

# Mascoma River Greenway in Action

The Mascoma River Greenway is motoring! Well, pedaling and jogging at top speed, and about to complete Phase One of the exciting City-sponsored project designed to connect Lebanon and West Lebanon. Powered by impressive fundraising success, this year's MRG effort will finish the job that the Friends group (YOU) began almost twenty years ago - by converting the Last Mile of the 59.9 miles of the abandoned Northern Railroad corridor into a rail trail. Here are the details and the plan, and it's all about volunteers.

After hundreds of hours of hand work with chain saws, loppers and machetes in 2013, the overgrown right-of-way west of the Slayton Hill underpass near APD Hospital was opened to the sun for the first time in thirty years. (A belated but special hot and humid day shout-out goes to the crew from Hypertherm - high heat they know even more about now!) Contractor Maine Track Maintenance disassembled the rails, and then in April 2014 Donn Cann and his backhoe got to work lifting the ties. Date pins identified many ties as having been laid down before WW II, no wonder they were in pieces. More volunteer work arranged by Recreation Director Paul Coats finished the clean up job salvaging metal and loading ties into City dump trucks headed for the landfill.

With the corridor cleared, planning focussed on interim surfacing - eventually the MRG is expected to be paved - and gaining design approval from NHDOT for fencing the I-89 overpass. Installation of railing and fencing is likely this spring, with "hard pack", the same surface as on much of the trail in Grafton County, being laid down shortly after, perhaps as far as the cemetery near Renihan Meadows, where an access path will be created. **NOTE: Until this work is completed the trail is NOT open.** Watch for a public announcement

More action is behind the scenes, as other volunteers, this time at the firm of Schuster, Buttrey & Wing of Lebanon engage Washington bureaucrats. As you may remember, the original B&M RR abandonment from north of Concord ended at Mile 140.00, at a bridge over the Mascoma River opposite Exit 12 of I-89. In order to extend the Greenway from that point west to Glen Road the Federal Railroad Administration must grant a formal abandonment - with a capital A - of a section classified as "Active", but disused since the mid-1960s. Working on a pro bono basis, the firm applied for the change in late '14, with approval expected shortly. Rail and tie removal will follow.

## Fund Raising Success

Highlight of the \$2.2M fundraising campaign was the July '14 presentation of a check for \$353,000 to the Greenway from the Timken Foundation of Canton, Ohio. A long-time major donor to civic betterment in Lebanon and other cities, the Timken leadership gift powered the total received to over \$1M. As of late winter '15, MRG Chair Frank Gould reported that the group was very close to a goal of raising a designated \$50,000, which would be matched 4 to 1 by the Jane McLaughlin Foundation. With those funds in hand, the Greenway will have met 80% of its ultimate goal.

**How You Can Help** Go to <http://mascomagreenway.com> and click on Support. Your donation is tax-deductable.

Donn Cann, clearing the corridor on the bridge over I-89. Note heavy ballast, common west of downtown Lebanon.

## MILE MARKER MASTERPIECE

While we wait for spring, star performer Ed Hiller waits for 70 degree temperatures so that he can finish stenciling the fourteen newly-installed granite mile markers that went in the ground last September. This extraordinary project began several years with a tip that salvaged mile markers were somewhere in NH's North Country. Thanks to hall of fame-type friends of the rail trail, funds were raised to install them to replace the originals, which were stolen about the time the corridor was salvaged in the mid-'90s. A half-dozen more are needed to reach the Merrimack Co line, where restored originals remain.

Below is the list of major donors and the mile marker they adopted. A plaque recognizing their gifts will be installed at the trail head this season. Locations are still available - several east of Canaan and Mile Markers 139/4 and 140/3 in Lebanon. For details on adoption email [dickmackay@comcast.net](mailto:dickmackay@comcast.net).



Crew from D. R. Key easing eight-foot 1400 lb. granite mile marker into place along the rail trail near Mirror Lake in Canaan.



Artist-in-residence Ed Hiller putting finishing touches on new post. It's 138 miles to North Station in Boston from this point in Lebanon, and on reverse, 5 miles to White River Jct.

## MILE MARKER MAJOR DONORS

Mile 5/138 Schuster, Buttrey & Wing, PC  
Mile 6/137 Dick and Linda Mackay  
Mile 7/136 Dottie Anderson & Richard Balaguer  
Mile 8/135 Patricia Higgins & Scot Drysdale  
Mile 9/134 Elizabeth Parkhill Trust  
Mile 10/133 Ed Chamberlain  
Mile 11/132 Betsy & Harrison Drinkwater  
Mile 12/131 Nina Sand & Keith Loud

## MID-WEEK TRAIL CLOSURE AT NEW RT 4 BRIDGE THIS SEASON

NHDOT's Larry Keniston, our liaison with the agency, has notified FNRT of the following:

*Construction for the US 4 bridge over the Northern Rail Trail requires the closure of the US 4 Northern Rail Trail underpass in Lebanon from time to time during the 2015 construction season as steel erection for the new Route 4 bridge proceeds. The US 4 Northern Rail Trail underpass will, however, be open during all weekends and holidays throughout the construction season. Travelers from Lebanon wishing to reach Mascoma Lake can exit the trail during underpass closures at a construction road leading to Mill Road and follow US 4 east to Payne Road or Ice House Road and re-enter the trail from either of those roads. Travelers can also exit the trail at the construction road leading to Mill Road, cross US 4 at NH 4A, proceed east to Payne Road and access the trail from Payne Road (steep and rough).*

We would add: Bikers not comfortable on RT 4 or 4A should simply park at Ice House Road and head east.

## TUNNEL CLOSURE

The 1964 downtown Lebanon fire, the disaster that keeps on giving... As part of the rebuild which gave us the "Mall", the B&M railroad at-grade crossing of Hanover Street became a tunnel. Until a few months ago the tunnel was to become a critical connection for the trail from downtown westerly toward APD Hospital and the Greenway. In recent years the bridge over the scenic falls of the Mascoma adjoining had been decked and an hobo jungle adjacent converted to a riverside park. But deteriorated concrete in the ceiling has "derailed" that plan and forced closure of section of Mall-area parking above the tunnel. In March 2015, the City put out an RFP for consultants to "vision" a solution for the two problems.