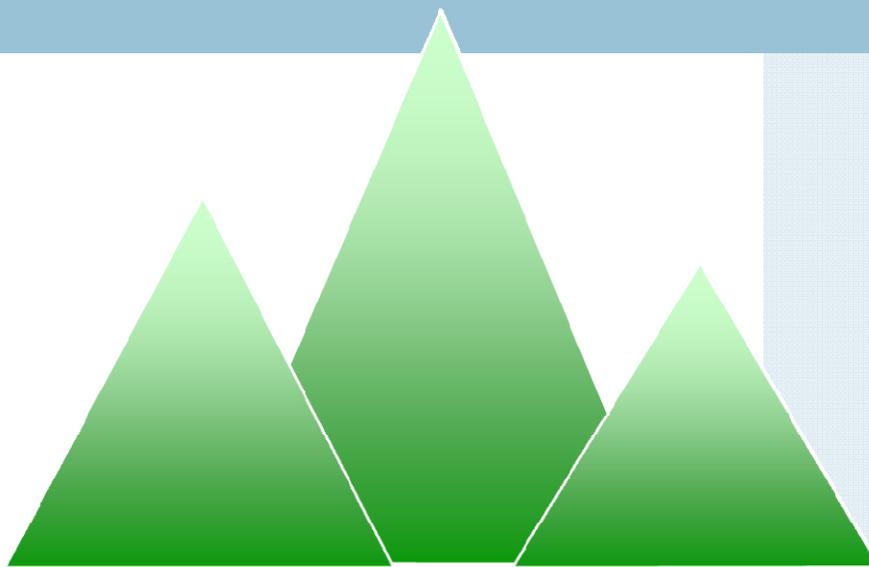


MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION



TRAIL INVENTORY REPORT

2010



FOR THE City of
GARDNER

November 2010

TRAIL INVENTORY REPORT

Prepared for the City of:
Gardner

Prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highway Division and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Trail Inventory project is to identify local existing trails in the City of Gardner (see map Figure 1 & 2) and to develop a Trail Inventory Report that can be utilized by the community and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to establish goals and objectives related to the development of multi-purpose trails within the community and the region. In addition, how these identified trails can be connected to existing or proposed trails of neighboring communities can be examined.

INTRODUCTION

The report outlines the identified corridor(s) and their potential as multi-purpose trails. Information has been gathered on the potential trails regarding their location, natural features, physical structures (i.e. bridges, trestles, etc.), and historical background. The benefits to the community in terms of recreational use, and conservation have also been compiled. How these trails correspond to the City's Open Space & Recreation Plan as well as state, regional and national trail plans have also been evaluated.

As new recreational trails are developed throughout communities, many more people will benefit from additional outdoor recreation opportunities. The benefits of trails extend well beyond fitness and leisure pastimes. Trails hold tremendous potential for economic and community development, education, transportation, aesthetics, historic preservation and community capital.

As stated by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy:

“Across the country, trails and greenways are stimulating tourism and recreation spending. Lodging and food, horseback riding, bicycling, snowmobiling and bird watching demonstrate the economic value that trails and greenways provide to communities... Trails help improve people's health by providing safe and attractive places to be physically active and by providing alternative transportation routes that help reduce pollution from automobiles. Trails and greenways also increase the natural beauty of communities and have been shown to bolster property values”.

The MRPC wanted to help boost the enthusiasm among local residents in trail development and conservation. The first steps in this process were to develop a list of community members who were already involved in the trail developing process. By communicating with these individuals, it became clear as to what the city had already done with trail projects and development along with what we could focus on for our Trail Inventory Meetings.

TRAIL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The United States

According to the New England Greenway Vision Plan “The United States has been actively increasing their trail mileage over the past three decades. The United States National Trail System hosts 14,260 miles of National Scenic Trails and 21,916 miles of National Historic Trails with a combined total of 36,176 miles of trail. Two organizations that are working hard to establish trails and have a direct impact on New England are the East Coast Greenway Alliance and the Rail-to-Trail Conservancy. There are also two significant legislative packages that impact trail building directly, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) signed in 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) signed in 1998.” Reauthorization of the transportation legislation, i.e. the successor to TEA-21 contain provisions that maintain funding for trails.

On August 10, 2005 the President signed into law the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)*. This law builds on the same firm foundations as the ISTEA and TEA-21 by supplying the funds and refining the programmatic framework for investments needed to maintain and grow our vital transportation infrastructure. Within this document it states that “A total of \$370 million is provided through 2009 to continue this program to develop and maintain trails for recreational purposes that include pedestrian, equestrian, bicycling and non-motorized snow activities as well as off-road motorized vehicle activities. New eligibilities are provided, including construction and maintenance equipment, real estate costs, educational program costs, State administration costs, and assessment of trail conditions”.

2. New England

As stated in the New England Greenway Vision Plan, Trails began in New England out of necessity. The white tailed deer, along with other wildlife, were of the first trail makers in the area. They created these trails to and from the watering holes and feeding areas. Native American Indians soon followed the deer into New England. This was because venison was one of their primary sources of food, and they could also use the hides for clothing and other necessary supplies.

New England's trail building efforts are leading the way for the rest of the United States. New England has approximately 7,000 miles of rail corridor, of which 4,000 miles are abandoned (a little more than ½ the total). Currently there are 1,023 miles of open rail trails located in New England, 133 miles of which are located in Massachusetts. The expected total of rail trails in New England by 2010 is 2,350 miles.

New England's railroad corridors are a rich resource for creating rail trails. Rail trails are pathways that run along abandoned rail beds. They can have many different types of surfaces

including asphalt and crushed stone. Rail Trails are considered multi-use trails because they can host a variety of recreation modes including biking, walking, roller-blading and horseback riding. New England's greatest potential for trail building lies within the rail corridors.

One of the recommendations for securing the Massachusetts Greenway Vision as developed by the Department of Environmental Management, now known as the Department of Conservation and Recreation, was to protect and promote long-distance trail corridors as primary spines of the Massachusetts Greenway and Trail System. As an example, the Midstate Trail which runs from the New Hampshire State Line all the way down to the Rhode Island border.

3. Montachusett Region (see map Figure 1)

Increasing concern for air quality and energy conservation is leading to renewed interest in development of adequate facilities for bicycles throughout the Montachusett region. While individual bikeway and trail projects are being implemented in some regional communities, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of bicycles around population centers and on the highways.

Information that was provided to the MRPC through pervious Trail Inventory efforts has been incorporated into the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The 2007 RTP explains how several communities have worked to develop bicycle paths and/or ways. A few are currently in operation with several more planned for expansion or construction. Transportation enhancement funds have been utilized as a mechanism to implement several of these bicycle and/or pedestrian ways. For more information please visit www.montachusett-transportationplan.com.

The MRPC will be in the process of coming out with an updated Regional Transportation Plan in 2011. This update will include the inventory results for this report as well as others that were conducted from 2007 to present.

4. Plans (MRPC Executive Order 418 Report 2004)

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission completed several Executive Order 418 (EO418) Community Development Plans during June 2004. "This program provided all communities across the Commonwealth with up to \$30,000 in technical assistance (pre-planning) and planning services in four core areas; Housing, Open Space/Natural Resource Protection, Economic Development and Transportation. This program was jointly funded by four state agencies; Department of Housing and Community Development, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Department of Economic Development and the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction." (Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development)

5. Bicycling

Bicycles have found a place on the highway network by default, as have pedestrians. Bicycles mixed with motor vehicle traffic can be dangerous and create traffic delays. At the same time,

bicycle safety problems have increased. Also the number of bicycle-automobile accidents has increased. There is strong support from the regional communities for designated bikeways for recreational and commuting traffic. Construction of the bikeways will encourage cycle commuting by providing a direct, separate, and safe route between the communities.

Bikeways are special routes and/or facilities established to facilitate the movement of bicycles as an energy efficient transportation and/or recreation mode of travel. There are three classifications of bikeways:

**Class I
Bicycle Path** A completely separated right-of-way designated for the exclusive use of bicycles. Crossflows by pedestrians and motorists are minimized.

**Class II
Bicycle Lane** Restricted right-of-way designated for the exclusive or semi-exclusive use of bicycles. Through travel by motor vehicles or pedestrians are not allowed. However, vehicle parking may be allowed. Crossflows by motorists, for example, to gain access to driveways or parking facilities, is allowed, pedestrian cross-flows, for example, to gain access to parked vehicles or bus stops or associated land use, is allowed.

**Class III
Bicycle Route** A shared right-of-way designated as such by signs placed on vertical posts or stenciled on the pavement. Any bikeway which shares its through-traffic right-of-way with either or both moving (not parking) motor vehicles and pedestrians is considered a Class III bikeway.

According to the Massachusetts Statewide Bicycle Transportation plan, there are also three different types of bicycle users:

Group A Advanced Bicyclists - These are experienced riders who can operate under most traffic conditions. They comprise the majority of the current users of collector and arterial streets.

Group B Basic Bicyclists – These are casual or new adult and teenage riders who are less confident of their ability to operate in traffic without special provisions for bicycles.

Group C Child Bicyclist – These are pre-teen riders whose roadway use is initially monitored by parents.

GARDNER TRAILS

The City of Gardner (see map Figure 2) is located in north central Massachusetts and is bordered by Winchendon and Ashburnham on the north; Templeton on the west; Westminster on the east; and Hubbardston on the south. Gardner is 28 miles northwest of Worcester and 59 miles northwest of Boston.

1. Inventory Process

MRPC held a Trail Inventory Meeting with the City of Gardner on the evening of July 7, 2010 at the Gardner City Hall. The attendees were asked to view a large wall sized map of the community that showed the existing trails that the MRPC had gathered from their Geographic Information System (GIS) database. They were then asked to verify existing trails, sketch out any additional trails that existed, parking areas and also possible spurs and trailheads. Potential trails and/or trail development areas were also discussed, along with specified connections to other existing trails to create a local trail network.

Because meeting attendance was very low, the MRPC decided to send out a draft trail map via email to all relevant City departments and request their feedback. This proved to be a very useful tool since there were many comments and suggestions during this time.

The Trail Inventory meeting and comments resulted in the following trail list:

2. Existing Trails

1. Dunn Pond Trail (Formal Trail)

This trail segment is located along Dunn Pond. It runs from the parking area at the Dunn Pond State Park off Rt. 101 and runs clockwise around the pond. The Dunn Pond State Park consists of 119 acres of property that is used for “walking trails, swimming, fishing, picnicking, public programs, and play equipment. Private canoes and non-motorized boats are allowed on the pond. In the winter the trails are open for cross country skiing, ice skating is allowed on the pond and often there is a fire blazing in the visitors centers fireplace. All activities offered by the park are accessible to people with disabilities.” (Department of Conservation & Recreation) This trail is approximately 1 mile long.

2. Gardner City Forest (Formal Trails)

This extensive trail network is located in the northwestern part of Gardner. The trails run from Rt. 140 south to Eaton Street along an abandoned railroad bed and then branches off to the west towards Perley Brook Reservoir and Clark Street and to the northwest to the town of

Winchendon. There are parking areas on Rt. 140 near the North Central Pathway as well as further up towards Winchendon, on Eaton Street south of the Golf Course, and on Clark Street across from Perley Brook Reservoir. These trails total approximately 8.9 miles

3. High Ridge Wildlife Management Area (Formal Trails)

This 2,018 acre property, owned by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, is located in Ashburnham, Gardner and Westminister. The property consists mostly of fields and marshes. The hiking trails run throughout the property, mostly on paved access ways. There are parking areas off Rt. 140 in Gardner, East Gardner Road and Overlook Road in Westminister. The entire property consists of 10 miles of trails, 5.8 miles of which are located in Gardner.

4. North Central Pathway (Formal Trail)

The North Central Pathway is an existing trail that connects the communities of Gardner and Winchendon. The idea of developing this 16-mile trail came about in 1994 when local citizens discussed the idea during a meeting in Gardner, and the North Central Pathway Committee was developed in 1995 and remains active today.

The trail development was split into five separate phases. Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4 have been completed and totals approximately 8.6 miles of the planned sixteen miles. Phase 5 is scheduled to be completed in 2012 through funding provided by an earmark from Congressman Olver.

Phase 1 was completed in 1997 along a sewer easement in the City of Gardner and it runs along Crystal Lake from the Veteran's Skating Rink to Green Street near the edge of the Gardner Municipal Golf Course. The total length of this section is about 1 mile and there are paved parking lots at both trail ends.

Phase 2 of the trail was developed in 1999 and added 2.5 miles of an on-road bike route to the Pathway. The route continues up Green Street, passing Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) and then it turns eastward onto Kelton Street in order to make use of a bridge over Route 140. Once north of Route 140, the trail then follows Wheeler and Stone Streets. From here users can follow Route 140 to Phase 3 of the Pathway.

Phase 3 of the trail entailed the purchase of approximately 8 miles of an abandoned railroad right of way between Gardner and Winchendon. Funding was obtained for the acquisition as well as the construction of 3.2 miles of the rail line through the Transportation Enhancement Program (both through the Montachusett Region and the Statewide Programs). This is a paved surface that runs from about 1 mile south of the Winchendon Town line to where the right of way intersects with Old Gardner Road in Winchendon. This section was opened in 2003. Small parking areas have been constructed at the northern and southern ends of this trail section.

Phase 4 breaks away from the progression northward and moves toward the center of Winchendon. This phase runs for approximately 8/10 ths of a mile from Summer Street to

Glenallen Street and involved the construction of a shared use path, signage, parking and the rehabilitation of the bridge across Whitney Pond. This section links areas of the town center to Whitney Pond and the Clark Memorial Recreation Center.

In July 2005 Congressman Olver announced that the U.S. House of Representatives has passed a \$286 billion authorizing bill which funds the nation's highways, bridges, mass transit systems and bicycle pathways through 2009 entitled Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The bill includes \$4 Million for North Worcester County Bike Paths including the North Central Pathway. Phase 5, which will connect phase 3 and phase 4, will make use of the earmark for its construction proposed for 2012.

The trail totals approximately 5.8 miles within the City of Gardner.

5. Oakmont Trails (Formal Trails)

This trail system begins at the Oakmont Regional High School and travels southward towards the railroad tracks, East Gardner Road and the Midstate Trail. These trails total approximately 6.45 miles in Westminister, and a small portion (0.6 miles) runs through the City of Gardner.

6. Old Colony Road (Informal Trail)

This informal trail runs along the discontinued Old Colony Road which is located off Route 140 in Gardner and runs north into the town of Winchendon. This trail is approximately 0.1 miles in Gardner and 4.5 miles in Winchendon.

7. Otter River Conservation Area (Formal Trail)

The Otter River Conservation Area is located in the area of the Gardner Municipal Airport. This trail begins at the end of Airport Road and travels up a dirt road where it ends at a small pond near Otter River. The trail is approximately 0.44 miles long.

8. Rome Conservation Area (Formal Trail)

“Rome Conservation Area was founded in 2002, with a gift of 175 acres from the Rome family to the North County Land Trust, Inc. The conservation area is a mixed hardwood/conifer forest drained by Wilder Brook. It is bounded on the north by the Winchendon Town Line and on the east by the Gardner City Forest. Rome Conservation Area is protected by a Conservation Restriction held by Massachusetts Conservation and Recreation. “(North County Land Trust, Inc.)

The trail is accessible off Route 140 through the Gardner City Forest. In the future the trail will

also be accessible through Wilder Brook development which is currently under construction off Brookside Drive. The trail is approximately 1.2 miles long.

9. Lake Wampanoag Wildlife Sanctuary (Formal Trails)

This 772 acre property is located on Mass Audubon land at the end of Raymond Street on the Ashburnham town line. These trails are open every day from dawn to dusk. The trail network is approximately 2.13 miles long.

3. Proposed Trails

There were two potential trails in our inventory located in South Gardner. Their names and descriptions were unknown at the completion of this report.

4. Additional Information

1. Open Space Plan (2006-2010 Update)

Listed in Table 5.4: Parks and Playgrounds, the following areas were mentioned that allow hiking:

- Dunn Park & Forest
- North Central Pathway

In Section 8: Goals and Objectives, the following information regarding trails is mentioned:

Goal 2 – Improve and expand recreational resource facilities

A. Complete bike path trail – The North Central Bike Path project consist of a planned 16 miles of dedicated pathway connecting the downtowns of Gardner and Winchendon. The project is about half complete with nearly all the path developed in Gardner. A short connector was completed in 2006, and a final connector is planned for 07-08. A Recreational Trails grant application has been filed with the Mass Dept of Conservation and Recreation requesting funds for this final connector within Gardner.

D. Improve Otter River boat access and hiking trails – Unrealized but desirable objective from previous OSRP.

Both these areas were listed as the most popular spot in the city for recreation from the Open Space Survey that was handed out to residents.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Trail cost estimates are often based on the trails surface type. Some things to consider while decided the surface type are:

- User acceptance and satisfaction
- Accessibility
- Cost to purchase and install materials
- Cost of maintaining the surface
- Life expectancy
- Availability of material

Hard surfaces often include materials such as asphalt, concrete, crushed stone, boardwalk, and recycled materials (ex. Tires). A soft surface trail often includes natural earth and woodchips. According to the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy, the cost estimates for these materials are as follows (cost is per mile):

- Asphalt - \$200K - \$300K
- Concrete - \$300K - \$500K
- Crushed/granular stone - \$80K - \$120K
- Boardwalk - \$1.5 mil – \$2 mil
- Natural Earth - \$50K-70K (10ft wide trail)
- Woodchips - \$65K – 85K (10ft wide trail)

Because trail development can often be costly, we've included some funding options to get you started.

1. Federal Funding

Recent passage of *Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* continues efforts begun in The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and its predecessor the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). These authorization legislations identify various federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit.

The SAFETEA-LU five-year legislation contains provisions for Bicycle and Pedestrian funding under varying programs and titles. Please consult state, federal and regional officials regarding questions on these programs for the most current information.

The following is a brief description of federal funding sources related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- ***Surface Transportation Program (STP)***

STP is the primary source of funds to the states for construction/reconstruction of roads, highways, and bridges. Funds can also be used for transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects as well; however, competition for these funds is exceedingly hard and currently compete with highway and bridge projects.

- ***Transportation Enhancement Program (TE)***

This is the largest, most popular, funding source for trails, sidewalks, and other bicycle/pedestrian facilities. Previous legislation (ISTEA) created the TE program as a way to promote multi-modal transportation by providing funds for projects such as:

1. Provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities
2. Provision of pedestrian and bicycle safety and educational activities
3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites
4. Scenic or historic highway programs including tourist and welcome centers
5. Landscaping and scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
8. Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails
9. Control and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning & research
11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provision of wildlife connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums

TE projects must related to surface transportation and must qualify under one or more of the 12 eligible categories listed above.

The Rails to Trails Conservancy describes TE programs in the online manual “*Acquiring Rail Corridors: A How To Manual*” as follows:

The Enhancements provisions are administered by each state's Department of Transportation (DOT). To receive Enhancements funds, you will need to submit a formal application to your state DOT. In most states, the project sponsor submitting an Enhancements application must be a local or state agency, although some states also allow nonprofit organizations to submit applications. Nonprofits are generally required to demonstrate some level of government sponsorship or endorsement before their applications are considered.

All Enhancements awards require that the project sponsor or the state provide at least 20% of the project's funding. The federal government provides the remaining 80%. This local match requirement is an extremely important issue that project sponsors need

to address carefully, especially since matching rules and ratios vary from state-to-state.

Since requests for Enhancements funding exceed the funds available, Enhancements funds are awarded through a highly competitive selection process. In most states, the selection process begins when applications are submitted to the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or other regional transportation planning body. MPOs play an active role in screening, endorsing, prioritizing, and, in some cases, actually selecting projects for funding. Once your application has been reviewed by your MPO, it will be passed along to the state DOT for statewide review. Many states have created statewide advisory committees to assist in evaluating projects. These advisory committees typically consist of citizens and representatives from the state DOT and other state agencies such as Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism.

Source: <http://www.railstotrails.org>

Within Massachusetts, project applications are submitted to the appropriate Regional Planning Agency, or if the project crosses RPA boundaries, to the statewide enhancement committee. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highway Division maintains guidelines, application procedures and an implementation manual on their website <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Highway/>.

- ***Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)***

The CMAQ program, jointly administered by the FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), was reauthorized in 2005 under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). It was developed to fund projects that assist in achieving the goals set forth in the Clean Air Act. In metropolitan areas classified as “non-attainment” i.e. they do not meet the national air quality standards for ozone and carbon monoxide levels, bicycle and pedestrian facilities may be eligible for funding. This program provides over \$8.6 billion dollars in funds to State DOTs, MPOs, and transit agencies to invest in projects that reduce criteria air pollutants regulated from transportation-related sources over a period of five years (2005-2009). Specific analysis needs to be conducted to determine project eligibility under the CMAQ program.

- ***Recreational Trails Program (RTP)***

According to the Federal Highway website, “The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The RTP is an

assistance program of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Federal transportation funds benefit recreation Federal transportation funds benefit recreation including hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles.

The RTP funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund, and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use: fuel used for off-highway recreation by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks.

The RTP funds are distributed to the States by legislative formula: half of the funds are distributed equally among all States, and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each State...Each State administers its own program. Contact your state RTP Administrator for guidance on State policies and project eligibility requirements.

The Recreational Trails Program Project Database lists most RTP projects funded from 1993 through 2009. The Coalition for Recreational Trails compiled this database from information supplied by State trail administrators.”
(<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/>)

- ***Safe Routes to School (SRTS)***

The Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS) is a Federal-Aid program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Program was created by Section 1404 of the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act* (SAFETEA-LU). The SRTS Program is funded at \$612 million over five Federal fiscal years (FY 2005-2009) and is to be administered by State Departments of Transportation (DOTs).

FHWA recommends that SRTS efforts in the United States incorporate – directly or indirectly – five components, often referred to as the “5 E’s”. The 5 E’s are:

1. Engineering – Creating operational and physical improvements to the infrastructure surrounding schools that reduce speeds and potential conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, and establish safer and fully accessible crossings, walkways, trails and bikeways.
2. Education – Teaching children about the broad range of transportation choices, instructing them in important lifelong bicycling and walking safety skills, and launching driver safety campaigns in the vicinity of schools.
3. Enforcement – Partnering with local law enforcement to ensure traffic laws are obeyed in the vicinity of schools (this includes enforcement of speeds, yielding to pedestrians in crossings , and proper walking and bicycling behaviors), and initiating community enforcement such as crossing guard programs.
4. Encouragement – Using events and activities to promote walking and bicycling.

5. Evaluation – Monitoring and documenting outcomes and trends through the collection of data, including the collection of data before and after the intervention(s).

The Massachusetts SRTS program promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. It educates students, parents and community members on the value of walking and bicycling for travel to and from school. The SRTS Program empowers communities to make walking and bicycling to school a safe and routine activity once again.

The Program allows partner schools to qualify for local infrastructure improvements around their school to help improve safety access. SAFETEA-LU specifies that eligible infrastructure-related projects include the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including

- sidewalk improvements,
- traffic calming and speed reduction improvements,
- pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements,
- on-street bicycle facilities,
- off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities,
- secure bicycle parking facilities, and
- traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools. (Section 1404(f)(1)(A))

Currently there are 18 schools in the MRPC region that have partnered with the Safe Routs to School program. More information on this program can be found at www.commute.com.

- ***Transit Enhancement Funds***

The FTA requires that at least one percent of transit expenditures for urbanized areas of more than 200,000 people (known as 5307 formula funds) go to projects that improve access to transit service. Many of these projects focus on cycling and walking. Contact your transit authority's planner or MPO for more information.

- ***The Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) Program***

“The Transportation, Community, and System Preservation (TCSP) Program is a comprehensive initiative of research and grants to investigate the relationships between transportation, community, and system preservation plans and practices and identify private sector-based initiatives to improve such relationships. States, metropolitan planning organizations, local governments, and tribal governments are eligible for discretionary grants to carry out eligible projects to integrate transportation, community, and system preservation plans and practices that:

- Improve the efficiency of the transportation system of the United States.
- Reduce environmental impacts of transportation.
- Reduce the need for costly future public infrastructure investments.
- Ensure efficient access to jobs, services, and centers of trade.
- Examine community development patterns and identify strategies to encourage private sector development patterns and investments that support these goals.

Section 1117 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, Public Law 109-203) authorized the TCSP Program through FY 2009. A total of \$270 million is authorized for this Program in FY's 2005-2009.

The TCSP Program is a FHWA Program being jointly developed with the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Rail Administration, the Office of the Secretary, and the Research and Innovative Technology Administration within the US Department of Transportation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency.”

(<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tcsp/>)

- ***Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP)***

“The Office of Federal Lands Highway (FLH) provides program stewardship and transportation engineering services for planning, design, construction, and rehabilitation of the highways and bridges that provide access to and through federally owned lands. FHWA's initial partnership began with the US Forest Service in 1914 and expanded to the National Park Service in 1926.

The Federal Lands Highway Program (FLHP) was created by the 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act and signed by President Reagan on January 6, 1983.

The primary purpose of the FLHP is to provide financial resources and technical assistance for a coordinated program of public roads that service the transportation needs of Federal and Indian lands. The FLH currently provides transportation engineering and related services in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. One of the major factors associated with the success of the program is the Federal Highway Administration's strong relationship with our Federal, State, local, and tribal partners.” (<http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/>)

“FLHP roads serve federal lands for which state and local governments are not responsible. According to the FLHP, these projects promote "recreational travel and tourism, protect and enhance natural resources, provide sustained economic development in rural areas, and provide needed transportation access for Native Americans." Despite being a "highway" program, trails often benefit as they fulfill the recreational travel and tourism requirement of the program.” (<http://www.railstotrails.org/>)

- ***National Scenic Byways Program***

“The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. There are 151 such designated Byways in 46 states. The Federal Highway Administration promotes the collection as the America's Byways®.

The National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grants program provides funding for byway-related projects each year, as part of the Federal Highway Administrations Discretionary Grants Program. Projects to support and enhance National Scenic Byways, All-American Roads and State-designated byways are eligible. Applications are prepared online but submitted through the State's byway program agency.”

(<http://www.byways.org/learn/program.html>)

Eligible uses for this discretionary grant program for designated FHWA National Scenic Byways include projects that improve bicycle and pedestrian safety along the byway corridor. Applications for National Byway status are submitted to state departments of transportation and then forwarded to FHWA in a competitive process.

(www.railtrails.org/)

As with all of the above programs, the final legislation and regulations may affect what types of projects are eligible, what programs are available and what the application procedure would entail. Please contact state and federal officials for the most up-to-date information.

2. Non-Federal Transportation Funding

The following information was taken from the Rails-to-Trails website.

“**National Recreation Trails (NRT)**: Though not a source of funding, NRT designation from the Secretary of the Interior recognizes exemplary existing trails of local or regional significance. NRT designation provides **benefits**, including access to technical assistance from NRT partners and listing in a database of National Recreation Trails. In addition, some potential support sources will take NRT designation into account when making funding decisions. The NRT program is open to applications.

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA): Though not a source of funding, RTCA is a technical assistance arm of the National Park Service dedicated to helping local groups and communities preserve and develop open space, trails and

greenways. RTCA is an important resource center for many trail builders in urban, rural and suburban areas. "Instead of money," their Web site notes, "[RTCA] supplies a staff person with extensive experience in community-based conservation to work with a local group on a project."

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF): This 50/50 matching grant program is administered by state agencies in cooperation with the National Park Service. Program funds are intended for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas; trails are one priority of this program.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant: This Department of Energy program was funded for the first time under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. According to DOE, it "provides funds to units of local and state government, Indian tribes, and territories to develop and implement projects to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use and fossil fuel emissions in their communities."

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG): Providing annual grants on a formula basis to local governments and states for a wide range of community planning initiatives, CDBG monies have been used for trails. For example, the **Fairfield Heritage Trail** in Ohio used CDBG funds for a portion of trail construction. CDBG projects must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate slums or blight, and address community development needs having a particular urgency.

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF): A program of the US Forest Service, UCF "provides technical, financial, research and educational services to local government, non profit organizations community groups, educational institutions, and tribal governments." Trails and greenways are a key part of the program, though Forest Service cooperative programs are in the midst of being **redesigned in 2008**.

Public Works and Economic Development Program (PWED): One of a few investment **programs administered by the Economic Development Administration** of the US Department of Commerce, PWED is meant to provide funding for "construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities" that, among other things, can help to "redevelop brownfield sites and provide eco-industrial development."

Historic Preservation Funding Sources: Many trail corridors contain historic structures, often of regional or national significance. Sometimes, the corridor itself is of historic significance. First awarded in 2006, **Preserve America** is a 50/50 grant program that will match non-federal funds. Administered by the National Park Service and focusing on education and heritage tourism, grants are awarded only to designated Preserve America communities and state Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). Trails are a common recipient of Preserve America grants. Administered by the National Park Service, **Save America's Treasures** grants can be used only to preserve properties and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places that are of national significance or designated as a National Historic Landmark. NPS also administers the Historic Preservation Fund, which awards matching grants-in-aid to the states for the restoration of properties on the National

Register of Historic Places. To look up your state, tribal or territorial SHPO, visit the **National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers**. For information on the National Register of Historic Places and the process to get a property listed on the Register, visit the NPS **National Register of Historic Places Web site**.

Brownfields Funding Sources: Many rail corridors are contaminated from years of industrial use. To remediate this environmental pollution, there are many federal and state funding sources for brownfields from which trails can benefit. The Environmental Protection Agency has devoted a **section of its Web site** to funding and financing for brownfields. Many trails have taken advantage of brownfield funding, including Rhode Island's **Woonasquattuck River Greenway Project**, the **Elkins Railyard redevelopment**  in West Virginia, and the **Assabet River Rail Trail** in Massachusetts. A **listing from the Trust for Public Land** shows examples of brownfields converted to parkland.

Wetlands Restoration Funding Sources: Many railroads were built through environmentally sensitive areas that are now candidates for restoration. Administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service, the **National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program** is a matching grant program designed to assist states in the "acquisition, restoration, management or enhancement of coastal wetlands." States bordering the Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf of Mexico or Great Lakes are eligible. Although trails cannot be the primary beneficiary of these funds, the program has been used to work on trail infrastructure. For example, the **Cape Cod Rail Trail underwent some reconstruction to restore a tidal wetland** in 2006 using program funds. Related funding sources include the **Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership**, a source of private money for wetlands restoration, and the **Natural Resources Conservation Service** of the US Department of Agriculture offers technical and financial assistance programs to restore and protect natural resources and wildlife. The U.S. EPA has a **full list of federal funding sources for watershed protection**.

Although federal programs have provided new sources of funding for rail-trail acquisition and development, it is important to obtain local financial support to provide necessary matching funds for federal or state grants, or in case federal or state funding is not available." (www.railtrails.org/)

3. State Funding

- ***Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program***

“The LAND Program (formerly the Self-Help Program) was established in 1961 to assist municipal conservation commissions acquiring land for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes. Lands acquired may include wildlife, habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farm land. Compatible

passive outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, bird observation and the like are encouraged. Access by the general public is required. This state program pays for the acquisition of land, or a partial interest (such as a conservation restriction), and associated acquisition costs such as appraisal reports and closing costs.” (Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services)

- ***Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program***

“The PARC Program (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established in 1977 to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents, or any city regardless of size, that has an authorized park /recreation commission is eligible to participate in the program. Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program.

Only projects that are to be developed for suitable outdoor recreation purposes, whether active or passive in nature, shall be considered for funding. Grants are available for the acquisition of land and the construction, or renovation of park and outdoor recreation facilities, such as swimming pools, zoos, athletic play fields, playgrounds and game courts. Access by the general public is required.” (Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services)

- ***Land and Water Conservation Fund***

“The Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (P.L. 88-578) provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply. Nearly 4000 acres have been acquired and hundreds of parks renovated using the \$95.6 million that Massachusetts has received from the state side portion of the federal program since 1965. DCS administers the state side Land & Water Conservation Fund program in Massachusetts. Access by the general public is required.” (Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services)

- ***Conservation Partnership Grant***

“The Conservation Partnership grants provide funding to assist non-public, not-for-profit corporations in acquiring interests in lands suitable for conservation or recreation purposes. Potential projects fall into one of two categories:

Land or a conservation restriction purchased by an eligible Applicant

Land or a conservation restriction gift donated to an eligible Applicant

The Act requires that all selected Applicants convey an appropriate perpetual conservation restriction, within the meaning of sections 31 and 32 of [Chapter 184 of the General Laws](#), to either the city or town in which the selected project is located, to be

managed by either its conservation or recreation commission, or a state agency, or both. The Act also requires that all projects provide appropriate public access, as determined by the Secretary.

Applications for these grants will be accepted from qualified IRS 501(c)(3) organizations that have been formed for one of the purposes described in [Section 4 of Chapter 180 of the General Laws](#). An organization must have 501(c)(3) status at the time an application is submitted. Municipalities are not eligible for funding.

The Conservation Partnership program is available only during specific times of year, and funds are available only through an open process which includes a qualified response to a Request for Responses (RFR). Check back to this site often for information on the availability of funds each fiscal year.” (Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services)

- ***Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bond Program***

“The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Bond Program is intended to increase compact, mixed-use, walkable development close to transit stations. To accomplish this objective, the Program authorization (Chapter 291 of the Acts of 2004) provides financing for pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities, housing projects, and parking facilities within .25 (1/4) miles of a commuter rail station, subway station, bus station, bus rapid transit station, or ferry terminal.

The Program is part of an integrated, multi-agency strategy to promote Smart Growth and Smart Energy development in the Commonwealth. Smart Growth – Smart Energy prompts growth where it makes the most sense: in and around central business districts or traditional city or town centers, near transit stations, or in areas that have been previously developed for commercial, industrial or institutional use. The Commonwealth’s Smart Growth – Smart Energy initiatives are intended to shape policies involving housing, transportation, capital and economic development, and the preservation of natural resources.” (www.mass.gov/)

- ***Recreational Trails Grant Program***

“The Recreational Trails Program provides funding support for a variety of trail protection, construction and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. This national program makes funds available to states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The Program is authorized and funded through the federal “Transportation Equity Act for the 21 st Century” known as TEA-21. It is administered on a reimbursement basis by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (formerly DEM), in partnership with the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board and the Massachusetts Highway Department. Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, government agencies, and municipalities.” (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation)

- ***Mass ReLeaf Grant Program***

“Mass ReLeaf is a trust fund for public tree planting projects in Massachusetts. By seeking public or private funding Mass ReLeaf is able to provide matching grants to support local projects that involve a partnership in the planting and care of trees on public land. The goals of the program are to help communities purchase trees to be planted for energy conservation, screening, community gateway or parking lot enhancement, or to offset urban pollution; and to assure long-term tree survival by emphasizing proper tree selection, planting, aftercare and maintenance.” (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation)

- ***Urban Forest Planning and Education Grants***

“The goal of the Urban Forestry program is to assist communities and nonprofit groups in building support for the long-term protection and management of community trees and forests. The USDA Forest Service provides the grant funds that the DCR administers with guidance from the Massachusetts Community Forestry Council. A maximum of \$10,000 is available per project.” (Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation)

- ***Community Preservation Act***

“The Community Preservation Act is statewide enabling legislation to allow cities and towns to exercise control over local planning decisions. This legislation strengthens and empowers Massachusetts communities:

- All decisions are local.
- Local people must vote by ballot to adopt the Act.
- Local legislatures must appoint a committee of local people to draw up plans for use of the funds.
- These plans are subject to local comment and approval.
- If residents don’t feel the CPA is working as they expected, they can repeal it.

The Community Preservation Act provides new funding sources which can be used to address three core community concerns:

- Acquisition and preservation of open space
- Creation and support of affordable housing
- Acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes

A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues of the fund must be used for each of the three core community concerns, and up to 5% may be used for administrative expenses of the

Community Preservation Committee. The remaining funds can be allocated for any combination of the allowed uses, or for land for recreational use. This gives each community the opportunity to determine its priorities, plan for its future, and have the funds to make those plans happen.

Property taxes traditionally fund the day-to-day operating needs of safety, health, schools, roads, maintenance. - and more. But until the CPA, there was no steady funding source for preserving and improving a community's quality of life and character. The Community Preservation Act can give a community the funds needed to control its future.” (www.communitypreservation.org/)

- ***New England Grassroots Environmental Fund (NEGEF) - (Small Grants)***

“NEGEF’s small grants program provides grants to groups working on community level issues in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Fund interprets the word ‘environment’ broadly and will provide funding for a wide range of activities. Whole systems-thinking is critical to initiatives focused on making our environment better, healthier and more sustainable.

Small grants are intended to support community groups who represent the most exciting energy in the environmental movement that are not being reached by traditional funders.

(1) *Successful applicants will have:*

- Earned credibility as a grassroots organization through community work which strengthens the role of local citizens in solving environmental problems or developing sound environmental policies;
- Identified a significant community need and developed a clear plan for translating that need into action;
- Developed a vision of the long-range impacts of their work; and
- Demonstrated an ability to account for the expenditure of funds.

(2) *NEGEF does not fund the following proposals:*

- Educational curriculum and/or in-school projects
- Publication of books or reports
- Lobbying or partisan political activities
- Studies with no follow-up action
- Acquisition of land and/or buildings
- Individuals
- For-profits
- Micro- or mini-grant programs

(3) *The goals of the Small Grants program are to:*

- Increase civic engagement, volunteerism, emerging leaders and community initiatives that create health, just, safe and environmentally sustainable communities at the neighborhood and town level in New England;
- Help community leaders move single issue, backyard debates to positive, inclusive, systemic, constructive, and lasting community solutions;
- Link community-based advocacy with the work of state-wide and national organizations without losing local identity; and
- Establish and maintain informed networks of activists across the region that are committed to building a just and equitable society”
(<http://grassrootsfund.org/>)

- ***Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)***

The Trails and Greenways Clearing house states “As rail-trails become increasingly important community development tools, rail-trail projects may be eligible for funding through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The CDBG program is designed to support community improvement and redevelopment projects. Rail-trails with documentable economic, cultural and historic merit may be eligible for CDBG funding. Seattle's Burke-Gilman Trail and the Baltimore & Annapolis Trail in Maryland both received funds through this program.” For further information on this program, contact the local RPA, chief elected official or planning department.

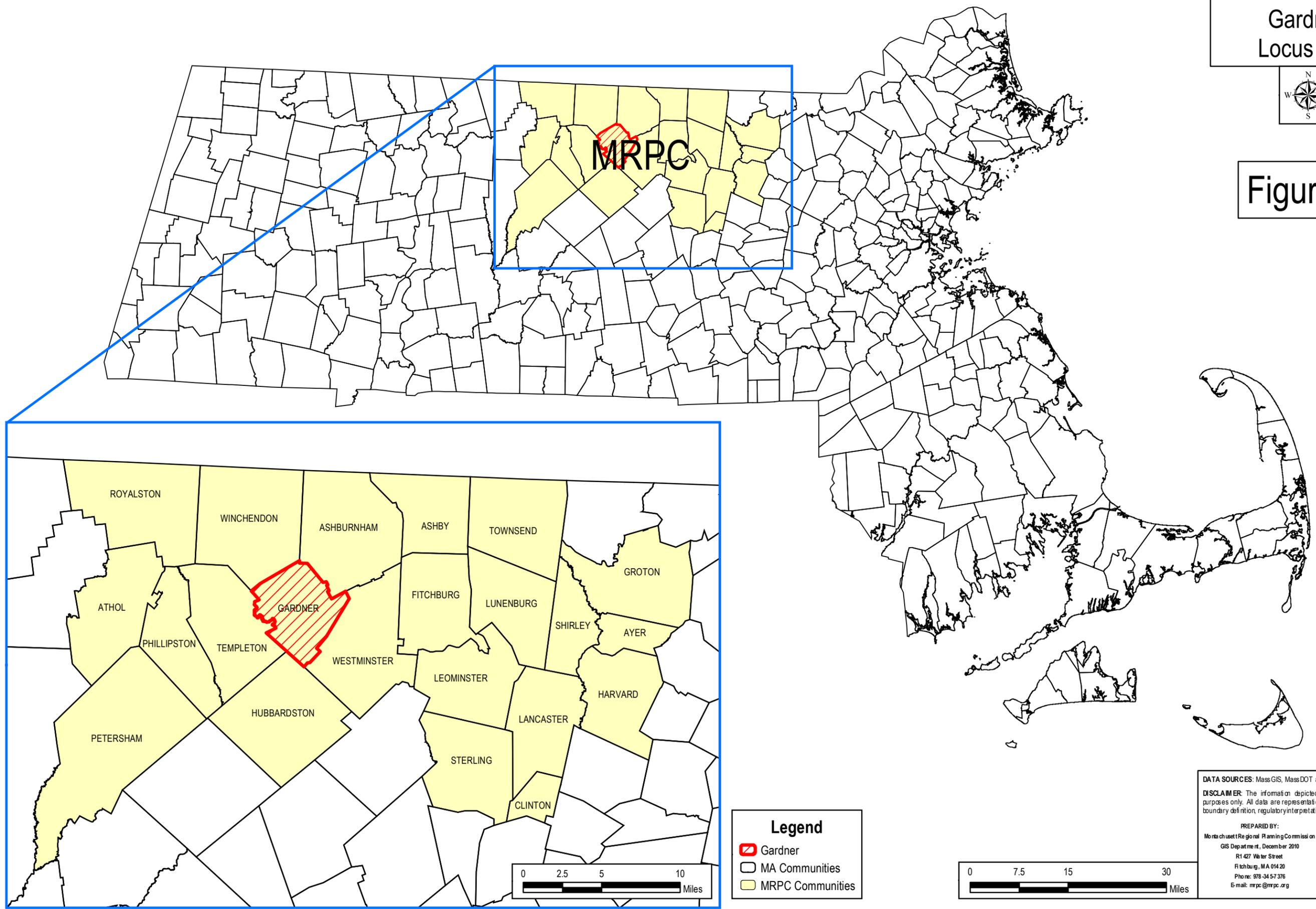
CONCLUSIONS

All of the communities within the MRPC region have the ability of connecting to other communities by means of local trails. These trails can create a regional trail network that will enable users to travel to other communities, regions, and even other states. This regional network is very important to the Montachusett region as well as the state of Massachusetts. As the population continues to rise, the land protection becomes more and more difficult. It is very important to protect these trails and preserve them for future generations to come.

2010 Trail Inventory
Gardner:
Locus Map

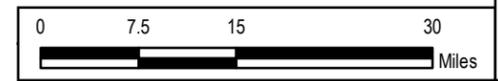
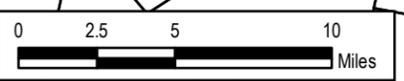


Figure 1



Legend

- Gardner
- MA Communities
- MRPC Communities



DATA SOURCES: MassGIS, MassDOT and the MRPC.

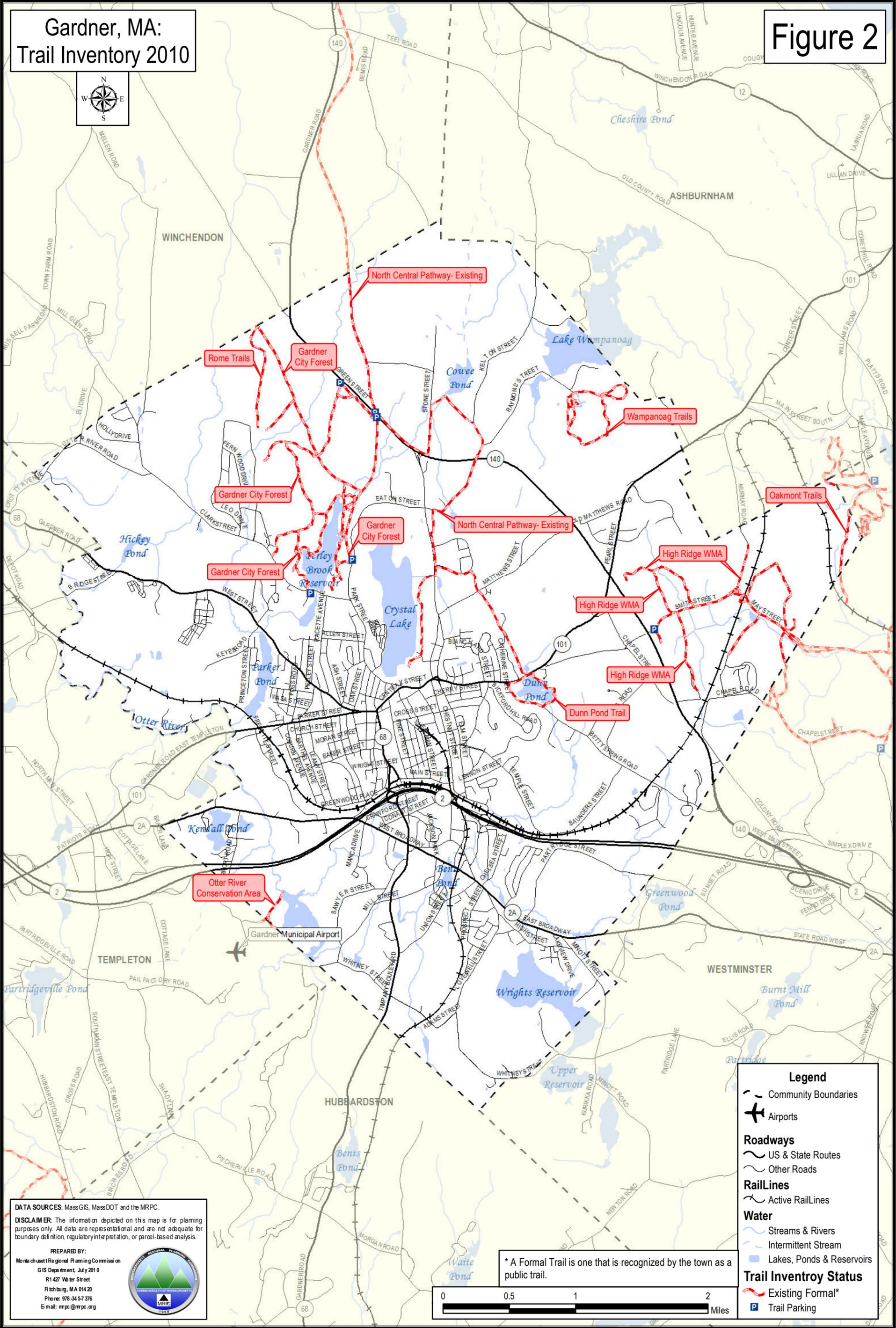
DISCLAIMER: The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. All data are representational and are not adequate for boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-based analysis.

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Gardner, MA: Trail Inventory 2010

Figure 2



DATA SOURCES: MassGIS, MassDOT and the MRPC.

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* A Formal Trail is one that is recognized by the town as a public trail.

Legend

- Community Boundaries
- Airports
- Roadways**
 - US & State Routes
 - Other Roads
- RailLines**
 - Active RailLines
- Water**
 - Streams & Rivers
 - Intermittent Stream
 - Lakes, Ponds & Reservoirs
- Trail Inventory Status**
 - Existing Formal*
 - Trail Parking