- Public Health
- Tourism
- Transportation



BCRC's Work So Far

- Creation of steering committee
- Scoping study funded by VTrans
- Presentations to town leaders in each community
- Preliminary survey of abutting property owners



Our Project

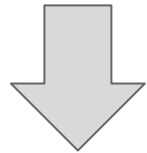
- Viability as a rural transportation route
- Abutting property concerns
- Environmental Impacts/Obstacles



Strategic Purpose

Our final report will provide:

- Background on the Trolley Path & its importance
- Clear explanations of the three primary barriers to the path
- Recommendations/solutions for the barriers
- Comparison of any competing solutions
- Data to support BCRC's scoping report and any future presentations.



Methods



- 26 interviews
 - Contacts at all stages of path planning/use
- 16 case studies of existing multi-use paths
- Web scraper to explore property listings near paths



Transportation Viability

- Rural setting
- Targeting priority users
- Steep slopes and long distances
- Winter usage and maintenance

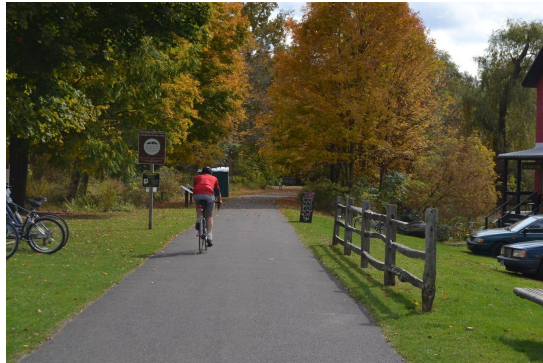


Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT)

Rural Setting

Concerns

- Low population
- Spread out destinations
- Connections to town



Harlem Valley Rail Trail Trailhead

Recommendations

- Signage
- Safe trailheads and road crossings
- Bike racks, parking
- Connections to other trails and routes



Signage for Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail

Targeting Priority Users

Concerns

- Proper surface type
- Conflict between users
- Motorized uses

Recommendations

- Mix of pavement and gravel
- Etiquette signage, wide path
- Bollards
- Community involvement events



Geography and Gradation

Concerns

- Steep grade
- Long distances between town centers



Ashuwillticook Rail Trail

Recommendations

- Alternative routes
- Switchbacks, passing and rest areas
- E-bikes



Bootlegger Bikes, Jefferson, VT along LVRT



Winter Usage and Maintenance



Concerns

- Snow removal plan
- Allowable uses



Recommendations

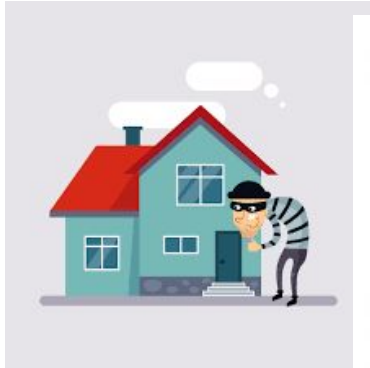
- Only plow downtown paved sections
- Allow motorized and non-motorized snow activities



Snowmobile on the
LVRT

Impacts on Abutter Properties

- Privacy and Safety
- Maintenance
- Hunting
- Property Values



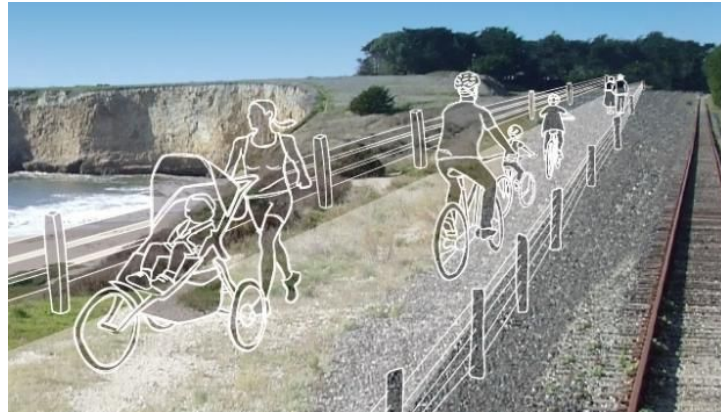
Privacy & Safety

Concerns

- Trespassing
- Path being a refuge for criminals
- Using path to steal/commit break-ins
- Vandalism

Recommendations

- Case studies demonstrate that rail trails are not correlated to higher crime
- Signage
- Fencing or Privacy Screening
- Lighting



Maintenance

Concern

- Littering and its potential to blow onto private property
- Up-keep to protect natural aesthetics

Recommendations

- Dedicated maintenance crew
- Signage
- Providing recycling and trash bins at park entrances/exits



Western Reserve Greenway Trail – Ashtabula County Metroparks,
<https://ashtabulametroparks.com/western-reserve-greenway-trail/>

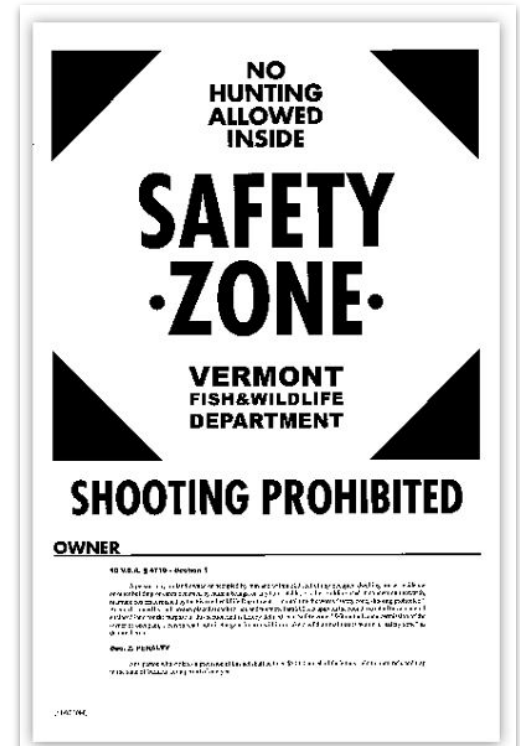
Hunting

Concerns

- Hunters using the trail to access private property
- Safety concerns about the trail's proximity to hunting areas

Recommendations

- Reinforcing basic Vermont Hunting and Trapping Official Regulations
- Property Postings
- Potentially closing sections of the trail during hunting season



Property Values

Concern

- The trail will affect the valuation of abutting properties.

Recommendations

- Demonstrated evidence and numerous studies have shown that property values are generally increased or unaffected by rail trails.
- Rail trails are positively marketed on online real estate marketplaces

Clean 3000 square foot commercial space conveniently located right off Route 8 next to Lanesboro/Cheshire line. Garage/work area is 35x50 with a 9' overhead door and a bathroom. Sales/office area is 25x50 broken into two sections. Building is well insulated and has radiant heat in the floor with two separate zones. Well maintained grounds located right on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. Tenant responsible for utilities

Contact Agent

Take a Tour

[Overview](#) [Facts and features](#) [Home value](#) [Price and tax hist >](#)

Time on Zillow **5 days** | Views **848** | Saves **21**

Fixer upper. Completed gutted home on nice level lot. Close to Cheshire lake, ashuwillticook rail trail and ski areas. New roof on house, garage & shed. Septic condition unknown. Water has been shut off at the street. Being sold "as is" condition. This property will not pass financing. Cash deal or rehab loan.

Environmental Obstacles

Protected
wetlands

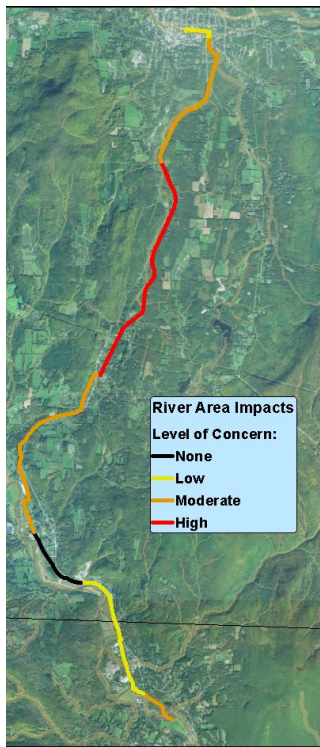


River Corridors (VT)
& Riverfront Areas (MA)

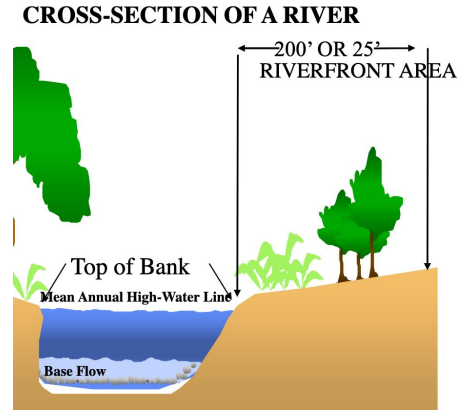
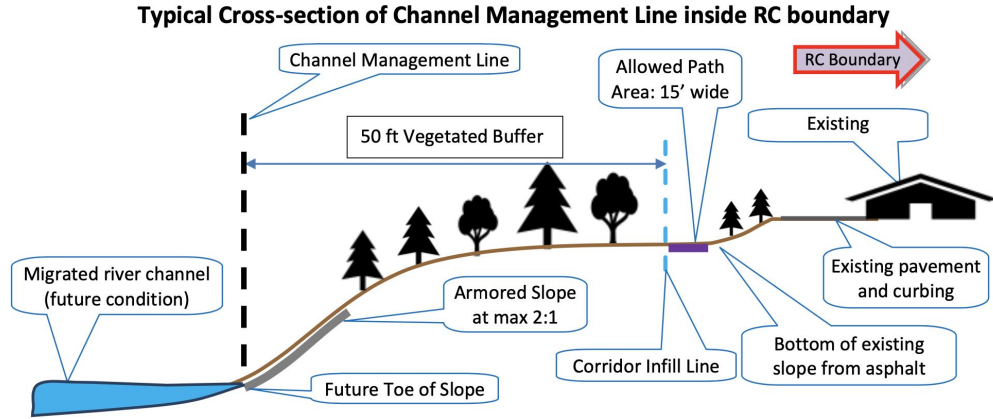


Special Flood Hazard Zones
(100-year floodplain)





Color Key: - - - Channel Management Line (CML) — Allowed Path - - - Corridor Infill line



River Corridor/ Riverfront Area



No permanent development

Protect ecosystem and services

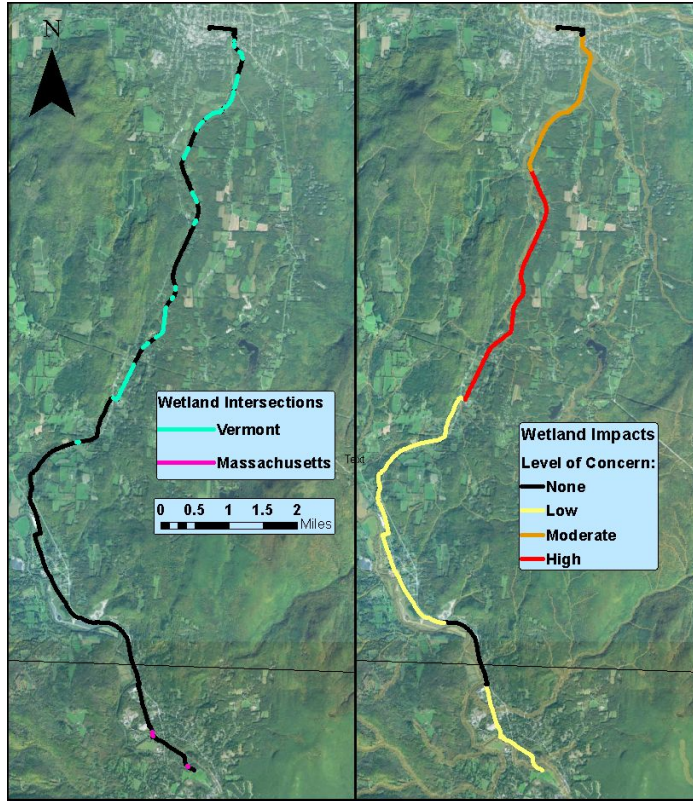
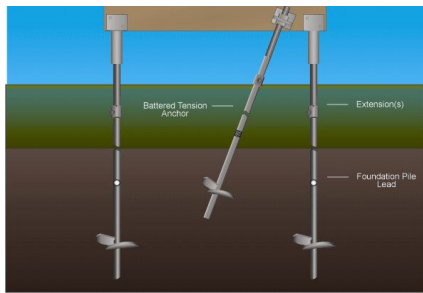




Wetlands

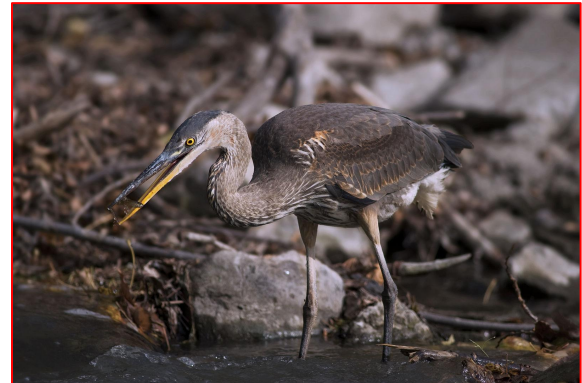
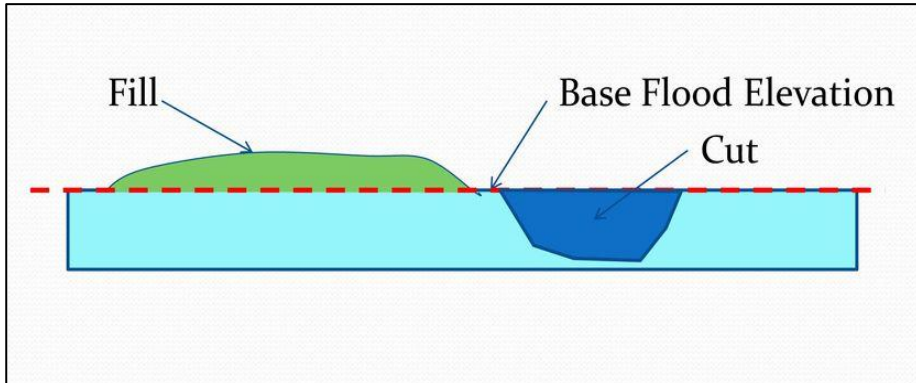
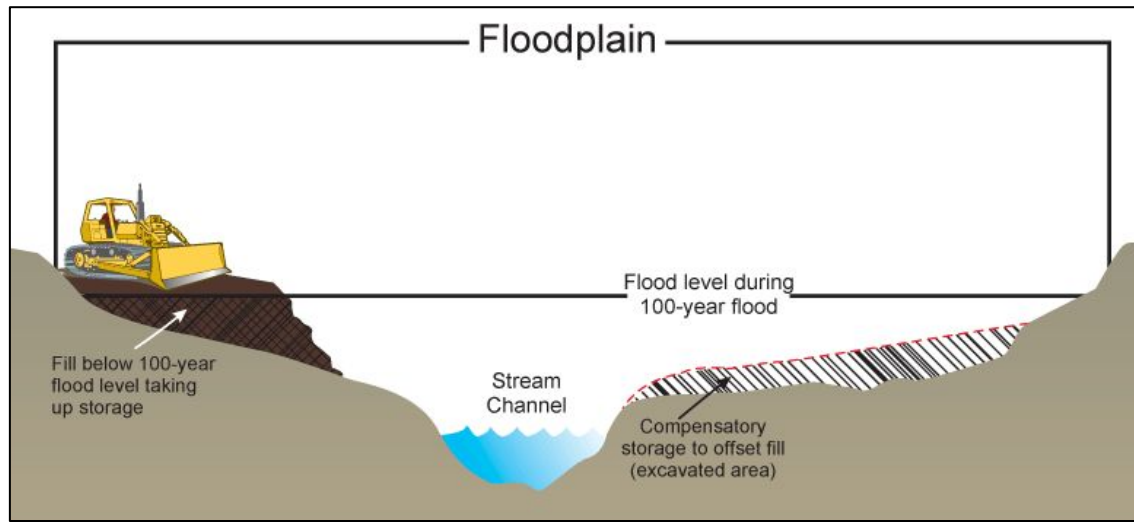
Quequechan River Rail Trail (Fall River, MA). <https://www.trailink.com/trail/alfred-j-lima-quequechan-river-rail-trail/>.

- Follow elevated trolley bed if possible
- Boardwalk otherwise
 - Helical piles
 - Gaps between deck planks
- Mitigation?



Floodplains

- Compensatory storage
- MA: Develop $<5000 \text{ ft}^2$ in 10-year floodplain



Other Envi Concerns



Looking to the future...

- Development will likely include
 - Mix of pavement and gravel
 - Working collectively with all communities
 - Some environmental mitigation in higher risk areas
 - Possible need for alternate funding sources
- Solutions will need to be chosen depending on:
 - Funding ultimately available
 - Highly site-specific considerations
- Forthcoming report gives (lots) more detail!

Acknowledgements

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Thanks to you all for being here!

QUESTIONS???

