

Group on Track Toward Rail Trail

By Charlie Breitrose / News Staff Writer
Monday, September 20, 2004

FRAMINGHAM -- The possibility of creating a trail on a former train line is moving closer to reality, as rail-trail advocates have gained rights to a section in Saxonville and are negotiating to acquire access to more.

Over the summer, the Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee was granted access to a section of the old rail line in Saxonville by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. Now the group is negotiating with the [MBTA](#) to gain use of more of the line.

"Earlier in the year, we got an easement from the Turnpike, but the MBTA has a larger portion of the trail," said Mark Lamkin, chairman of the Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee.

The Framingham group has banded with several other communities wanting similar access to Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority lands in hopes of striking a deal with the agency.

"We have requested a temporary license...to complete the segment between Rte. 30 and Old Connecticut Path," Lamkin said. "They haven't executed it, but it could come late in the year."

Lamkin said he hopes to have part of the trail, between Rte. 30 and Old Connecticut Pass, open by next spring.

The group has visions of turning the train tracks into a four-mile recreation trail from Saxonville in northwest Framingham down to Natick Center. The Natick portion, unlike the part in Framingham, is occasionally used by trains.

The rail-trail committee plans a clean-up of the trail on Oct. 2, which Lamkin said will involve removing vegetation more than picking up trash.

"We cleared it in the beginning of the summer, but it must have been a good weed-growing year," Lamkin said. "I went walking down there the other day, and the weeds were four feet high."

Even after the area is cleared, however, the trail won't be ready for the public to use. The part that the Turnpike Authority opened up runs near Speen Street and crosses the driveways of TJX Cos. and other businesses.

Lamkin said the rail-trail committee hopes to work with the businesses to create safe crossings, similar to a crosswalk. The other section of the trail in Framingham that runs from Old Connecticut Path to School Street poses more complicated problems. The path includes two bridges that have deteriorated over the years.

"The bridge is made of concrete and steel supports," Lamkin said. "Normally they would have wood ties and rails, but the rails have been removed and the ties have rotted away."

Though the trail has not opened yet, the public can get a glimpse at one of two events during October, said John Brennan, a member of the Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee. The first will be the clean-up day.

"The trail is not open to the public, yet. It is only open during special events," Brennan said. "Usually, 30 to 60 people show up (at the clean-up days) and work most of the day cleaning trash and clearing brush."

The clean-up day on Oct. 2 runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. People who work for an hour will receive a rail-trail T-shirt and pizza served at noon.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring brush cutters, bow saws, rakes and shovels. Wearing work gloves, long pants and a long-sleeve shirt is recommended. People can park at 500 Old Connecticut Path and then walk across the street to the sign-in table.

Later in the month, on Oct. 17, a walking tour of the Cochituate Rail Trail will be held as part of an event organized by the Friends of Saxonville.

More information about the walking tour is available on the Web at www.saxonville.org.