



Manhan Rail Trail

Easthampton, Massachusetts

Spring 2009

Sinkhole and trail repair expected to be completed this summer

The City of Easthampton approved the borrowing of \$450,000 from a low-interest fund to repair a broken culvert near East Street, which failed during heavy rains last fall.

The money, from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, will be used to rebuild the culvert but will *not* pay for the repair of the Manhan Rail Trail, a section of which was washed out when the 100 year-old stone culvert gave way. The Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail will pay for the trail repair and have begun raising an estimated \$10,000. (story page 2)

The culvert project is being fast-tracked due to continuing erosion of soil down into the Manhan River near the Oxbow. Work is expected to begin as soon as permits can be attained. A sewer pipe, also damaged in the washout, has already been repaired by the Department of Public Works, but



This house-sized sinkhole developed after an old railroad culvert collapsed near East Street last September pulling down the rail trail surface and fence along with it.

the culvert must be rebuilt and the banks on either side need to be stabilized. Also under discussion is a plan to inspect all other old culverts along the old rail bed.

Trail connector may get funded with stimulus \$!

What started as a long shot is now looking more promising: using stimulus money to fund construction of the Manhan Rail Trail connector between Easthampton and Northampton. The three and one-half-mile link has already been designed and has even been approved by Mass Highway. But until now, it was understood that finding money for the construction was several years away.

The availability of stimulus dollars for “shovel ready” projects however, may allow the connector project to move forward this year.

Both communities have kicked into high gear. The first step was to get the project on the Transportation Improvement Project list. That happened March 4, when the Metropolitan Planning Organization amended its list to include 4.6 million dollars for the connector.

The next step is acquiring right of way easements from the land owner, National Grid. That process is underway and looks promising. Also under way is getting both Easthampton and Northampton City Councils to agree to the easement acquisition which amounts to a “friendly” land-taking.

Public hearings will be held in Easthampton on May 6 and in Northampton on April 27. Trail supporters are urged to attend both hearings.

The connector will link the trail at Ferry Street in Easthampton to the trail at Earle Street in Northampton. It includes a 17.5 ft. high bridge over Route 10 and a smaller bridge over the Manhan River.



Rest rooms have been built at the Lower Mill Pond Park along the Manhan Rail Trail near Ferry Street. This spring a band shell will be installed overlooking the pond allowing for summertime concerts at the park. The park also includes basketball courts, a childrens play area and an exercise circuit. A grand opening for the park is tentatively planned for June 19th.

Visit our web site!
manhanrailtrail.org

Rail Trail Tidbits

Clean Up the Trail!

Grab your shovel, wheelbarrow and garden gloves and head to the trail at Payson Avenue on Saturday, May 2 at 8:00am. Just a few hours of many hands sprucing up the trail will make a big difference.

Community Service Helpers

The Hampshire County Jail community service program has offered to help clean and maintain the Manhan Rail Trail. Program participants will pick up trash and do some minor maintenance on a weekly basis. This is welcome news - we truly appreciate this offer.

Bike Commute Week

The Pioneer Valley will celebrate Bike Commute Week May 9-17 with various events throughout the valley. Visit: [www.http://massbike.org/mbpv/bikeweek](http://www.massbike.org/mbpv/bikeweek) for details.

Trail Fundraisers Coming Soon

Derrill's Race - May 3 (www.derrillsrace.com) (registration at 9:00 am)

A portion of the proceeds from this annual 5k running/walking race will go towards repairing the trail at the site of the culvert washout.

Avon Sale - May 3-17 (www.youravon.com/vhurteau)

Buy Avon products through the web site above or from a member of the Committee during this two week period. The sinkhole repair fund receives a percentage of the profits.

Breakfast at the Apollo Grill - May 17 (8:00 am - noon)

Join us for breakfast at the Apollo Grill in Eastworks, 116 Pleasant Street, Easthampton. Eggs, bacon, sausage pancakes and fruit and a cash bar. (suggested donation: \$10)

Yankee Candle Sale - May

Purchase a lovely Garden Sweet Pea scented Yankee Candle with our very own "Save the Trail" label. All proceeds to help repair the trail by the sinkhole.

Massage Day at the Massage School - June 26 (10:00 am - 1:30 pm)

Come to the Massage School at 1 Northampton Street for a relaxing one-hour massage. \$25.00 plus tip. Call for reservation 529-2900.



Yankee Candles will be sold as a fundraiser during May.

Accessible Cycling on Manhan Rail Trail a Success by Karen Foster



Cyclists take advantage of adaptive bicycles provided by All Out Adventures on the MRT last summer.

Every Thursday last summer, All Out Adventures took to the Manhan Rail Trail with a fleet of adaptive bicycles. The cyclists were a diverse bunch, including a young woman taking college classes, a man who gives motivational speeches, two couples trying out a tandem bike and a retired police officer.

What was unusual, however, is that each of them either has a disability or is a friend or family member of someone who is disabled. Disabilities ranged from traumatic brain injury to blindness to developmental disability. Thanks to the adaptive bicycles and a supportive environment, people of all abilities were able to ride the trail.

Participants surprised themselves by riding further than they thought possible. All grew and improved over the summer. A young man with Down Syndrome who began the program quietly participating on group rides grew to the point where he would get off his bicycle at street crossings and hold traffic while everyone crossed safely. A couple, with one blind partner, worked on tandem riding; after a shaky beginning, they became confident and relaxed riders who could cycle the trail with ease.

Last year's program was funded in part by the Nan and Matilda Heydt Fund of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. All Out Adventures is now seeking funding to continue the program in 2009. The nonprofit organization, based in Easthampton, provides outdoor recreation programs to people with disabilities and their family and friends. In 2008 they operated 129 programs that served nearly 2,200 people. To learn more about All Out Adventures and their accessible programs, please visit: www.alloutadventures.org or call (413) 527-8980.

This newsletter is published by the Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail. Comments or questions may be directed to: (413)529-1460 - info@manhanrailtrail.org or visit our web site at:

www.manhanrailtrail.org

Donations may be sent to:
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