

Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board
MINUTES
October 24, 2012

Location: Leominster Public Library, 30 West Street, Leominster, MA

Time: 4pm to 6pm

Members Present:

Dick O'Brien, Chair: Community trails and greenways

Bill Boles, Vice Chair: Mountain Biking / New England Mountain Bike Association

Michele Biscoe: Trail Users with Dogs / Coalition of Massachusetts Dog Owner Groups

Pam Browning: Canoe & Paddling / New England Canoe Kayak Racing Association, U.S. Canoe Association

Becky Kalagher: Bay State Trail Riders Association

A. Richard Miller: Alternate Cycling / Rail Trails

Leslie Robinson: Alternate Trail Users with Dogs

Mark Shea: Full Size 4-Wheel Driving / Northeast Association of 4WD Clubs

Dick Williamson: Cycling / Rail Trails

Dean Zuppio: Snowmobiles / Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts

I. MEMBERS' ROUNDTABLE

- A. Becky Kalagher reported that the Bay State Trail Riders Association made a donation of \$5,000 to a new land trust, the Common Ground Land Trust in Spencer, which has raised enough money to purchase Sibley & Warner Farms, comprising over 200 acres. BSTRA donated \$1500 to the Metacomet Land Trust toward the purchase and installation of ¼ mile of fencing at Sweetwilliam Farm in Upton. Completing this portion of the trail opened up a 15 mile network which links the town-owned Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area with Upton State Forest, which in turn connects to open space in Grafton. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission held a meeting in June regarding the Blackstone Valley Prioritization Project, for protection, development and transportation improvements in the Blackstone Valley. BSTRA recommended the preservation of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail be included on the priorities list.
- B. A. Richard Miller reported that members of The Trustees Of Reservations, Mass Audubon, the DCR, and the Appalachian Mountain Club did a Bay Circuit Trail tour and enjoyed many new trail improvements. October is Archeology month and trail events are planned across the state. Dick attended one nice event at Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge. In Framingham the first section of MWRA Aquaduct Trail (1/4 mile of trail) was dedicated at a ceremony attended by Rick Sullivan and other officials from DCR and MWRA; 40 miles of single-track trail for hiking is to come, with mountain-biking not to be excluded.
- C. Leslee Robinson reported that MassDOG had an outreach booth for the first time at the PetRock Festival in Worcester.
- D. Dean Zuppio reported on the International Snowmobile Congress held in June at Sturbridge with representatives of all the "snow states" of the United States and Canada, as well as several delegates from Russia. At the International Congress, the Snowmobile Association of

Massachusetts and Audubon signed a joint contract. The Spencer Snowbirds also donated to the successful Sibley Farm Campaign.

- E. Dick Williamson reported that he attended a meeting at the MWRA facility in Southborough just below the dam. There has been resistance on the part of MWRA to allow recreational-trail use along the aqueducts as well as resistance to allow the Bay Circuit Trail to traverse the MWRA property. There is a beautiful walking trail along the east end of the MWRA reservoir that suddenly goes onto a road. MWRA has agreed to a trail along the periphery of their property through the woods which will reroute a long segment of the Bay Circuit Trail off local roads. The Bay Circuit Trail has gotten a lot of attention recently relating to an agreement between the AMC and The Trustees Of Reservations: Kristen Sykes, Director of Conservation Strategies for the AMC, is the Bay Circuit Trail Coordinator.
 - F. Mark Shea reported that the Northeast Association of 4WD Clubs (NEA) helped out with the Molly Bish Ride, which had over 500 motorcycles again this year, for the eleventh year in a row. The Ride is one of largest police-escorted motorcycle rides in the New England area. The NEA does all the parking and helps coordinate the event as well as participating in the Ride. The Crawl Magazine Readers' Ride fundraiser for land acquisition was one of their fundraisers; they are working on ideas for RTP grants.
 - G. Pam Browning reported that, whereas organizations like the Millers River Watershed Council and the Mystic River Watershed Association have been interested in creating water trails, the U.S. Canoe Association and the New England Canoe Kayak Racing Association have been more interested in racing than creating blue trails and need to do more to reach out to the community. The Millers River Watershed Association has done a lot to establish a blue trail with a map and markings along the river highlighting specific historic places.
 - H. Dick O'Brien passed around flyers from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for a series of statewide discussions for public input into the State Transportation Plan. MARTAB members are encouraged to attend these meetings and support recreational-trail connectivity and alternate transportation routes. Dick sits on a Committee representing community trails organizations and is working to create a Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition as well as a regional trails coalition for the Pioneer Valley. He'd like to see trails visions that are established at the regional level come to inform the Commonwealth Connections Plan. The Commonwealth Connections Plan, while being a fine framework, lacks detail. Getting down to the regional level can provide more concrete action for the Plan.
- 1. Dick Miller added as a comment on the State Transportation Plan that public comments at the MassDOT meetings go on record. He has served two three-year terms on the Mass Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board: that's the longest that you can serve unless you are an agency person (then you can stay forever). The Forum is hosted by MassDOT: all the other agencies are there, but they're the host and they're the source of the funding for the various projects for bike/ped activities. Whatever they don't put out for that, they get to keep for their own projects. There are still a few very keen people in that group, who want this to work, but the others mostly want to smile enough to check the boxes and have most of the money stick with them. There are two places that could change:
 - a) There's no need for most of the money to go through the DOT. That's the way it's done in many states, but it's also not done that way in many other states.
 - b) There's been no money for the start of projects: 25% to design-stage completion is the qualification for picking up any of the money. Small towns cannot start projects to

qualify for the money.

2. Dick O'Brien responded that MARTAB's efforts have been focused on raising visibility. Paul Jahnige is interested in getting a greater amount of the RTP funding that is apportioned actually obligated. We have to present a unified voice in our desire to see those funds allocated to the projects that are out there. There are dozens of states that appropriate 100% of the RTP funding. MA only matches 50% of what is apportioned to the RTP program because DOT takes it and holds it in abeyance.
- I. Bill Boles reported on NEMBA's goals for the next year: NEMBA is morphing into a regional trails organization rather than an interest group. They own their own land, they have trails on it. Now, working with the DCR and with many communities, they are starting to build, repair, update, and upgrade trails systems. He believes that is the future of the organization.
- J. Dick Williamson added that he spoke with Dan Driscoll at the the Moving Together Conference. The MBTA Corridor from Central Waltham to Five Corners in Berlin—twenty-five miles—has been given over to DCR to construct a rail trail. That's a key piece of the Mass Central Corridor that is, in turn, a key part of the Commonwealth Connections. At the Bay Circuit Meeting, he was able to speak to Ed Lambert about filling the position in the organization vacated by the late Danny O'Brien, who was a strong advocate for rail trails. Dick recommended that \$50K go to Dan Driscoll at DCR for doing some initial work on the Commonwealth Connector. Driscoll said that they had given a contract to VHB [Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.], a transportation consulting firm that has done a lot of work with rail trails, to look at what exactly they can build. MBTA will maintain ownership of the trail and allow DCR to use a portion of the trail. This fall, once the leaves are off the trees, they will take aerial photos of the whole twenty-five miles.
- II. APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
 - A. Michele noted that she had sent out a correction of the spelling of her name, "Michele" with one "L", in the minutes. **Mark motioned to accept the corrected minutes of the meeting on July 25, 2012. Seconded by Pam. Voted and passed.**
- III. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLIST MEMBER
 1. Three nominations were submitted to represent the New England Trail Riders Association/off-road motorcyclists on the Board. The New England Trail Riders have endorsed Bill Riorden. **Dick motioned to elect Bill Riorden. Seconded by Pam. Voted and passed.**
 2. Dick O'Brien, in his capacity as President of the Board, or Amanda will follow-up with all nominees to thank them for their interest and with NETRA's new representative about nominating an alternate.
 - B. NEW SCORING METHOD FOR GRANT ROUND
 1. Dick Williamson recommended going to a five-point scoring system given a list of criteria that will provide, as he noted, consistency to how individual evaluators approach the process. He further recommended, recognizing that not everyone scores every proposal, a second score: the number of points above or below the average score for each reviewer: i.e. a "hard-nosed" reviewer will have a relatively low average score, but all the proposals he or she scores will be scored relative to their average. A "hard-nosed" reviewer will not be jeopardizing the proposals he or she reviews with his or her low scores. Dick also recommended using another measure: a "standard deviation" which takes into consideration how much variation there is in the scores any given proposal received. This,

in effect, flags proposals for which there was a lot of disagreement among the reviewers who read it. Dick O'Brien asked Dick Williamson to write up his recommendations for the review and approval of the Board. **Bill motioned to replace the current scoring system with a five-point scoring system. Seconded by Dean. Voted and passed.** Dick O'Brien observed that we will accept grant applications to appropriate \$900,000+ for recreational trails.

C. PLANNING UPDATE ON STATE-WIDE TRAILS CONFERENCE

1. LOCATION: Dick O'Brien discussed three possible venues, Sturbridge, Devens and Fitchburg, each offering a large conference space and breakout rooms for \$500 with the understanding that we would cater our food through them, and discussed different benefits and options that each location offers for a trails conference. Sturbridge: Location by the Pike is a big "plus"; it's very easy to get to. They're a very experienced facility, they're not exceptional but we could put on a good conference. The town has acquired an 800-acre parcel and is developing a trail network, so there's a possibility of field trips. Devens is a newer/younger facility than Sturbridge and Fitchburg. It's not quite as close to the highway as Sturbridge--two to three minute ride off of Rte. 2. Devens has a planned community and plans their recreation; they have planned some trails. Fitchburg is interesting for regional trail issues: Leominster State Forest is close by; there is an active mountain-bike community there, the extension of MBTA rail line holds interest for ecotourism. Other members proposed additional possible venues. Interest was expressed in Dick Miller's proposal to use the Student Center at Worcester State University for free because it is a public university? But Dick observed that there is no opportunity for a trail-community field trip in Worcester. Wachusett Mountain will not work for the conference because there are no breakout rooms available. A place in Sterling (Chocset?) was also mentioned but ruled out as being not a good fit for the conference.
2. The cost for 200 people--at Sturbridge, Devens or Fitchburg--plus the honorarium for keynote speaker, plus copying costs will be about \$10-12,000.
3. Vendor and trail-group booths were also discussed.
4. Dick Williamson motioned to hold the trails conference at the Sturbridge site. Seconded by Mark. Voted and Passed.
5. KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Committee discussed and agreed that the Keynote Speaker would be Mark Benton (Walkable Communities)
6. REGISTRATION FEE: \$25/PERSON
 - a) As the details are hammered out we will see if the \$25 registration fee holds. If we have to, we can make up the difference with sponsors, perhaps even name the conference for a major sponsor.
7. WORKSHOPS
 - a) The Chairman entertained ideas for workshops. Dick O'Brien. recalled that there was talk of a session on the Bay State Trail Coalition (progress, updates, future plans). He would also like to do a session on Regional Trail Coalitions. There was an inquiry about inviting sponsors, e.g. Garmin, to offer sessions, for example on uploading GPS trails.
 - b) The format last year was one plenary session and three break-out sessions. DCR will likely do a session on the volunteer program; it would be interesting to have a session with MassDOT on the Past and Future of Trail Funding; we could put on a session on MARTAB and RTP Funding; there has never been a Bay Circuit trails conference, which would be a great opportunity to bring together people from Duxbury to Newburyport.

- c) As soon as we have a date, we will send out save-the-date announcements to our constituencies.
 - d) A suggestion was made to have MARTAB T-Shirts (so people will know who we are) and a MARTAB logo
 - e) The Chairperson requested that any additional suggestions and ideas be emailed to him.
 - f) The Conference Committee will convene by conference call.
8. FACEBOOK ACCOUNT/PAGE
- a) Bill requested that the Facebook Committee present the Facebook page. Michele expressed her view that the MARTAB members have a lot to share and that there seems to be general agreement and concern that we are not reaching as many people as we could reach. Facebook is an easy way for us to connect with trail groups and can be leveraged, not only to expand the reach of different trail groups, but also to broadcast our agenda to interested groups. A Facebook page is just another way to reach another group of people that we are not currently reaching.
 - b) Dick O'Brien observed that DCR has a website that keeps people aware of trail issues. Counter observations were made that "nobody goes there" and "nobody updates it". Our MARTAB page is something that would be shared, for example, by the "dog" representative with the dog-owner community, by the paddling representative with the paddling community, etc.
 - c) Mark O'Shea added that it is an engine to get all the user groups together. Pam Browning added that the page is where we could market multi-use trails.
 - d) Michele requested that people post visually interesting photos of people using trails.
 - e) A question was raised as to whether the page title should be the "somewhat wonkish" "Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board" or just "Massachusetts Recreational Trails". It was agreed that it is our page and should reflect MARTAB's presence on Facebook.
 - f) Bill Boles asked if we want to have a filter so that if someone posts something to the page one of us has to approve it.
 - g) Mark argued in favor of the page being open so that if someone has something going on they can post it to the MARTAB page.
 - h) Spam was not considered to be a problem on Facebook pages (even if 5000 people commented on a post about mountain biking in the Fells).
 - i) ***Dean motioned to publish the Facebook page and allow the public to post. Seconded by Mark. Voted and passed.***
 - j) Mark added that we could conduct a poll on the site, for example inviting people to vote on options for conference workshops.
- D. UPDATE ON RTP PROGRAM OR THE NEW TA FUNDING
- 1. Dick Williamson attended a meeting hosted by Senator Thomas McGee, Head of the Joint Transportation Committee, in the State House Hearing Room where a representative from Transportation for America discussed their lobbying efforts to get the transportation bill more in line with what a lot of people think it should be and to explain what came out under the new transportation bill (a two-year bill).
 - 2. Clinton Bench from MassDOT gave the plenary speech at the Moving Together Conference, which is a big bike and pedestrian conference, in Boston. The "new tone" at MassDOT is "Green Transportation." In the Q&A at the plenary session, Dick observed that both

Recreational Trails and Rails Trails have been funded in the past at half of their authorized level and that MA is one of the lowest-ranked states in their use of the authorized funding. Dick O'Brien added that MA ranks dead last. Dick Miller asked Bench if, under the new bill, MassDOT would fund those programs at close to the authorized levels.

3. There are three programs in the former Federal Transportation Bill: Recreational Trails; Transportation Enhancements; and Safe Routes to Schools. In the new bill, these programs are no longer separate programs: they are all lumped into a category called "Transportation Alternatives." In the new bill the total authorized amount for "Transportation Alternatives" has been cut by 30%. According to the Transportation for America representative, it will take several months before the Administration can write new rules to address the "new stuff" in the new transportation bill.
4. Dick O'Brien sees an opportunity now for us to meet with Ed Lambert and the Governor's Office and influence the amount of funding to recreational trails. Possible points of entry include the Bike/Ped Advisory Board; Clinton Bench in MassDOT; Jennifer L. Flanagan, Vice-Chair of Ways and Means; Stephen M. Brewer, Chair of Ways and Means.

E. ADJOURN

1. ***Dick motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Dean. Voted and passed.***