



MRT Committee member Bette Sanderson and volunteer Robert Natario hold the new Pastport in place prior to installation so it can be lined up properly.

Pastport to Trail History

The Manhan Rail Trail's rich railroad history is coming alive with the installation of a display just off Payson Avenue. The display, called a Pastport, consists of a clear plexiglass panel onto which a turn-of-the-century photo (below) of a train engine has been etched. When visitors look through the glass panel, they will see the old fashioned scene superimposed over the present day rail trail.

The photo, found in the attic of the Easthampton Historical Society after an exhaustive search, includes the wood-fired engine, the old station house and tracks from the Boston and Maine line.

When viewers line up the tracks on the image with the current rail trail, the two images merge and the results are amazing.

The display was sponsored by Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail but funding was provided by the Easthampton Lions and Rotary Clubs. The organizations raised money for the project by holding their annual Golf Tournament.



Williston Seeks Rail Trail Property

Williston Northampton School has expressed an interest in either purchasing or obtaining the right of way to a small strip of land between the rail trail and Lossone Rink on Greenwood Court. The use of the land would allow the school to widen its driveway alongside the rink as well as install a parking lot on the south side of the rink.

The strip of land is about 20 feet wide and 500 feet long. Expanding the driveway and parking area would mean a smaller buffer between the trail and the paved areas. But Williston officials assured the Manhan Rail Trail Committee that landscaping and fencing would keep trail users safe and enhance the view along that stretch. Officials also offered to allow trail users park in the rink lot during off hours.

The committee made a recommendation to sell the land but it is up to City Council and the Mayor to make the final decision about the property.



A narrow strip of land adjacent to Williston's Lossone Rink driveway (right) is being sought by the school so it may widen the driveway and add a parking lot south of the rink. (photo by Peter Brooks)

Our volunteer web site manager, Trace Meek, is in the process of revamping our site to make it even better! The redesign will help us to keep the content fresh, so site visitors will have all the latest info about the trail and related programs.

Our sincere thanks to Trace for all his efforts!

Visit our web site!
manhanrailtrail.org

Rail Trail Tidbits

“Bike Up” Window

Kudos to Easthampton Savings Bank for deciding to allow customers on bicycles to conduct business at their drive up windows. This is a change in policy brought about by an inquiry by MRT Committee member Peter Brooks.

Moved for Safekeeping

In case you are wondering...the Nora Valdez sculpture which normally graces the area opposite the mural, was moved indoors for the winter. The sculpture was commissioned by members of the community in recognition of the Manhan Rail Trail Committee and others who helped get the trail built. It should be back in its warm weather spot this spring.

New Fencing

L & L Fence has been selected to install some 80 feet of fencing near the Pascommuck Trust property off East Street this spring. The cost, to be shared by the Trust, is \$1,380. It is hoped the fence will reduce erosion by preventing ATVs from crossing the trail.

Southampton Moves Ahead

The Southampton Conservation Commission in January unanimously approved funding a feasibility study for the town's proposed Greenway. The next step is to get the study's funding approved at Town Meeting May 21. The \$30,000 would come from Community Preservation funds. Proponents say the path, which would end at Sheldon's Ice Cream shop, could have a soft surface.

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:

Manhan Rail Trail

Easthampton Municipal Office Building

50 Payson Ave.

Easthampton, MA 01027

Breakfast, Nature Walk May 18

Come celebrate *Bike Commute Week* with a breakfast to benefit the Manhan Rail Trail Sunday, May 18 from 8 - 11AM at the American Legion Hall, 190 Pleasant Street in Easthampton. The Legion Hall is adjacent to the bike path, and has plenty of free parking. The menu includes eggs, toast, sausage, home fries, French toast, coffee and orange juice.

Special thanks to Richard Boulanger, who is donating the food and facilities, and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission which helps coordinate and promote Bike Commute Week throughout the region. An annual event, Bike Commute Week is designed to encourage people to ride their bikes to work or school.

Nature Walk to Follow Breakfast

Following the breakfast, the first of three planned trail nature walks will begin. Titled “*Signs of the Season on the Manhan Rail Trail*,” the walk will be led by Jim Teruso, who has worked as a Park Ranger/Naturalist for the Massachusetts State Park System and the Mass Audubon Society.

The group will meet at the Lower Mill Pond Park on Ferry Street behind the Legion Hall. The walk will last for 60-90 minutes and will follow the trail north towards Route 5. All ages are invited as the pace will be slow with an emphasis on exploration and education, not distance walked. The trail is handicap accessible and people of all abilities are welcome. Bring water and binoculars. The program is funded by the Easthampton Cultural Council. Call Jim at 529-2614 for details.



To Northampton..and Beyond! by Liz Sturgen

One of the most frequently asked questions about the Manhan Rail Trail is, “When will it connect to Northampton?” We are happy to report that some progress is being made towards that goal.



The Earle Street section of the Manhan Rail Trail in Northampton is under construction.

The trail from Easthampton to Northampton will be built in two sections. The first, from the Roundhouse in downtown Northampton to the old State Hospital grounds at Earle Street, is being constructed now, beginning at the State Hospital end and working northward over the summer.

The section from Earle Street to Easthampton's Ferry Street, where it will join the existing trail, is farther in the future. The right-of-way must still be acquired by Northampton from National Grid, which has power lines along the old rail corridor. Funding is also needed for that section.

So we must continue to be patient, but also remember that real progress has been made this year, and soon another part of the trail system will be in place for all to enjoy!