

North Reading Rail Trail

Next Steps

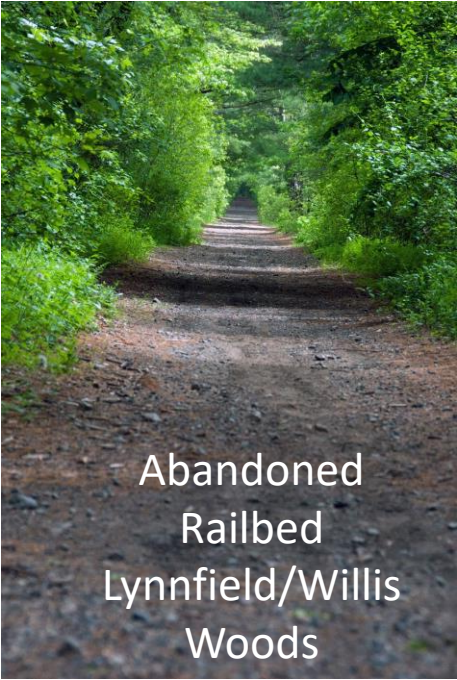
Summer 2022

June 22, 2022

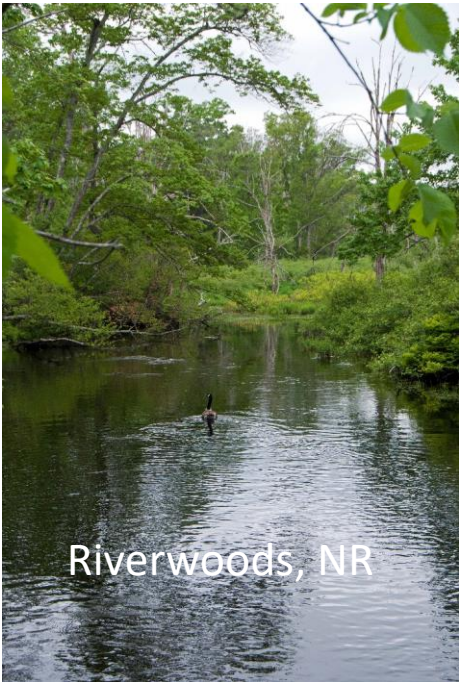
North Reading Rail Trail



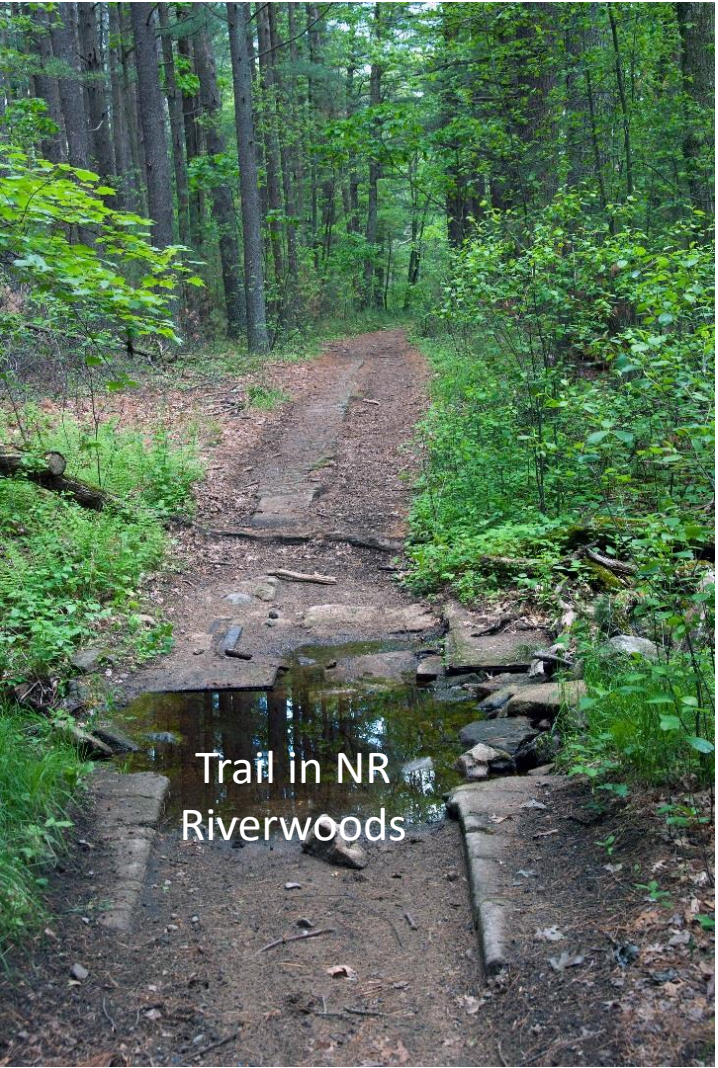
Entrance to Independence Greenway
Russel St. West Peabody near NR, Middleton and Lynnfield



Abandoned
Railbed
Lynnfield/Willis
Woods



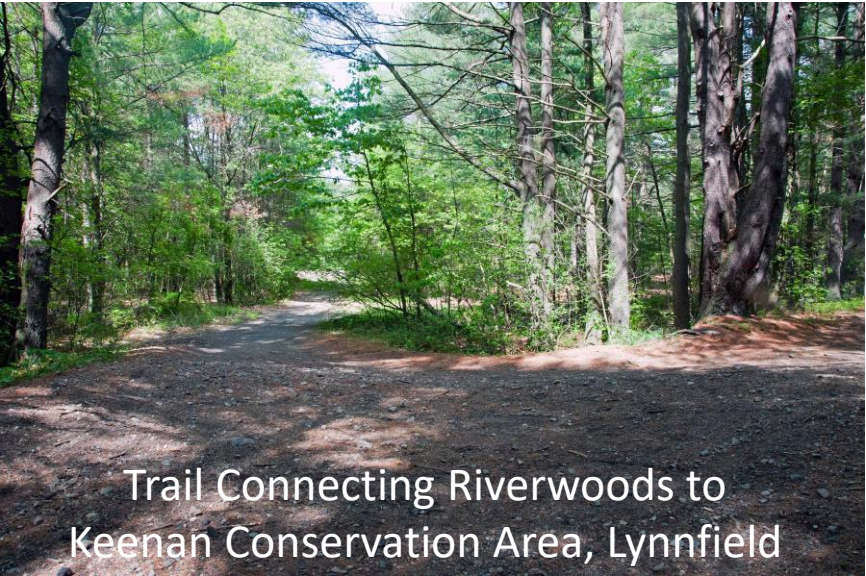
Riverwoods, NR



Trail in NR
Riverwoods

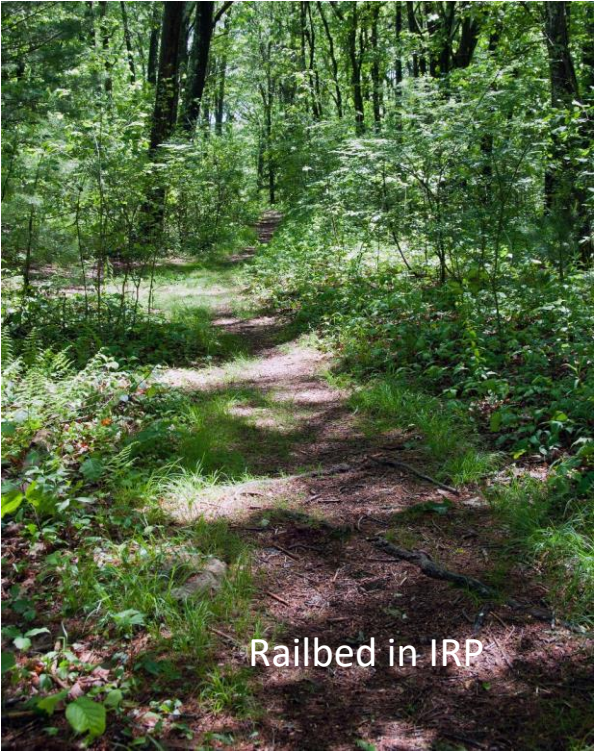
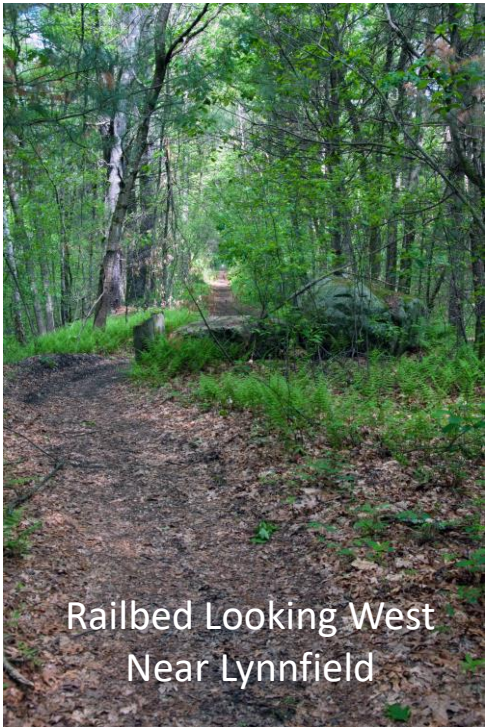
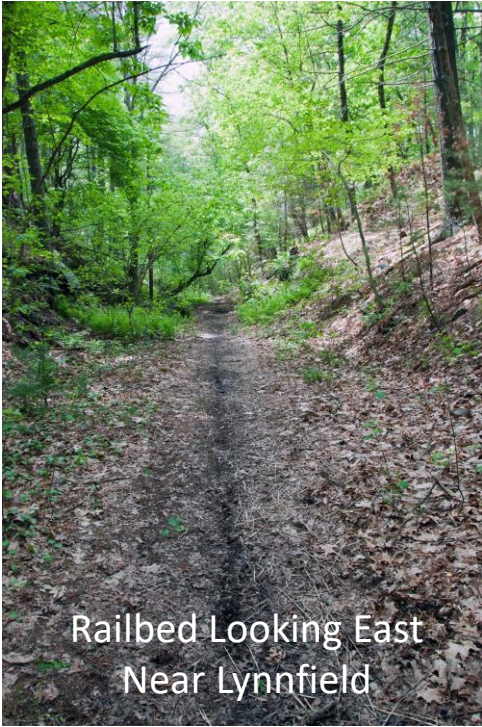
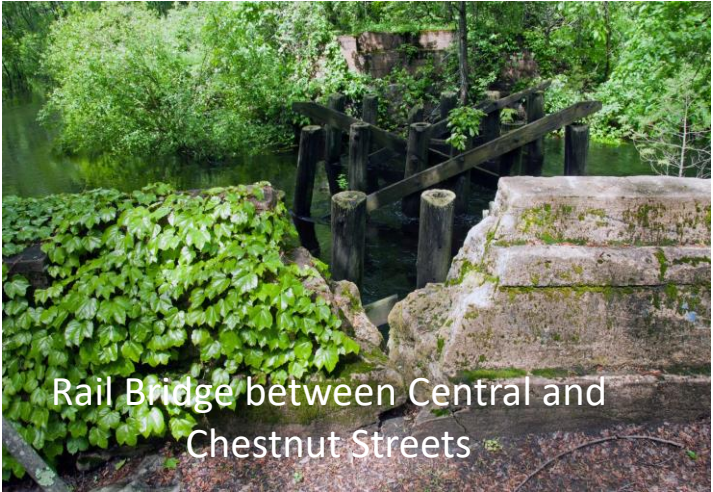
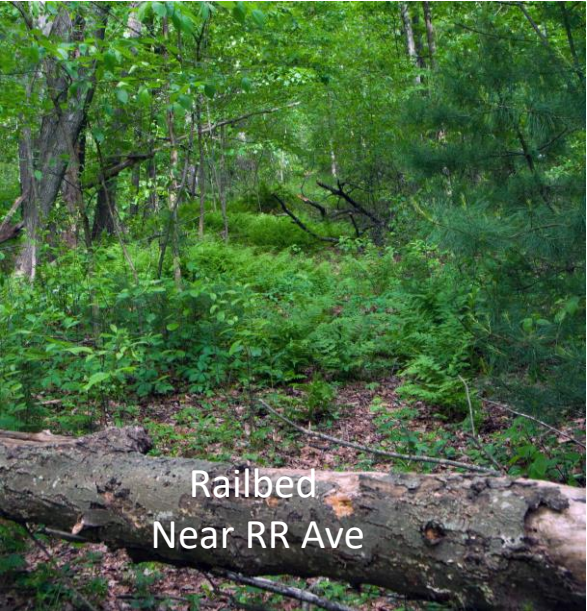


Willis Woods



Trail Connecting Riverwoods to
Keenan Conservation Area, Lynnfield

North Reading Rail Trail



Introduction: Where the NR Rail Trail Stands Now

- Feasibility Study funded by 2018 Town Meeting and 2020 MassTrails grant complete
 - Route options
 - Planning and construction cost estimates
 - Easement challenges
 - Next Step is funding for Initial Design (25% Design).
- PIF (Project Initiation Form) sent and received by MassDOT
 - We believe the PIF has been approved
 - Next step is submission to MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and their approval to place the project on the STIP (State Transportation Improvement Plan)
- MAPC Study “A Vision for Willis Woods” complete
 - Collaboration of Lynnfield, North Reading, Peabody, Middleton, the Ipswich River Watershed Association, and Essex County Greenbelt to provide public access to forested space along the Ipswich River and a rail trail connected to regional trail networks
 - The North Reading Trail will connect IRP to Willis Woods and the already established Border to Boston Trail Network beyond

Why the Trail Makes Sense for North Reading

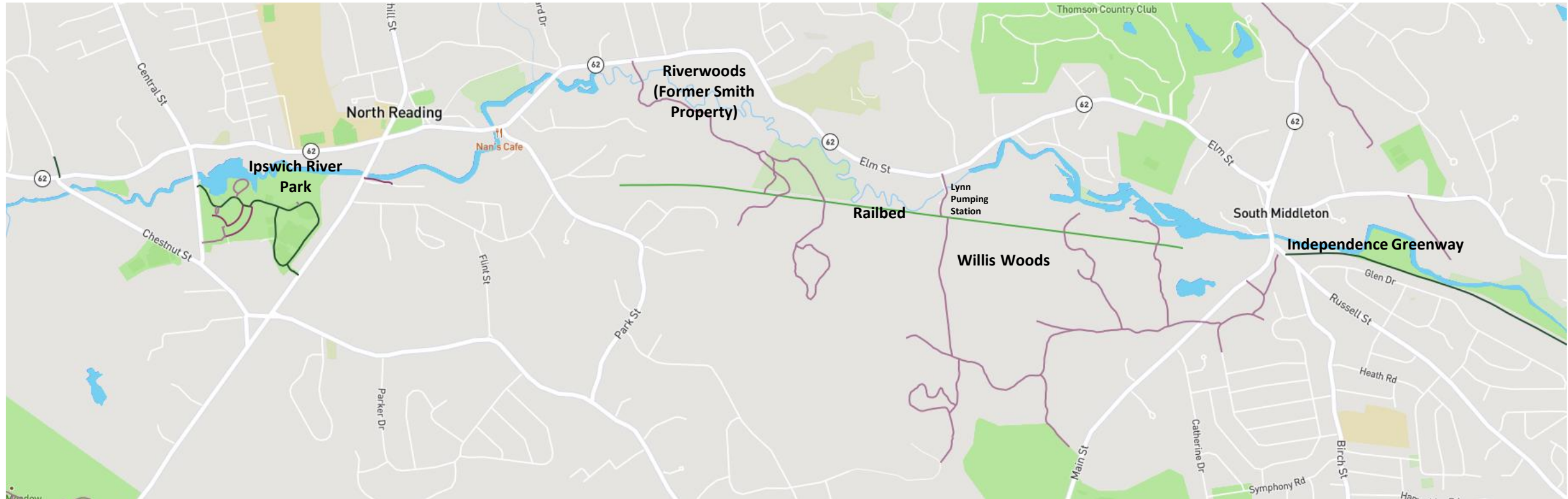
- Creation of a new town amenity providing recreational facilities for all residents and possibly leading to increased property values.
- For an eventual investment of under \$2 million less grants the State will cover \$9.5 million in construction costs (Subject to MassDOT approval). Funding is through the Federal Gas Tax and recently passed Infrastructure Bill.
- A new pedestrian/light emergency vehicle bridge from Elm St/Rt 62 into Riverwoods (former Smith property) giving residents access to lands purchased without a means of public access
- A new bridge from Park St/Rt 62 connecting the HS/MS directly to IRP
- 2.5+ miles of paved, handicap accessible, trail connecting IRP to Riverwoods and beyond to the area in Lynnfield now known as Willis Woods
- From existing unimproved trails within Willis Woods access to Peabody's Independence Greenway and the Greater Boston Trail Network
- Trail meets priorities defined in NR Open Space Recreation Plan, March 2020.

North Reading Rail Trail

Connecting IRP to the “Border to Boston Trail Network”

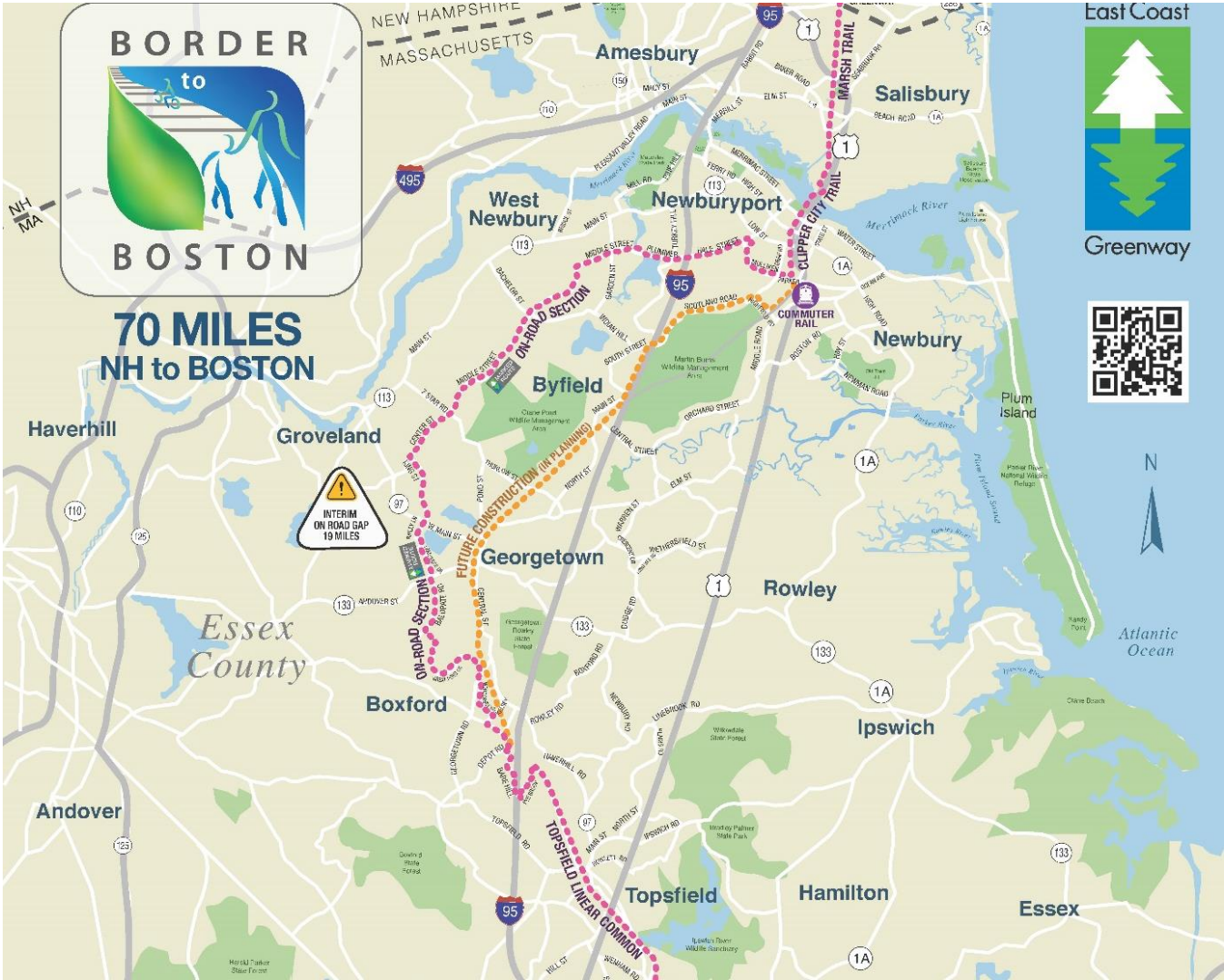
Existing unimproved trails already link North Reading to the Independence Greenway in Peabody which connects into the Border to Boston Trail Network. Securing the path from IRP to Lynnfield will give our town access to this huge system of trails.

Existing Trails



North Reading Rail Trail

Border to Boston Trail Network



North Reading Rail Trail

Willis Woods

North Reading, Lynnfield, Middleton and Peabody are working together to build a network of connecting trails through 620 acres of Lynnfield owned land which has recently been named Willis Woods. This is significant because until now Lynnfield blocked all public access into these lands.



Grant public access to existing open space:

- Open more than 600 acres of forested land and walking trails in northern Lynnfield currently closed to the public.

Create access to the river:

- Existing rail bed in Willis Woods runs along the Ipswich River
- Access to the river from Willis Woods could provide new opportunities for fishing and water sports.

Connect to the regional trail network:

- The Independence Greenway acts as the critical link within the region's Border to Boston shared use trail network that links approximately 20 communities for non-motorized uses including walking, bicycling, and more.

Protect the Water Supply

Permanently protect open space and habitat

North Reading Rail Trail (Version 6/14/22)

The proposed trail would run from Elm St./ Rt 62 to IRP and potentially as far as Chestnut Street in Phase 1 (about 2.5 miles) . Key features include access into Riverwoods and bridge connecting HS/MS to IRP.

- Town Owned Parcel
- Town Owned Sidewalk/Right of Way
- Private Parcel

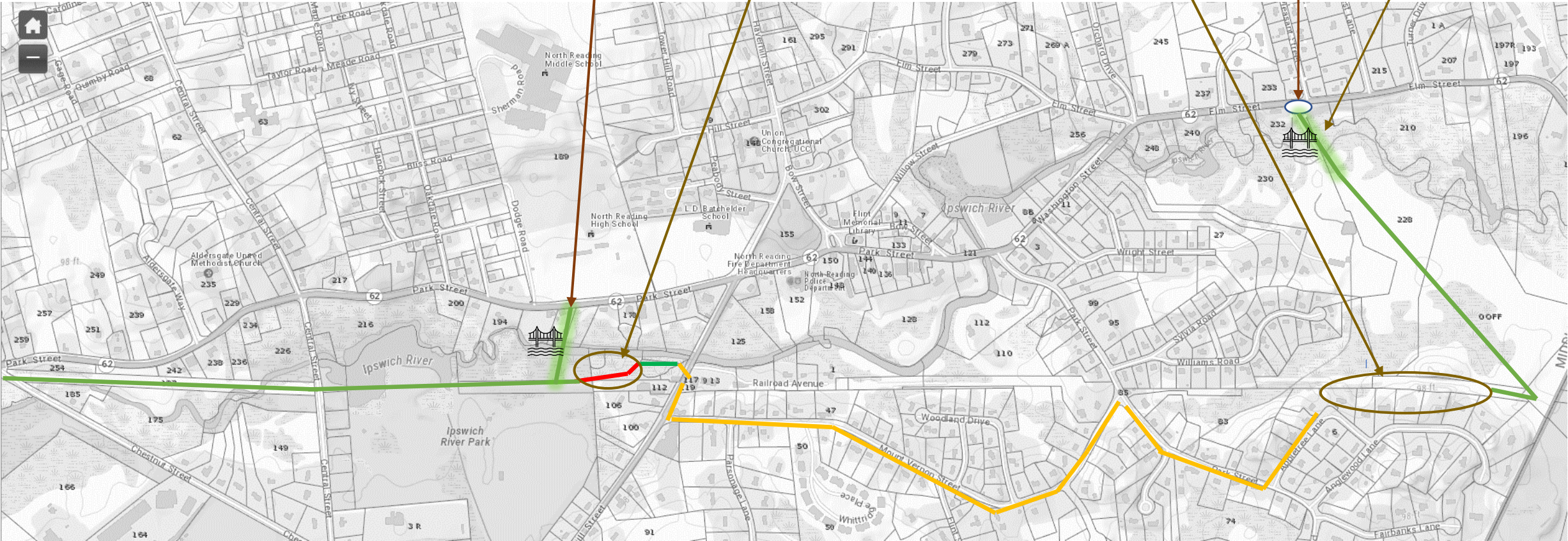
New Bridge
Connecting
HS/MS to IRP

Easement
Negotiation
and Wetlands

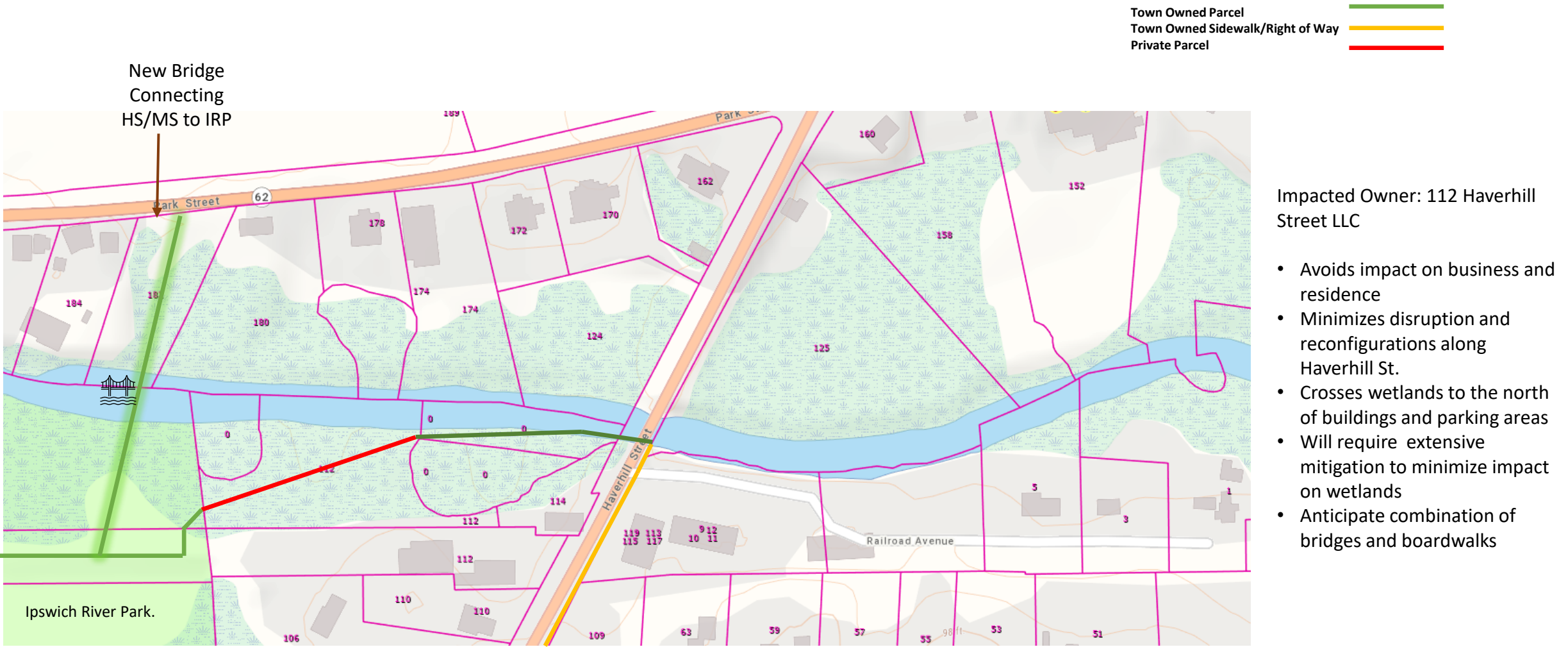
Easement
Negotiation

New
Parking

New Bridge
over River
and Marsh



Bypass of 112 & 114 Haverhill Street



Costs and Challenges

25% (Initial) Design – Next Step	\$850,000 less grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possible \$200,000 design saving ending trail at IRP, not Chestnut St.• Application submitted for grant up to \$300,000 from MassTrails/DCR. Award notification (up or down) this summer
Easement Negotiation and Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By MassDOT rules, Easement negotiations with parcel owners must not begin prior to the completion of the 25% Design	
75% (Final Design) and Permitting	\$850,000 less grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MassDOT approves project prior to initiating 75% Design• Involves final construction planning and design plus all permits• Fully the responsibility of the Town but may be some grants available
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time frame is 5 to 10 years.• MassDOT construction begins some time after the completion of the 75% phase subject to other project scheduling.• MassDOT will cover the full cost of construction currently estimated at around \$10million but likely to be higher by the time work begins. Includes the costs for the trail, new sidewalks, relocation of utilities, wetland mitigation and parking.• MassDOT is enthusiastic about the project because they see it as a critical link to the Border to Boston Trail System.		

Frequently Asked Questions 6/14/22

I've heard that the proposed trail would cross many resident's yards. Is this true?

The trail route as currently planned would cross no more than two private parcels. In only one case would it cross a yard and there is either an existing easement or a willing property owner

Even if the trail would not cross yards, it will certainly abut many properties in Town. What will be done to protect abutters from pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the Trail?

Fencing and plantings will be installed to prevent people using the trail from crossing into private property. This will also minimize views of the trail from homes which may abut the trail.

Some of the Trail will be constructed in wetlands, what will be done to protect these areas?

All local, state and federal wetland rules will be strictly followed. The same rules apply to building the trail as they do to any home or business owner. The North Reading Conservation Committee will need to approve construction plans. Bridges and boardwalks will be supported by widely spaced columns which minimize disturbance of the wetlands. The platforms will be above the flood plane.

How might the Trail impact wildlife currently living on or near the Trail?

There could be temporary disturbance during construction but over the long term there will be minimal impact. Trails routinely coexist with nature in public parks and even in wildlife protection areas in Massachusetts e.g., the Audubon reserve in Topsfield.

Will the Trail be used primarily for bicycles?

While adult cyclists will be welcome, the primary use of the Trail will be for walkers, joggers, baby strollers and kids on bikes. In fact, the trail will provide for a safe, off street, way for kids to bike to school

Frequently Asked Questions 6/14/22 (continued)

Will parking areas and crossings on busy roads disrupt traffic?

A traffic plan is a key component of the Initial Design for which we are requesting funding. The intention is to situate parking so that entrances and exits merge easily into traffic. There are likely to be pedestrian crossing signals at some busy intersections. These will be short cycle lights. Examples can be found in surrounding towns. A good one to look at would be on Route 1 by the Topsfield Fair Grounds. Route 1 is busier than any NR trail crossing and the signal rarely, if ever, significantly disrupts traffic.

Where are there examples of similar Trails?

Many nearby communities already have recreational trails in place, under construction or in the final planning stage. Examples are Middleton, Danvers, Peabody, Topsfield, Boxford, Newburyport and Lynnfield. It is important to note that when these trails were first proposed, many in the community, especially abutters, had similar concerns to those raised in North Reading. However, after some years of operation, most residents came to enjoy the benefits of the trail or at least have no issues living with it.

Will the Town have to pay for the new sidewalks?

No. The cost to construct sidewalks for areas where the Trail runs along a street's right-of-way will be paid by MassDOT. This includes the costs of relocating telephone poles and other obstructions.

Will the Trail need to be lit or plowed in the winter?

- No. There are no plans to light the Trail or plow it in winter. It will be dawn to dusk operation. Winter will be a time for cross country skiing or snow shoeing.

Frequently Asked Questions 6/14/22 (continued)

Will the Town need to cover the ongoing costs for trail maintenance? If so, how expensive will that be?

Yes. The Town will be responsible for ongoing upkeep. Ongoing annual maintenance on an established paved trail is minimal, usually \$1,000 to \$2,000 per mile per year or \$2,500 to \$5,000 on the 2.5 miles of NR trail. This can be offset by volunteer labor. For example, trail maintenance is a good community service project for High School students.

Are similar trails safe from crime? Will additional police patrols be needed on the Trail

This is a common question asked by concerned citizens whenever a trail is proposed in a town. Police chiefs of similar Massachusetts towns to North Reading with established trails report little to no crime on their trails.

What is the liability for property owners or the Town when granting a trail easement?

There is no incremental increase in liability to a landowner or to the Town by granting a trail easement across their property.

MGL Chapter 21, Section 17C limits a landowner's vulnerability to lawsuits. While anyone, including a trail user, could sue a landowner, the owner's liability is limited by law to circumstances of unlawful, wanton, and reckless conduct. In part, the law reads:

Any person having an interest in land . . . who lawfully permits the public to use such land for recreation, conservation, scientific, educational, environmental, ecological, research, religious, or charitable purposes without imposing a fee . . . shall not be liable for personal injuries or property damage sustained by such members of the public, including without limitation a minor, while on said land in the absence of willful, wanton, or reckless conduct by such person

Frequently Asked Questions 6/14/22 (continued)

Will ATV, dirt bikes and other motorized vehicles be allowed on the Trail?

No motorized vehicles other than emergency vehicles will be allowed on the Trail. In fact, one of the key benefits of having the Trail will be the elimination of ATV use which tears up the dirt trails currently in Riverwoods and Willis Woods.

How will the trail impact traffic on Wright St.?

Over the years, ATVs as well as walkers wanting access to Riverwoods, or Willis Woods, would enter these areas via Wright St. They would need to trespass on several private properties between the end of Wright St. and Town owned lands. The Trail will eliminate ATVs and walkers/cyclists who want access will enter via the new Elm St. bridge or via Appletree La. Traffic into the woods via Wright St. should be all but eliminated.

Do trails reduce abutter property values?

According to many studies, Trails do not reduce property values. In fact, if anything, they increase them. Lots of examples are available with a browse of the Internet.

Will the Trail increase noise and crime?

Consistently when new recreational trails are first proposed, abutters express concern about noise and crime. Police chiefs from around Massachusetts as well as other states overwhelmingly report that neither noise nor crime increase with trails. Crime rates and noise levels on and around trails remain the same as the community as a whole.

Will the Trail lead to dozens of cars parked along Appletree Lane and/or Anglewood Lane?

Parking could be controlled with no parking signs as potentially requested by the residents. It may also be possible to locate parking in the woods on a portion of the abandoned railbed. However, by and large, people would be parking at the new lot to be built on Elm Street and not on these streets.

North Reading Rail Trail

Frequently Asked Questions 6/14/22 (continued)

How much of the trail will be on or near the historical railbed?

Around .75 miles will be on or very near the historical railbed. Additionally, although not part of this project there is an existing, unimproved, dirt trail on 1.25 miles of Lynnfield railbed which could be assessed from the North Reading trail

Is MassDOT funding for the North Reading trail dependent on Lynnfield completing a direct railbed connection to the Independence Greenway

No. The projects are completely separate. Lynnfield will soon have a connection to Main St. around the Bostik plant on town owned land. This will provide access to the Independence Greenway from the railbed.

If Bostik does not grant an easement through to Boston Street, Middleton, can there still be a connection from the railbed to the Impendence Greenway.

Yes. While the most direct connection would be via Bostik property, the Town of Lynnfield has acquired land abutting the railbed which has an outlet onto Main Street which becomes Boston Street at the Middleton line.

What North Reading Would Lose by Not Funding the Trail

- \$2 million bridge connecting HS/MS to IRP paid for by MassDOT
- \$2 million bridge connecting Elm Street to Riverwoods and Willis Woods. Both areas currently inaccessible from North Reading paid for by MassDOT
- 2.5 miles of ADA compliant trail mostly in wooded areas paid for by MassDOT
- New sidewalks on Park Street, Mount Vernon St. and likely on Applewood Lane paid for by MassDOT
- Enhanced pedestrian safety crossings at busy intersections