

### 3. PLANNING CONTEXT

This chapter summarizes selected state and regional plans and other documents as they relate to bicycle, pedestrian and trail systems generally and rail trails specifically where appropriate. This review of key planning documents provides background and context for the State Trails Plan by describing some of the state planning priorities, and the regional and local projects and implementation goals.

#### State of New Hampshire Documents

##### *New Hampshire Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan:*

###### Introduction

The New Hampshire Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was adopted in May of 2000 as an element of the State’s Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan. One of the goals of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation—and the overriding goal of the New Hampshire Statewide Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan—is to recognize, support and encourage bicycling and walking as alternatives to motorized forms of transportation.<sup>1</sup> The plan was developed through public input and the recommendations of the Bicycle Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Board.

###### Development Process

The NHDOT has been purchasing abandoned railroad rights of way using federal/state funds for the preservation of rail corridors for future transportation needs. One of the identified uses for these rail corridors is for bicycle and pedestrian use. A Rails to Trails program to convert abandoned railroad corridors to usable trails is being developed. The New Hampshire Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan does not incorporate many of these trails since the trails are still under development.<sup>2</sup>

###### Funding Categories, Levels, and Availability

Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds can be used for basically the same types of projects as the National Highway System (NHS) monies. Within the program, 10 percent of the funds are required to be used for Transportation Enhancements (\$ 3.2 million each year) ...this portion of the STP funds can be used for:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian facilities
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors

Projects under the Transportation Enhancement program are not limited to construction of bicycle lanes or paths or pedestrian walkways. These funds can also be used to provide shelters, lockers, and other amenities to accommodate bicyclists or pedestrians. In addition, these funds can be used for bicycle/pedestrian planning activities.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> New Hampshire Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan May 2000, pg. 2

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 14

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg. 15

## ***New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP):***

### **Introduction**

*New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007* is New Hampshire's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). It serves as the State's official plan for outdoor recreation for the ensuing five years. The SCORP identifies major issues and challenges concerning the state's recreation and natural resources and offers a series of recommendations to address those issues. In some cases, the recommendations are guidelines; in others, they give direction for specific action, particularly for State agencies.<sup>4</sup>

### **Stewardship of the Natural Resource Base for Outdoor Recreation**

- Protection of existing greenways and trail corridors has become an increasing challenge due to changes in land ownership, private land closures, and increased development (*Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study, 1997*).<sup>5</sup>

#### **Recommendations:**

- Insure that the quality and quantity of the natural resource base is maintained or enhanced as recreation pressures increase.<sup>6</sup>
- Continue to support efforts to identify and protect open space lands.
  - Support comprehensive statewide and regional planning for open space, recreation corridors, and greenways (e.g. State, regional, and local open space plans, trail plans etc.)<sup>7</sup>

### **Providing Different, Sometimes Competing, Recreational Opportunities**

- The 1997 Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study completed by the Office of State Planning found that existing trails are inadequate to meet the current range of recreational activities.<sup>8</sup>

### **Impacts of Existing Land Use Patterns on Recreational Opportunities**

- Many current land use development patterns negatively impact local and regional opportunities for trails and recreation corridors.<sup>9</sup>
- Respondents in the *Statewide Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment* (UNH, 1997) said that about 50 percent of their outdoor recreational activity takes place within 10 miles of home.<sup>10</sup>
- Recreation corridors can also serve as alternative transportation corridors.<sup>11</sup>
- An important part of growing smarter includes preserving open space and parks, creating networks of trails and greenways that link community resources, and promoting bicycle/pedestrian friendly communities. All of these goals have a positive effect on local recreational opportunities and have solid links to transportation, health and land use planning goals.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) March 2003, pg. 1

<sup>5</sup> New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Summary Report June 2003, pg. 9

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 10

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg. 12

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pg. 21

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

### Recommendations:

- Promote interagency coordination to address regional recreation, trail and open space needs (e.g. explore expanding the role of the Statewide Trails Advisory Committee in addressing regional trail needs).<sup>13</sup>
- Encourage Regional Planning Commissions to coordinate and develop multi-community recreation and open space plans (e.g. Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission open space and trail planning assistance).<sup>14</sup>
- Promote local development that is sensitive to protecting and enhancing local land and water-based recreation and natural and cultural resource protection opportunities.
  - Support efforts to create local and regional networks of trails and greenways.
  - Support efforts that link community resources via trails and improve the overall connectivity of trails.
  - Better incorporate open space and trails planning efforts into local and regional planning and land use decisions.
  - Promote “Walk to School” and other “Walk to” or “Bike to” programs.<sup>15</sup>
- Educate communities about the importance and economic and non-economic benefits of local, close to home recreational opportunities.
  - Educate the public about the economic value of recreational opportunities in local communities.<sup>16</sup>

### Importance of Local Outdoor Recreation Opportunities and Open Space Protection in Promoting Increased Health and Wellness

- Providing open space, parks, trails, and greenways for "recreation" can be an important part of larger community efforts to develop more livable/walkable communities.<sup>17</sup>
- Providing outdoor recreation opportunities within neighborhoods and communities and providing better access to information about recreational opportunities have been identified as important tools to address obesity and lack of physical activity.<sup>18</sup>
- Nationwide initiatives and partnerships are also in place to promote use of trails as 'pathways to health' and to promote community partnerships aimed at encouraging physical fitness. Promoting trails and trail use is seen as a way of reaching the largest segments of the community. Walking/trail activities are the most popular recreational pursuits in the US, even among those 60 + years of age.<sup>19</sup>

### Recommendations:

- Build connections with the NH Department of Transportation, local public works departments, and local boards to promote bicycling and pedestrian connectivity and non-motorized transportation networks.<sup>20</sup>
- Improve existing and new recreation opportunities by enhancing non-motorized (bicycle/pedestrian) accessibility and connectivity. Non-motorized access is particularly important to youth, elderly and disabled populations.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 22

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pg. 23

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pg. 24

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pg. 25

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pg. 26

### Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

Volunteer groups often make up the difference between a good idea and a success story. In 1996, the State acquired 60 miles of the old Boston & Maine Railroad Northern Line for recreation purposes. But acquiring the corridor proved to be just the beginning. The old rail line needed a great deal of work before it could be transformed into a year-round rail trail. The State had funds available to assist in such efforts but lacked the staffing or resources to undertake the necessary trail directly. That is where the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Grafton County (FNRT) stepped in. Using state recreational trail grant monies, private fundraising and foundation grants, FNRT paired these funds with a great deal of volunteer time and effort to start the corridor's transformation into a recreation trail. So far, through an impressive volunteer effort, a 23 mile section of trail starting in Lebanon is open to foot traffic, bicycling, skiing, horseback riding, and snowmobiling. Volunteers removed rail ties, decked bridges, re-graded existing surface, and in some cases resurfaced sections of the trail to make it accessible to year round use. The group has also prepared a Rail Trail brochure for distribution and will continue to work on the remaining sections of trail down to Boscawen. Without such a coordinated volunteer effort, the Northern Rail Trail would still be in its infancy.<sup>22</sup>

## ***A Plan for Developing New Hampshire's Statewide Trail System for ATVs and Trail Bikes 2004 - 2008 December 2003:***

### Introduction

In the span of a few short years, the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and trail bikes, otherwise known as wheeled off-highway recreational vehicles (OHRVs), has come to the forefront of New Hampshire's recreational management issues. Concerns expressed by both wheeled OHRV supporters and opponents are warranted as the number of participants is expected to increase in the coming years. In recognition of both its popularity and its accompanying controversy, public land managers have consequently determined that providing safe and well managed wheeled motorized recreation in New Hampshire is an appropriate task and in alignment with statewide recreational goals. This document serves as the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development's Statewide Trails Plan for ATVs and Trail Bikes (the Plan). As such, it calls for providing designated seasonal trails for ATVs and trail bikes, identifies major issues relayed to developing and managing these trails for use by wheeled OHRV during the snow-free months, and offers suggestions for addressing these issues.<sup>23</sup>

### Plan Purpose and Need

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) users and non-users often disagree over management of ATV use on public lands. Supporters of their use feel that the current trail availability in New Hampshire does not adequately provide for the current number of participants. According to the report, ATV users also feel that the state has expended insufficient effort toward increasing and improving trail access, despite an annual wheeled ATV registration fee that is one of the highest in the country. Concerned opponents of this form of recreation offer a different view and regard ATV use as an increasing problem. As its popularity continues to grow, non-users contend that ATV use is a significant source of negative impacts on the environment, trail conditions, the outdoor experiences of others, and on adjoining property owners. In addition, there is an overall concern for other issues such as trespassing and regulatory enforcement. It can be argued that ATV users, unlike other trail user groups, have not enjoyed extensive trail systems on public land in New Hampshire. For example, well-maintained hiking trails are found throughout the state on both state and federally owned land. Also for comparison, snowmobile trails make up the majority of trail mileage in the state. There are more than 6,830 miles of snowmobile trails providing roughly 0.12 miles for each of the 55,000 registered snowmobiles. The relatively few managed ATV facilities in the state are receiving increased use and subsequent impacts, to the extent that these areas are

---

<sup>22</sup> New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) June 2003, pg. 91

<sup>23</sup> A Plan for Developing New Hampshire's Statewide Trail System for ATV's and Trail Bikes 2004-2008 December 2003 Woodlot Alternatives, pg. i

NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

determined by some users to no longer provide enjoyable riding opportunities. This is particularly true of the most popular trails in the southern part of the state, such as the Rockingham Recreational Trail.<sup>24</sup>

**Existing Conditions: Trails Designated for ATV Access**

ATVs have access to all snowmobile trails on DRED lands and those federal lands under DRED recreation management during full snow cover except one railroad grade (see Table 2).<sup>25</sup>

**Table 3-1 Summary of ATV Trails Designated by the State of New Hampshire<sup>26</sup>**

Trail	Town	County	Ownership	Trail Maintenance Organization	Surface and Use Description	Total Mileage	Estimated Wheeled ATV use	Trail Condition
Ammonoosuc River Rail Trail	Littleton, Haverhill, Bath, Lisbon	Grafton	State-DOT	Ammonoosuc Valley ATV Club; the Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round	29	Moderate	Fair
Greenville Rail Trail	Greenville, Wilton	Hillsborough	State-DOT	The Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round with mud season restriction	3	Light	Good
Hillsborough-Bennington Rail Trail	Hillsborough, Bennington	Hillsborough	State-DOT	Tri-County ATV Club, Hillsborough; the Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round with mud season restriction	8	Moderate	Good
Rockingham Recreational Trail	Derry, Sandown, Hampstead, Fremont	Rockingham	State-DOT	Rockingham County ATV Assn., Sandown; NH ATV Club, Auburn; the Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round	12	Heavy	Fair
Sugar River Trail	Newport, Claremont	Sullivan	State-DOT	Sullivan County ATV Club; the Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round	8	Heavy	Good
Warren Rail Trail	Warren	Grafton	State-DOT	The Bureau	Multi-use rail trail, open year-round with mud season restriction	7	Light	Poor

**Designing the Finite Trail System**

To provide sizeable riding networks, the Bureau should seek to link two or three riding areas within each region. The first locations to investigate possible trail connections would be within existing municipal, state, and federal

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, pg. 2

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pg. 7

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, pg. 9-10

NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

holdings. Gaining and designating access to parcels that are in proximity to each other and existing ATV trails have high potential for improving trail opportunities, particularly those parcels with historical pathways. Previously created corridors, such as old roads or paths, should be evaluated for their potential to provide linkages between existing trails to prevent the occurrence of new disturbances.<sup>27</sup>

Abandoned railroad beds are ideal locations for developing trail networks. They provide unique transects of the landscape and remarkable scenery. Railroad rights-of-ways also tend to link communities so riding rail beds is often compatible with other activities. Although abandoned rail beds are trails, they were not constructed for recreation, especially wheeled motorized recreation, and would need to be enhanced to prevent damage to the bed. It is a common fallacy that an abandoned rail bed will eventually become a trail; however, adopting rail corridors for public trails is not as easy as it seems. These public rights-of-way are preserved to retain the bed for the possibility of returning rail service. Also, the railroad corridors are a unique contribution to New Hampshire’s historical legacy. Any rail bed adoption procedure should consider carefully their value as cultural resources.<sup>28</sup>

Suggested sites with potential for adding riding opportunities to the existing state trail system are listed in Table 3-2. Linking the existing systems in the South and Central Regions would provide large networked areas to sites with heavy riding pressure.<sup>29</sup> In New Hampshire, a specialized ATV riding area would be ideally located near another heavily used trail, such as the one at Pisgah State Park or the Rockingham Recreational Trail. This situation could potentially relieve some of the riding pressure that these two trails currently experience.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 3-2 Suggestions for ATV Trail Expansion Locations for Years 2004-2008.**<sup>31</sup>

Site	Towns Possibly Affected	Benefits to Expansion	Increased Opportunities	Facilitators	Obstacles
<i>Linking Existing Systems</i>					
Sugar River and Claremont Trails	Claremont, Newport	Connect a single segment with a large contained system	Diverse terrain	One organized club currently maintains both trails	None known
Warren Line to Ammonoosuc Rail Trail	Benton, Haverhill	Connect a shorter trail with longer trail	Flat terrain	Existing railroad corridor could serve as link	Few facilities; possibly need participation of an additional club
<i>Expanding Existing Trails</i>					
Rockingham Trail	Freemont, Epping	Lengthen a heavily used trail	Popular trail; flat, safe riding	Existing rail bed	Residential areas
Greenville Line	Wilton, Mason	Lengthen a short trail	Needed trail expansion in South Region	Existing rail bed	Few facilities; high potential for public opposition; may require participation of a club

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pg. 24

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pg. 29

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, pg. 31

## *Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study, June 1997, New Hampshire Office of State Planning:*

### Introduction

The Office of State Planning (OSP) in cooperation with the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the Bureau of Trails (BT) conducted a year long study of the state trail system focusing on existing and potential trails throughout the state. The study was conducted under the guidance of Statewide Trails Advisory Committee representing public and private trail organizations. The primary purpose of the 1997 Statewide Comprehensive Trails Study is to address future trail needs, establish a recreation planning framework, analyze economic impacts and funding, discuss management and maintenance problems, identify priorities for protection and make recommendations.<sup>32</sup>

### Background

Despite maintenance setbacks, interest in trails across New Hampshire continues to grow. While hiking in the mountain regions has a long history, multi-use trails closer to urban centers continue to gain in popularity. In the future, trail users would like to find trails within a 15 minute drive from town. In order to accomplish this, trails should be planned as part of the state's infrastructure, in the same category as highways and utilities and should be accessible to users' homes and workplaces...Another effective tool to meet this objective is to convert abandoned rail beds and river ways into an expanded trail system. The State has been active in acquiring rail beds since the 1974 study [1974 Statewide Trails Study].<sup>33</sup>

### Trail User Survey

Most respondents to the 1996 questionnaires stated that multi-use trails were a wise investment and noted they felt 'comfortable' with other classes of users particularly when the rights-of-way is wide enough to accommodate other users.<sup>34</sup>

While several trails exist in the central and northern section of the State...there is a need for some dog sled trails in the southern section of the state, which the New England Sled Dog Association (NESDA) has recommended. Currently, dog sled operators in the southern section of the State are using the Rockingham Recreational Trail.<sup>35</sup>

### Developing Trails

The 1974 Statewide Trail Study discussed the potential use of abandoned railroad rights-of-way as links in the trail system. As noted in the study, these rights-of-way, 'lend themselves to a wide variety of trail uses even if these uses are not compatible for all trail uses.' Since the last study was completed, the State of New Hampshire, Bureau of Railroads has obtained title to thirteen lines...the 1974 Study recommended that each rail bed be 'Trail Zoned' for the various uses to be served, and provisions be made for trail maintenance, access, and linkage to other trails. In some instances a management agreement has been instituted between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Resources and Economic Development for the management of these rights-of-ways for recreational purposes. Potential discontinued rail lines that could be converted into rail-trails include the following:

- Ashuelot Branch – The local rails to trails group, Ashuelot Rails-to-Trails (ARTA), has been active in planning and surveying the line for recreational use.
- Manchester and Lawrence Branch – ...there are no immediate plans for its development into a multi-use trail.

---

<sup>32</sup> Comprehensive Statewide Trails Study, June 1997, New Hampshire Office of State Planning, pg. VII

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pg. 2-3

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, pg. 17

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pg. 20

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

- Northern Branch – It has potential to become a major spur of the New Hampshire Heritage Trail. Of all the available rail beds this line has the greatest potential for development primarily because of its location in relation to existing trails.
- Sugar River Recreation Trail – The 1974 Statewide Trail Study identified the entire 42 miles of rail bed as a potential trail corridor.<sup>36</sup>

Some examples of existing linkages could include connecting the old Concord to Claremont line, which includes the Sugar River section, with the Monadnock-Kearsage-Ragged Greenway. These linkages would assure recreational access for future generations as well as corridors for wildlife and plants.<sup>37</sup>

The acquisition of rail beds for multi use trails would provide an excellent mountain bike resource.<sup>38</sup> Yet another possibility might be to harden one side of the abandoned North Branch rail bed to accommodate touring bikes. This same technique might also be applied to the Rockingham Recreation Trail.<sup>39</sup>

### Issues, Goals, and Recommendations

#### Issue 1: Protection of Resources

DRED should continually work toward developing multi-use trails on abandoned rail lines as they become available. Coordination should be established and maintained with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, Bureau of Rail and Public Transit.<sup>40</sup>

### Summary

One of the more important findings of the chapter on economic impacts was that significant revenue and jobs are created as a result of trails activities.<sup>41</sup>

Hiking has a long and honored tradition in the more remote mountain regions of the state. However, close-to-home multi-use trails are increasingly being recognized by the trails community that envisions trail within 15 minutes of home. Rails-to-trails, and greenway projects appear to be the primary approach for expanding the growing network of trailway systems. Community based trails projects are evidence of a strong grass roots trails movement in the state.<sup>42</sup>

## Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs)

The following are summaries of the regional plans, as they relate to pedestrian, bicycle, trail, and off-street transportation and recreation planning. These plans are executed by the regional planning commissions (RPCs), the officially designated planning entities for each region of New Hampshire.

### *Lakes Region Planning Commission*

The LRPC is currently working with an advisory committee on a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The plan will be the first of its type and primarily focus on policy. Goals and objectives will be developed and opportunities for trail development will be identified. LRPC staff and the advisory committee see a direct tie in between bicycling and walking and the region's primary industry—tourism. They envision a network of existing and improved roads and off-road paths encircling Lake Winnepesaukee with spur routes to the village centers

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pg. 26-28

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pg. 32

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pg. 33

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pg. 61

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pg. VII

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

and other destinations. The plan will also document existing municipal bicycle and pedestrian path projects including rail-to-trail and rail-with-trail projects in Northfield, Tilton, Franklin, Belmont and Laconia.

### ***Southwest Region Planning Commission***

There is strong support for designated bicycle routes to serve recreational and commuting traffic in the Southwest Region. The NH DOT in conjunction with the Regional Planning Commissions and interested citizens has developed a state bike route system that routes cyclists on a network of state highways and little used back roads. Keene has an established bicycle network used for recreational and daily trips by residents. Peterborough is also developing a bike path through town. These village systems are integral with the region's Rails-to-Trails network.

Opportunities for recreational hiking and biking within the region are numerous with the presence of an extensive Rails-to-Trails system and several long distance trails, most notably, the Appalachian Trail. The Southwest Region Rails-to-Trails network comprises the abandoned Cheshire, Ashuelot, Fort Hill, Monadnock and Chesham railroad. This network connects 16 Southwest Region towns. Rail Trail development is undertaken by NH DRED, area trail user groups such as snowmobilers and cyclists, regional conservation organizations and municipalities.<sup>43</sup>

While the Hillsboro Branch rail line is inactive, the physical condition of the track as rated in the 1991 New Hampshire State Rail Plan is as follows:

- Ties: Fair to Good
- Surface: Fair to Good
- Ballast: Cinder, stone, gravel – good
- Drainage: Fair – good
- Track Bridges: Fair to good
- Abutments: Fair to good
- Culverts: good
- Crossings: fair<sup>44</sup>

### **Local Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning**

Pedestrian and bicycle planning at the municipal level is administered through Municipal Master Plans. Master Plans ideally summarize the extent and condition of facilities and articulate the municipalities' policy regarding pedestrian and bicycle opportunities within the community. Municipalities are responsible for maintaining the municipal sidewalk network (on state and local roads) and municipal trail networks. Local Recreation Committees and Conservation Commissions are often active in planning and promoting enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access. Municipal budgets serve as the primary funding source for maintaining pedestrian and bicycle facilities. In the past several decades, pedestrian and bicycle access has been incidental to road development. Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in the demand for designated safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities in many Southwest Region towns. Many communities in the Southwest Region have identified this system deficiency in their Master Plans and are committed to finding ways to improve the system.

---

<sup>43</sup> Southwest Region Transportation Plan 2001 Update, Southwest Region Planning Commission, pg. 26

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, pg. 29

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

The Southwest Region population, employment and service centers support the development of a local network of sidewalks and bike trails using municipal funds, volunteer organization fund-raising and Transportation Enhancement funding. The City of Keene has established a bicycle network for recreational and commuter activity. The towns of Peterborough and Jaffrey are developing bike paths through town and enhancing pedestrian facilities in the town center. The towns of Antrim, Greenfield and Hinsdale are also improving pedestrian access in their town centers.<sup>45</sup>

### Rail Corridors

NHDOT has committed to a policy of preserving New Hampshire's extensive network of abandoned railroad corridors for possible active rail use in the future and assisting in securing funding for the rehabilitation of remaining active lines. Abandoned rail lines acquired by the State in the Southwest Region for interim recreational trail use are the Cheshire Line, the Ashuelot Line, the Fort Hill Line, and the Monadnock Line.

### 1992 Southwest Region Transportation Plan

The Planning Commission developed the 1992 Southwest Region Transportation Plan at the request of NH DOT and the Governor's Advisory Committee on Intermodal Transportation in fulfillment of the requirements under ISTEA, as the Region's contribution to the statewide transportation plan. Among the high priority recommendations identified in the 1992 Plan is to

- Support analysis and development of pedestrian and bicycle systems in the Region's population and village centers<sup>46</sup>

The mobility needs of the Southwest Region are served almost exclusively by personal motorized passenger vehicles and commercial trucking of freight. There is an increasing demand for facilities to support pedestrian and bicycle transportation both within densely developed centers and between. Several communities (e.g. Greenfield, Hinsdale, Jaffrey, Keene, and Peterborough) have undertaken comprehensive design and reconstruction projects to provide safe and meaningful connections in their centers for pedestrians and bicycles – both as an alternative to automobiles and in conjunction with car trips (a park-and-walk environment).<sup>47</sup>

## ***Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission***

The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commissions main purpose is to increase communication, cooperation and coordination among the local governments in the 13 communities that comprise the SNHPC. The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission promotes inter-municipal cooperation between planning boards and local officials; promotes coordinated development of the region; prepares and adopts regional plans, including policies and strategies for the region; and performs other acts or functions as it deem appropriate to fulfill its duties.

### ***Regional Transportation Plan***

In response to the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission has prepared a long range, multi-modal transportation plan. The plan was recently updated in the spring of 2004.

The *Southern New Hampshire Regional Transportation Plan* includes a Bikeways and Pedestrian Facilities component. The goal of this component is to create a transportation system that incorporates bicycles and the accommodation of pedestrians throughout the region.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, pg. 42-43

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, pg. 49-50

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, pg. 57

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

### The Objectives:

- Increase the use of bicycles for people movement throughout the region.
- Provide pedestrian-way and encourage their use.

### The Policies:

- Provide bicycle/bicyclist facilities associated with routes.
- Provide maps (guides) and publicity as to bicycle routes and their advantages.
- Coordinate planning and transportation projects with bicycle interests.
- Pursue funding opportunities.
- Incorporate pedestrian-way planning (circulation) in the transportation element of the municipal master plans.
- Establish a local greenway/pedestrian corridor task force/committee in each municipality to oversee a pedestrian-way development program.
- Provide technical planning and construction detailing assistance to municipalities by state and regional agencies.

In addition, within the Railroad component, there is a policy that states that abandoned railroad right-of-ways should be acquired and preserved for other public users.

### *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*

The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission updated the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in the spring of 2003. The plan offers an overview of how the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission region can become a safer, more inviting, and more practical place for people to walk ride bicycles. It serves as an update of the 1994 SNHPC region *Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan*, responds to a growing demand for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and fulfills requirements specified in the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The plan's overriding goal is to facilitate and encourage bicycling and walking as convenient, safe and practical forms of transportation throughout the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission region. The goal is supported by a series of objectives that emphasize the regional biking and walking network, safety, appropriate design, education and promotion, and planning and maintenance.

The goals and objectives of the plan envision the region's future as one where many people walk and bicycle for both utilitarian and recreational purposes. It is a healthy and safe place to live, with vibrant city and town centers and calm rural areas. The long-range goal and objectives of the region's pedestrian and bicycle strategy follow below. The objectives and policies reflect those of the current *Regional Transportation Plan* and further clarify the pedestrian and bicycle goals therein.

The Regional Network Goal as stated in the *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*:

To establish a continuous and coordinated regional bikeway and pedestrian walkway system, ensuring that this regional system is well linked with local systems in municipalities and abutting towns and regions.

- Accommodate bicycle lanes on roads of sufficient width.
- Modify sidewalks and intersections to facilitate pedestrian circulation.
- Construct separate (dedicated) facilities where desirable and possible, and link new and existing trails with on-street facilities.
- Coordinate the design and construction of routes between local jurisdictions and adjacent regions to ensure continuity.
- Design the regional system to function as part of the overall transportation system; include appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities in every project.

## *Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission*

### *Regional Plan Volume 2 Regional Transportation Plan (Feb. 5, 2004)*

The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Bikeway System Plan recommends a network that incorporates bicycle lanes and paths along highways and abandoned railroad rights-of-way, based on available right-of-way widths and traffic conditions. The Plan provides a fairly well integrated bike system that should be augmented in urban and village areas with additional local routes. State and local transportation projects should provide the necessary infrastructure improvements on all highway and trail projects to support Regional and local bikeway system plans, where feasible.<sup>48</sup>

A number of recommendations in the Regional Bikeway System Plan have been implemented. For instance, numerous roadway projects throughout the Region have included shoulder widening to encourage greater bicycle accessibility. A number of Transportation Enhancement-funded projects have added bicycle infrastructure in communities in this Region and other improvements are planned for the future. In addition, inactive rail corridors have been turned into multi-use paths that serve as great recreational and transportation assets to residents of this Region. However, much work is needed to provide continuity of existing bicycle routes, linking existing facilities to the communities and providing bicycling infrastructure for children and less experienced cyclists who will not ride on highways. Particular consideration should be given to connecting important civic places, such as schools, recreation centers and libraries, with residential areas. Cycling should also be considered as a viable form of transportation for employee commutes and the appropriate on-site facilities should be provided by employers to encourage such behavior. In addition, it is important to provide good bicycling access to tourist destination.<sup>49</sup> The overarching goal is to provide a safe, integrated network of bikeways throughout the Region for transportation and recreation.<sup>50</sup>

Bicycle facility planning should consider design features to encourage safe use. For instance, many highway corridors with more than 8000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) would benefit from paths segregated from the roadway with a sufficient landscaped buffer to separate the bike path from the roadway. The Vermont Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Manual contains suggestions for appropriate facility type based on average daily traffic and motor vehicle travel speed.<sup>51</sup>

### Abandoned Rail Corridors

Inactive rail corridors should be preserved for future use and for other uses, as has been the case with the Northern Rail Trail and the Sugar River Rail Trail. Unlike an air route, for example, which can be abandoned and reestablished without difficulty, selling parcels of a rail corridor results in the effective loss of that line. Thus, keeping these corridors intact should be given a high priority. As these corridors close or reopen, consideration should be given to sharing the line with recreation and other transportation modes when appropriate. Rail with Trail options should be considered along all rail corridors that can support such multi-use while not precluding current or future rail operations. VTrans recently evaluated the feasibility of a rail-with-trail along the Berlin line route which spans from Wells River to White River Junction, Vermont. The Region and individual communities can benefit from the recreation and transportation use of these shared rail lines.<sup>52</sup>

#### Northern Railroad: Boston and Maine Railroad

The line was abandoned by Guilford Industries, the owner of the Boston and Maine Railroad, and purchased by NHDOT with Enhancement Funds, in order to assure preservation of this corridor. The abandonment of this

---

<sup>48</sup> Regional Plan Volume 2 Regional Transportation Plan (Feb 5, 2004), Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, pg. 21

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pg. 21

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, pg. 23

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Draft Regional Plan 2003 Volume 2 Regional Transportation Plan, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, pg. 44

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

line does not include a one mile section in Lebanon east from the Vermont line to approximately the Glen Road bridge. This section is currently operated by the Claremont-Concord Railroad with freight service.<sup>53</sup>

Sugar River: Claremont-Concord Railroad

The Claremont-Concord Railroad right-of-way, from Pleasant Street in Claremont east to downtown Newport, was abandoned several years ago, with the State acquiring the right-of-way for rail banking purposes and converting it into a recreational trail. The remainder from Newport through Newbury was abandoned at an earlier date and was not preserved.<sup>54</sup>

### Railroad Goals, Policies, and Recommendations

Urge that NHDOT and VAOT actively preserve the integrity of all railroad rights-of-way indefinitely for transportation purposes. Preservation of intact rail corridors, even if temporarily abandoned to public uses such as recreation, should be given a high priority.<sup>55</sup>

UVLSRPC and state agencies should encourage multiple uses of rail corridors where appropriate.<sup>56</sup>

Preserve all existing railroad rights-of-way, whether abandoned, inactive or in service. NHDOT and VTTrans should actively preserve the integrity of all railroads rights-of-way indefinitely for transportation (rails-with-trails and rails-to-trails), recreation and utility purposes.<sup>57</sup>

### *North Country Council*

The North Country Council recognizes the challenges in trying to increase and diversify economic development while balancing any land use changes with the existing transportation infrastructure. New, high draw commercial ventures such as industrial parks or national retailers provide jobs and income for host communities. Seasonal fluctuations in numbers of visitors to our scenic North Country swell the number of vehicles on the roads, slowing traffic and increasing safety concerns. Bicyclists often have to vie with four-wheeled traffic for a piece of pavement on shoulder-less roads. Former rail corridors seek new incarnations as rail/trails and local airports are poised for expansion.

North Country Council's long-term relationship with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation and local officials provides hands-on partnering to solve current transportation problems and identify future mobility challenges.

### Regional Transportation Plan Update

The Regional Transportation Planner and the North Country Transportation Committee have begun working on the rewrite of the North Country's Regional Transportation Plan. The plan will include statistics and accounts of existing conditions, the unmet needs regarding our transportation systems and services, and a plan of actions and projects to be included in future Transportation Improvement Programs and Transportation Enhancement Programs that will address those needs. The update will occur within the next two years. The Regional Transportation Planner and the Transportation Committee have already begun researching pertinent data and are working on a format for public information gathering meetings to be held in the spring of 2004.

### Ten Year Plan Priorities

Due to the funding constraints explained to the region by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, the North Country Transportation Committee voted to not solicit for new projects this year to be included in the Ten Year Plan. The Committee instead focused on the review and prioritization of projects currently existing in the Ten Year Plan. The following projects received high priority from the Transportation Committee

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pg. 43

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, pg. 42

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pg. 24

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pg. 45

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

and were submitted as high priorities to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

Milan to Dummer and Dummer to Erroll – Rt. 16 projects – road is in dire need of improvements. It is banned in the spring time every year providing no north to south traffic from Erroll south to Berlin.

Conway Bypass – This bypass has been in the plan for 20+ years. There are phases that have been completed and they are in the process of beginning new phases but the overall completion of the bypass is a top priority.

Warren - Wentworth Bridge – very dangerous bridge. There is a sharp corner going into and coming out of the bridge which makes it difficult for large trucks to stay on their side of the striped line. There was a fatal accident at this bridge involving two state troopers and the prisoner in their car. It is on schedule to be done in the next two – three years.

Bath and Lisbon Rt. 302 projects – there are several projects along Rt. 302 from Littleton down to Haverhill. The Committee ranks the improvement project high but prefers to see the bypass projects considered at a later date due to the fact that they need to be redesigned. The Committee feels the safety improvement projects should be done while NHDOT redesigns the bypass options.

Gorham Intersection of Rt.2 and Rt. 16 – currently there is no signalization at this intersection. These are two of the most significant roads in the North Country and they intersect in downtown Gorham. There is no light there and you have people turning in all directions, south and north on Rt. 2 and from the south and north of Rt. 2 turning onto Rt. 16. This project has been put off into "Future Considerations" and the committee feels there will be some terrible and possibly fatal accidents there if something is not done sooner.

Jefferson – Randolph Rt. 2 project – not only has a corridor study been done for the entire length of Rt. 2 but the design work for this project is nearly complete. NHDOT and other state agencies have held several public meetings and plan on hold their public hearing this spring. This section of Rt. 2 is narrow and dangerous for automobiles facing logging trucks at the posted speed limit.

### ***Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission***

A major component of the CNHRPC work program is transportation planning. Generally speaking, most analysis related to trail development done by the CNHRPC has been part of the transportation planning effort. The following two recent studies have addressed trails in the Central region:

#### ***The Regional Multi-Use Trail System Plan***

This plan, completed in February 2003, was intended to be used as an advisory guide for creating new trails and expanding and maintaining existing trails. It was designed to be a resource for Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, municipal planners, Recreation Departments, and other citizens interested in trail development.

The plan:

- Defines trail types
- Summarizes trail planning efforts in the Central New Hampshire Region
- Outlines steps in developing a local multi-use trail system
- Explains trail etiquette
- Relates the trail planning process to other municipal planning efforts such as master plans
- Describes municipal authority to create designated trails
- Explains the legal issues surrounding municipal trail development
- Provides trail design and construction standards
- And, suggests funding sources for trails projects.

### *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*

This plan, completed in April 2001, proposes a regional bicycle network for the Central New Hampshire Region and suggests ways that communities can implement bicycle and pedestrian projects. The goals of the plan are to:

- Encourage the planning and development of a safe and accessible regional bicycle/pedestrian system for recreational and commuting purposes
- Establish a continuous, coordinated non-motorized transportation network that will increase the incidence of bicycling and walking
- Reduce the number of bicycle and pedestrian accidents, injuries, and fatalities, particularly those that involve motorist.
- Create a traveling environment in which bicycling and walking are attractive alternatives.
- Promote public awareness of bicycling and walking as modes of transportation for all destination-oriented trips
- Encourage organizations with appropriate interests or authority to improve traffic safety education and enforcement
- Integrate the consideration of the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists with other travel modes into the regular routines and programs of all agencies involved in the transportation planning process
- Recommend the development of a system that promotes the use of non-motorized modes of transportation that do not pollute the environment
- And, help communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of local bicycle and pedestrian plans and projects.

Work will begin on the transportation element of the Regional Master Plan in summer 2004. This will likely be the next CHRPC endeavor that will address potential trail development in the Central New Hampshire Region.

### Railroad Corridors

In the mid-1850's, the industrial age was beginning to take shape throughout the country with the advent of the railroad. New Hampshire was home to 1,200 miles of newly-constructed railroad track by the mid-1880's. Not only did the arrival of the train era bring the ability to export local timber resources and textiles, it also allowed for the convenient moving of people. After the arrival of the automobile, the dependency on railroads in New Hampshire diminished. Due to the decline in railroad use, many railroad corridors were abandoned or dismantled; the State of New Hampshire has claimed some of these former rights-of-way and so have abutting landowners. By design, these corridors are ideal for multi-use recreational trails. They are typically flat, hard-packed, straight beds that run continuously for miles. Railroad corridors provide a good resource for developing networks of trails and greenways. The right-of-way is compatible with a variety of activities and also has the advantage of linking up many communities. After abandonment, the railroad owner is sometimes willing to sell their land or grant trails easements for recreational and transportation uses. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy keeps track of abandoned railroads and soon to be abandoned railroads.

Abandoned railroad corridors are also good locations for the state to consider for trail development. For example, in 1996, the State of New Hampshire acquired 60 miles of the Boston and Maine Northern Line using Federal Transportation Enhancement funds. Community groups in Grafton County converted 23 miles of the corridor into the Northern Rail Trail, a recreational trail open to hiking, bicycling, horse back riding, cross country skiing and snowmobiling. The trail begins in Lebanon and follows the abandoned railroad bed of the Northern Line along scenic rivers, lakes and historic villages. Rails with Trails (RWT) describes a shared use path located on or directly adjacent to an active railroad corridor. About 60 Rails with Trails are in existence in the United States and range from trails located next to active rail lines that have a few slow-moving short haul freight trains weekly to over 100 Amtrak trains per day. In New Hampshire, there is a Rail with Trail segment

between the towns of Tilton and Laconia. The trail segment is fenced in order to keep it separate from the railroad.<sup>58</sup>

## *Nashua Regional Planning Commission*

### *Nashua Metropolitan Area Long-Range Transportation Plan (2003 - 2022)*

The Nashua Metropolitan Area Long-Range Transportation Plan (the “Plan”) is guided by nine goals, six of which mention pedestrians and/or bicycles. Although none explicitly address trail facilities, several address bicycle and pedestrian access, open space preservation, promoting non-motorized travel, and economic development, all of which are applicable to trail development.

1. New highways and new road connections should establish shorter routes to cross natural boundaries, relieve traffic congestion, and create a logical progression in increasing the connectivity of the existing road network. The road network should provide for the most efficient circulation of vehicles. Response time for fire apparatus and emergency vehicles at the local and regional level should be reduced through improvements in the road network. The expansion of the road network should be achieved in ways that respect neighborhood cohesiveness, conserve open space (including woodlands and wetlands), and encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel. Consideration should be given to lessen the impact of secondary growth due to new highways, which in turn can lead to the re-emergence of traffic congestion.
2. Promote transportation demand management practices and the development of a transportation management association to relieve traffic congestion and increase circulation and efficiency in the existing highway network.
3. Encourage the use of access management techniques in commercial highway corridors to preserve capacity, increase safety, and improve the aesthetic environment. Support and encourage the redesign of areas and highway corridors that have experienced strip mall development so that they can better accommodate bicycle, pedestrian, and transit use.
4. Encourage transportation improvements in urban centers and town centers away from the urban fringe to improve transportation efficiency. Improve convenience and service, and therefore the ridership, of the transit system through the targeting of segments of the market that are not currently part of Citybus patronage. Promote the extension of transit service to urbanized areas in the towns and the expansion of sidewalk and pedestrian facilities in town centers.
5. Encourage multi-modal use and the integration of alternative modes, coordinated with land use and zoning practices that reduce dependency on the automobile and encourage pedestrian oriented and transit oriented development.
6. Encourage local planning that supports an efficient and cost effective transportation system including the development of site review regulations that encourage access management techniques and the inter-connection between sites and the accommodation of cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.
7. Establish inter-city transit connections including passenger rail service.
8. Promote access to transportation for the under-served and include plans and projects that ensure that the needs of transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians are met. Promote plans and projects that link the jobless with jobs on a regional level. Improve the safety and quality of life in low-income areas and minority neighborhoods by reducing traffic congestion and implementing traffic calming techniques.

---

<sup>58</sup> Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission 2002 Multi-Use Trail System Report, pg. 4-5

## NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE TRAILS PLAN

9. Encourage public/private sector partnerships and private sector participation in the financing of transportation projects and services. Establish a transportation system that provides for orderly economic growth while preserving the environmental and cultural resources of the region.

The Plan observes that in recent years, there has been an increase in construction of sidewalks and bicycle paths, especially in urban centers, but that many inter-city roadway facilities that might be appropriate for non-motorized transportation access do not have adequate sidewalks or shoulders for bicycles or pedestrians.<sup>59</sup> The Plan also reports that the Nashua RPC is currently updating its 1995 regional bicycle and pedestrian plan.

Municipalities in the Nashua RPC region have also participated in the Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) programs, and have developed bicycle and pedestrian projects through these programs. Projects in the Nashua RPC region that have been completed include:

- The Nashua segment of the statewide Heritage Trail, built on the Nashua Branch railroad
- Shared-use path along Albuquerque Avenue in Litchfield
- The Granite Town Rail Trail linking Milford and Brookline – Extension of the Nashua/Worcester Rail Trail from the Massachusetts/New Hampshire state line to NH 111A in Nashua

Applications for extensions to these trails, and for other bicycle and pedestrian projects, have been submitted to the NHDOT.

### ***Salem - Plaistow - Windham Metropolitan Planning Organization***

The Salem – Plaistow – Windham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the recognized planning entity for this three-town area. The MPO is staffed by the Rockingham Planning Commission, the RPC which contains these three towns.

#### ***2003 - 2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan***

The Salem – Plaistow – Windham MPO’s Long-Range Transportation Plan (Draft: November 27, 2002) includes chapters on bicycle facilities and pedestrian access. The Plan includes a series of overall goals, several of which relate to bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including the following goals:

- Goal 1. Develop a transportation system that affords mobility for all and provides good access to employment, housing, services, and recreation areas
- Goal 3. Develop, maintain, and encourage the use of viable alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.
- Goal 4. Promote transportation policies and improvements that support protection of cultural and natural resources, and provide mitigation for unavoidable impacts.
- Goal 5. Encourage better integration of land use and transportation planning.
- Goal 6. Establish a transportation system that facilitates economic development.
- Goal 9. Assure adequate transportation funding.

The Plan states that some of the major roadways in the MPO area, notably NH Route 125 and NH Route 111, have adequate shoulder width for bicycle travel, and Route 111 is designated as a state bicycle route. However, these roadways also have high traffic volumes and frequent curb cuts. At the same time, less congested roadways have inconsistent and/or substandard shoulder widths.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> Nashua Metropolitan Area Long-Range Transportation Plan 2003 – 2022, p. 2-8.

<sup>60</sup> Salem – Plaistow – Windham MPO 2003 – 2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Draft 11/27/02, p. 6-2.

The Plan also states that there are currently no off-road shared-use paths in the MPO region, but that the abandoned rail line from Salem Depot to Derry could be developed as a trail.<sup>61</sup> This abandoned rail line is a segment of the state-owned Manchester and Lawrence Branch, which has been designated as a segment of the recommended Salem to Concord bikeway.

The plan also includes a series of recommendations for supporting the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities; non-motorized transportation education, outreach and enforcement; and appropriate design of roadways, pavement markings, and signage. The Plan also recommends a series of specific bicycle and pedestrian projects. These recommended projects are principally on-road facilities: improved shoulders for better bicycle access, and new or improved sidewalks for pedestrian access. There are no specific recommendations for off-street trails.

### ***Seacoast Metropolitan Planning Organization***

The Seacoast Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) covers the Strafford Regional Planning Commission area and most of the Rockingham Planning Commission area. The Seacoast MPO is staffed by these two RPCs.

#### ***2003 - 2022 Long-Range Transportation Plan***

The Seacoast MPO's January 2003 Draft Long-Range Transportation Plan (the "Plan") includes components that bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities.

The Plan includes a series of pedestrian and bicycle objectives, and makes recommendations to support the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities; non-motorized transportation education, outreach and enforcement; and appropriate design of roadways, pavement markings, and signage.

The Plan identifies bicycle and pedestrian improvements that have been completed in the Seacoast MPO area. These include bicycle improvements in Dover and shoulder widenings on NH Route 108 in Dover and NH Route 27 in Exeter, along with two principal off-street trail projects:

- The 1.5-mile Lakeport Branch rail-trail in downtown Rochester
- The Pease Tradeport bicycle path

In addition, the Plan identifies future bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the Seacoast MPO, including shoulder widenings on NH Routes 108, 111, 27, and 1A and sidewalk projects in town centers throughout the Seacoast MPO area. The Plan also identifies proposed off-road shared-use trails, including:

- The Newington Branch Rail Trail in Dover. This 2.1 mile trail will run along the abandoned Newington Branch from the Dover Transportation Center in downtown Dover south to Central Avenue. It is an approved CMAQ project that is expected to be in design in the fall of 2004, and begin construction in spring 2005. The City of Dover is also pursuing funding for a 1.5-mile extension of the trail across the Bellamy River, where it will connect to Bellamy Park, Dover High School, and the shoulder widening project on Route 108 from Back River Road to the Madbury town line.
- The Wagon Track Bicycle Route in Durham and Madbury, a shared-use trail connecting Route 108 to Route 4.

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 6-2.

## *Salem to Concord Bikeway Feasibility Study*

As part of the I-93 widening project, it was suggested that bicyclists and pedestrian travel between Salem and Concord be accommodated. NHDOT executed a feasibility study to identify potential alignments, and recommend the most promising alignment for a multi-use path in the general I-93 travel corridor between Salem and Concord. Such a bikeway would run through New Hampshire’s most populous communities, and connect to Manchester and Concord, two of the state’s most important employment and commercial centers. Therefore, this project has special statewide significance that should be recognized in the State Trails Plan.

### **Public and Agency Involvement**

Public involvement was extensive throughout the course of the study and included the formation of a Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC included members from nine communities within the Salem-Concord corridor and representatives from the Bicycle/Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Board, Rockingham, Central New Hampshire and Southern New Hampshire Planning Commissions, Department of Resource and Economic Development, Department of Historical Resources and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. The CAC guided the study process and meet on four occasions. Additionally four public information meetings were held. At these meetings presentations of the options were made and representatives from the CAC and the consultants listened to public comments on the project. Based on recommendations and technical data provided by the consultants, the CAC made the final selection of an option to be considered for further development for a bicycle/pedestrian connection between Salem and Concord.

Options evaluated as part of this study included both off road and on road alternatives such as the proposed I-93 shared use path, the abandoned Manchester and Lawrence Railroad Corridor, the abandoned Concord – Portsmouth Railroad Corridor, segments of the New Hampshire Heritage Trail and on-road options.

**Recommended Route.** A recommendation for a preferred route was based on a comprehensive evaluation of each option based on criteria set forth by the CAC. The criteria included determining how well the option met the goals of the purpose and need statement, design and construction issues, costs, resource impacts and compatibility with community plans. As part of this process the “Rail Trail Alternative” was developed and is a combination of the other three options. It encompasses the two abandoned rail corridors, connected by an on-road option in Manchester and portions of the proposed Hooksett Heritage Trail. It was this combination alternative that was found to most strongly meet the criteria of the CAC. A detailed description of the route follows:

**Table 3-3 Proposed Salem to Concord Bikeway Alignment**

Segment Name	Facility Type	From	To
Manchester-Lawrence Railroad	Shared use path(rail to trail) and on-road segment around Manchester Airport	Hampshire Road, Salem	Depot Street, Manchester
Depot Street, Canal Street and River Road (Manchester)	Bicycle route (on road) and sidewalk	Concord Railroad crossing of Depot Street (Manchester)	Hooksett Town Line
Heritage Trail	Shared use path	Depot Road, Hooksett	Merrimack Street, Hooksett
Merrimack Street (Hooksett)	Bicycle route (on road)	Heritage Trail at proposed crossing of Merrimack River	Southerly end of Concord – Portsmouth Railroad
Concord – Portsmouth Railroad	Shared use path (rail to trail)	Merrimack Street, Hooksett	Westerly bank of Merrimack River
Hall Street	Bicycle route and sidewalk (on road)	Merrimack River, Concord	Downtown Concord

**Phasing**

Phasing for the development of the Salem – Concord Bikeway is broken into short-term, mid-term and long-term components. In the short term effort should be made to secure land not currently owned by municipalities or the state. Design and construction of the portion of the trail located within the Manchester–Lawrence abandoned rail corridor would follow. Lastly, the design and construction of the portions of the trail north of Manchester including the Concord –Portsmouth corridor and Hooksett Heritage Trail would be completed.