

*Wakefield Rail to Trail Committee
c/o Dot Halpin, Secretary
541 Lowell St., Apt. 1
Wakefield, MA. 01880*

February 20, 2008

Governor Deval Patrick
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick,

The towns of Wakefield and Lynnfield are jointly engaged in a project involving the former Newburyport Railroad right-of-way which extends from Wakefield into Lynnfield and beyond up to the town of Newburyport. The plan is to convert our 4.4 miles of the railbed into a multi-use pathway for pedestrians and bicyclists. The cost-effectiveness of a rail trail in its ability to improve the safety and quality of life in a town like Wakefield, is amazing. We are effectively gaining the use of the 4.4 mile right-of-way through a 99-year lease at no cost to the town or the state, but we do need legislative help in attaining the funding necessary for the design costs. The towns along the northern section of this now-abandoned railbed have been working together for several years to develop the Border to Boston rail trail. They had received federal funding some time ago and have been working with the National Parks Service to achieve their goal.

Wakefield is actually the southern terminus of the old railway and our Rail Trail Committee, working with our Lynnfield counterparts, has obtained the abandonment of the line from the freight rights holder allowing our Town Counsel to now negotiate with the MBTA on the terms of the 99-year lease. Our path has the potential of connecting with the Border to Boston path to become one of the nation's premier Rail Trails, beginning in Wakefield and ending 42 miles north at the New Hampshire border.

The Wakefield Rail-to-Trail Committee has been in existence since we were appointed by our Board of Selectmen in 2004. Working with our Massachusetts State legislators, we were successful in getting environmental liability insurance legislation passed through the State House, allowing towns developing rail trails a lesser burden if environmental contamination is uncovered during construction of their trail.

Now we come to the issue of funding: Our towns' budgets are stretched to the limit and now that we have successfully completed our feasibility study, we are looking into state or federal funding for our design and engineering phase. The cost is \$500,000. Once we obtain this funding for design and engineering, the Rail Trail Committee plans to utilize a 501(c)3 organization to assist with the on-going future maintenance of the trail. The formation of that entity is now in progress.

The benefits of developing this stretch of trail are many. Providing safe routes to school is one of the paramount benefits, along with providing a safe, relaxing place for people of all ages to walk, bicycle, travel in their wheelchair, or rollerblade. It will also make public transportation centers more accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians. With the price of fuel and the pollution given off by motorized vehicles such a concern, a project like this is an environmental and health-conscious move that will benefit many. Our pathway will open up a hidden treasure in the Reedy Meadow area—a nature preserve twice the size of Wakefield's Lake Quannapowitt, with plants,

birds and other species—that is currently in-accessible. This remarkable location will be unveiled for public use.

We urge your support for the funding of this project through any of the now-pending bond bills. This is a project that will meet both transportation and environmental criteria. Any funding that can be directed into the conversion of this path resulting in the establishment of a multi-community transportation corridor would be money well-spent.

We thank you for your time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Kevin Scott
Chairman, Wakefield Rail-to-Trail Committee

copies sent to: Governor Deval Patrick
Representative Robert DeLeo
Representative Mark Falzone
Representative Brad Jones
Senator Steven Panagiotakos
Senator Pam Resor
Senator Richard Tisei