

Letter: Town needs to take a close look at trail

Thursday, June 30, 2005

TO THE EDITOR:

Now that the Selectmen have completed their appointments to the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee, we believe the Town must have an open debate about whether it wants the equivalent of a paved road running through our woods or a nature trail that preserves the character of our town's setting.

While the Committee's mission is to examine alternatives for the rail bed, the simple fact is that the town essentially has two choices: either a 10 to 12 foot wide surfaced road or a very low cost unpaved nature trail. This is because the town will likely receive partial State and Federal reimbursement only if the path is paved with asphalt or some other surface for high traffic routes. Without this reimbursement, any other surface, other than a low cost natural trail, will likely be prohibitively expensive for the Town.

From the viewpoint of bike enthusiasts on the committee, who seem to be in the majority, the paved road option may seem like the best "value" for the town. But best "value" is not necessarily the best choice. In our opinion, a paved road does not address the needs of our community. Certainly, an asphalt road will be a magnet for out of town bicyclists, as is the converted rail in Lexington, but are these the primary users Sudbury is looking to serve? The rail trail should be a recreational path for as many of Sudbury's residents as possible. As anybody who's tried to walk along the bike path in Lexington knows, bicyclists are not compatible with children, strollers, casual walkers, nature lovers, and seniors. A paved road will also attract motorized ATVs, scooters and snowmobiles, all of which will make the converted trail even less accommodating to users. South Sudbury residents are already complaining of unauthorized dirt bikes along the recently cleared CSX line.

The Town of Weston intensely debated and thoroughly studied the impact of a rail trail running through their town. The study included nine town-wide general sessions and engaged over 100 citizens in numerous subcommittees who examined every facet of the project and issued a comprehensive final report. Our town deserves an equally comprehensive study and we believe it is the responsibility of the Rail Trail Committee to engage the town in an open and honest debate about every aspect of the proposed trail.

Miner and Helen Crary

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