

June 14, 2018

Frequently Asked Questions, Lynnfield Portion of the Wakefield/Lynnfield Rail Trail Project

1. What is the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail project?

The Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail project is a proposed recreational path/park that would use a 4.4-mile rail corridor that begins at the Galvin Middle School on Main Street in Wakefield and extends to the Lynnfield/Peabody Town line. Approximately 1.9 miles of the proposed path is located in Wakefield and 2.5 miles in Lynnfield. The path would be 12-foot-wide and paved, except for a raised boardwalk through Reedy Meadow. The project is the result of many years of study and planning to identify safe, off-road alternatives for residents of Lynnfield and Wakefield to bike and walk. The proposed project is currently (June, 2018) in the preliminary design phase, often referred to as 25 percent design.

2. How does this project relate to The Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) Landline Plan?

In May 2018, MAPC unveiled the Landline Trail and Greenway Plan to connect 1,400 miles of trails and greenways throughout the Boston Region into a seamless network. If the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail is constructed, it would be part of the North Suburban Boston Greenway system (http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SR_NorthSuburban.pdf). Greenways are the backbone of the Landline network, providing a corridor of travel for the widest variety of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair and stroller users. The surface is firm and stable, wide enough to pass each other. The corridor is ideally on its own property (such as the proposed rail trail).

3. Why is the Town of Lynnfield engaged in this project?

As documented in a [recent report](#) by the Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee to the Board of Selectmen, improved bicycle and transportation corridors have been the focus of community concerns and studies for many years. The 1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan included the results of a survey of town residents completed in 1997 in which more than one-third of the households in town responded. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents stated that they supported the acquisition and preservation of land for overall conservation purposes. Based on a regional study of alternative rail trail locations, the only recreational path opportunity in the Town of Lynnfield to be currently feasible is the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail.

4. How much is the project going to cost the Town?

The Recreational Path Committee is working now to identify all costs identified with the project and will provide this information to the Board of Selectmen as soon as reliable cost estimates are available. Detailed cost information will not be available until the Massachusetts Department of Transportation completes the 25 percent design. In terms of costs incurred to date, planning and preliminary design have been completed at no cost to the Town.

The cost of building the path would also not be borne by the Town. State and Federal funds would be used to pay for all construction costs of the proposed 4.4-mile linear park/recreation trail to provide recreational and transportation benefits to the town. Preliminary estimates of project cost of construction of the entire Wakefield/Lynnfield rail trail is \$10.2 million. The acquisition of the right-of-way for the path construction is through a 99-year lease from the MBTA to the Town for a nominal (or no) annual fee (either \$1/year or \$0/year).

The costs the town would be responsible for include: 1) remaining design and permitting costs, 2) acquisition of construction (temporary) right of way, 3) environmental hazard insurance, and 4) maintenance costs. In aggregate the first three would be one-time costs and are estimated to be less than \$400,000. Annual maintenance costs (based on other towns's experiences) are estimated to be less than \$5,000 per year. Long term maintenance (paving and boardwalk repair) have not yet been estimated.

5. How will maintenance and replacement be addressed?

The Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee is identifying short and long-term trail needs with Town Department heads. The Committee anticipates that a management plan will be developed to address ongoing needs such as public safety, trash control, dog waste, and clearing of fall and spring debris. Meeting these needs is not expected to result in any new staff positions within the Town. The Committee is also exploring opportunities for local civic organizations and businesses to be involved in trail maintenance. In terms of longer-range issues, portions of the boardwalk may need to be replaced in 15-20 years; as noted, the Recreational Path Committee will work to identify all costs. A final plan for this proposed project will include a description of all building materials to be used. Once these materials are thoroughly specified a final estimate of maintenance, repair and replacement costs can be developed.

6. Where are people who access the trail going to park?

Accommodating the parking needs of trail users is a critical step in building a successful recreational path. However, the first phase of planning for the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail is focused primarily on the design of the trail itself. Subsequent planning phases will identify parking needs and how to accommodate them. If this project is ultimately built, the final design will accommodate the parking estimates at the time of construction. The parking experience of other similar trails can be used to provide guidance on what the likely use patterns will be for this trail. It is possible that parking lots at the high and middle schools abutting the proposed trail will be made available for trail users during non-school hours. Additional parking may be made available at other locations based on the final design parking requirements. Parking design and implementation will be coordinated with the Lynnfield Police Department which will be responsible for enforcing any parking regulations associated with the parking approach included in the final design and construction plan.

7. What about the residents' concerns about the rail trail?

The Town is sensitive to concerns and interests of Town residents, particularly of trail abutters who are a high priority in the trail design. Based on concerns expressed by abutters and other residents, in public meetings and communications to the committee, several topics have been identified including a need to understand the impact of a trail on: public safety, real estate values, parking, and

noise and privacy. An earlier report issued by the Lynnfield Recreational Path Committee addressed each of these issues and this report can be viewed [here](#). In addition, it is important that anyone concerned about these issues plan to attend the public hearing that will be hosted by the MA DOT later this year. Each abutter will receive notice of this hearing at which they will be able to learn more about the proposed design and will be encouraged to express their preference for specific screening options.

8. Are there environmental impacts?

Two environmental questions have arisen in anticipation of this trail project. One concerns the risk that environmental contaminants could be exposed during construction. The other concerns the impact on Reedy Meadow and the flora and fauna that reside there. On the first question, since this area was once used as a railroad it is conceivable that contaminants from that era (debris from train spills and construction materials) could be encountered during construction and find their way into the environment. Environmental insurance, which is required under the lease with MBTA to offset such a risk, would pay for cleanup costs. The cost of such insurance would be the responsibility of the Town of Lynnfield and has been estimated to cost \$39,000. If contaminated material is found at the site, it would be advantageous to remove it to achieve long-term health surrounding residents and the environment.

As to the disruption that construction would produce in the meadow, since Reedy Meadow is one of the most heavily protected wildlife sanctuaries in the state of Massachusetts, all relevant state and federal governing organizations that are involved in creating this sanctuary will be required to provide approval of the final design and permitting stage. This will ensure that access to Reedy Meadow, via the Wakefield-Lynnfield Rail Trail, will not come at any expense to the flora and fauna that reside in the Meadow.

9. What's the next step?

The next significant step in this project will be the public hearing that MA DOT will host sometime later this year (2018). This hearing has not been scheduled yet but it is expected it will take place before October 2018. The hearing will be open to all residents of Wakefield and Lynnfield (this is a joint effort between these two towns). The purpose of the hearing is to share the results of the 25 percent design effort and to solicit input from residents in terms of their screening preferences. The hearing will also be an opportunity for residents to discuss parking alternatives and other matters that will be used as input to the following design phase (referred to as the 75 percent design stage). The meeting will be noticed locally and all residents are invited to attend this hearing to provide input to the next stage of design.

10. What is the process for approving the project?

Both Lynnfield and Wakefield voters have approved acquisition authority for the rail trail right of way. Once the 25% design is approved, the 75% design and permitting work will need to be funded by the Towns of Wakefield and Lynnfield or other sources. The LRPC is working with the Selectman to identify potential funding sources, but it anticipated that some form of Town funding will be required. Any expenditure of Town funds must be approved through the normal budget process.

11. How do I know when the Recreational Path Committee meets?

Agendas are posted a least 2 business days before the actual meeting on the Town [website](#). The posted agenda includes the date and location of the upcoming meeting.

12. What is the difference between the 25 percent design and 75 percent design

The “25 percent design” describes a milestone in the design process that includes a completed conceptual design on a well-documented site baseline description as well as a preliminary project cost estimate. Sufficient detail is included in the 25 percent design to demonstrate the proposed design is feasible, is the best alternative, and can serve as the basis for permitting.

The “75 percent design” stage in the project development that includes complete working engineering drawings and draft specifications that incorporate key mitigation and design features that are unlikely to change significantly. The 75 percent design is generally the basis for final environmental permits and includes a more precise cost estimate.