

## Boston Globe West

FRAMINGHAM

### Cochituate Rail Trail to Open First Portion

Half-mile path between Route 30, Pike in Framingham due to open in June

*By Eun Lee Koh, Globe Staff, April 29, 2004*

As early as June, walkers and cyclists will be able to find respite along a half-mile portion of the new Cochituate Rail Trail, between the congestion of Route 30 and the roar of the Mass. Pike.

The Framingham Board of Selectmen finalized an agreement last week with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority that would open a portion of the rail trail to the public for the first time since the project to convert the now-defunct CSX rail corporation line into a recreation trail began three years ago.

"We're really happy about it," said Andrea Carr-Evans, a member of the Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee. "Obviously, this is a major step forward."

The selectmen voted to accept an easement for the trail, which means the Pike will continue to own the land but will allow the town to use that portion for its nascent rail trail.

The half-mile stretch starts near the Framingham-Natick line, at Route 30 near Speen Street, and ends at the Mass. Pike, near Old Connecticut Path. When it's finished, the 4-mile Cochituate Rail Trail is expected to start at Natick center and wind north to the village of Saxonville in north Framingham.

Trail proponents have been cleaning up parts of the site for the past three years, removing rail ties, splintered wood, and garbage. They will head there again Saturday to continue the cleanup.

This initial leg of the trail will open officially once the agreement is recorded with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, which is expected to happen in the next several weeks, according to Mark Lamkin, chairman of the Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee, which also includes representatives from Natick.

Committee members have already posted signs near the entrance on Route 30, guiding pedestrians to the half-mile portion. A ceremony is planned for sometime in June, when the trail officially opens, he said.

The next task for Framingham officials and for committee members is to continue negotiating with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and with CSX, the two entities that own the remaining parts of the 4-mile trail. Trail proponents are seeking similar easement agreements with the T and with CSX.

"It's a really beautiful walk, and I'm happy that people will have access to it soon," said Selectwoman Katie Murphy, who has walked portions of the trail during the cleanup efforts. "The committee has done tremendous work on the trail. I'm just happy that we, as a board, could support them."

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