



Town of

Groveland

Groveland, Massachusetts
Town Hall
183 Main Street
Groveland, MA 01834

September 8, 2015

Mr. Paul Stedman
Acting District Highway Engineer
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
519 Appleton Street
Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

**Subject: Groveland Community Trail from Main Street to King Street
Responses to PNF Review**

Dear Mr. Stedman:

We have reviewed your comments and have the following responses:

Comment – It appears that a public outreach effort has begun. Please submit copies of information distributed to the public along with attendance at public meetings and comments received. Any communications received from regulatory agencies or Town departments should also be included in your PIF documentation.

Response – We have made a PPT presentation at our meetings with the abutters, Whitestone Village (an over 55 development which abuts the trail) and the Board of Selectmen. We can forward the three presentations if you would like. Attached with this letter are the sign-in sheets, Locus Map given to attendees, and our invitation to the meeting letter which was sent to over 300 residents including abutters and others within close proximity. Also enclosed are letters of support from the MVPC, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Lenny Mirra, the Essex National Heritage Commission, and the Groveland Conservation Commission.

Comment – The Town should consult with National Grid to determine if use of the property will be compatible with the utility's needs. Any special considerations or additional accommodations required for the safety of trail users and utility workers must be included in the conceptual design and preliminary estimate. Your discussion with National Grid should also include any potential limitations to construction activities.

Response – National Grid's representative, Steven Towle, met with our committee on January 27, 2014. FST has also visited the NGRID offices to meet with Steven. Our design will follow

NGRID's "Conditions for Proposed Activities within Transmission Line Rights of Way". In general, NGRID has also requested the following:

- FST will measure the clearance of the existing wires and develop plans for review by NGRID. FST is in the process of measuring the clearances and we anticipate the plans will be submitted to NGRID in October.
- The trail will have to be constructed to H20 wheel loadings including bridges.
- Metal objects will have to be grounded to IEEE80 standards.
- Bollards at road crossings will have to be removable or break away in nature so that equipment and materials will have access into the Right of Way. Guardrails will need to be removable as well.

Comment – Consultation with the Conservation Commission or their agent regarding wetland impacts, well head and water supply protection and mitigation is encouraged early in the project development process. The storm water collection system must be designed to current standards with appropriate storm water runoff treatment prior to discharge.

Response – The Committee and FST has met several times with the Conservation Commission Coordinator. The preliminary design plans which have been submitted with the PNF show no impact to adjacent wetlands which have been flagged and surveyed. Please see the attached letter of support from the Conservation Commission.

Comment – There appears to be abutting priority habitats for rare or endangered species. The Town should consult with wildlife officials regarding impacts to these populations and any potential improvements that should be considered as part of the trail construction such as wildlife passages or fencing to protect sensitive habitat.

Response – We have contacted the NHESP and they have identified turtle habitat. Attached with this letter is the NHESP letter and map of the corridor.

The Committee is well aware of turtles in Groveland and in particular in this location. We are currently working with Dr. Eve Schluter of NHESP regarding a conservation restriction on the property next to the rail bed.

We have done much work on avoiding turtles, buying land to protect their habitat and mitigating them when found. The largest project that was instituted was near the rail bed on Water Department land where a solar field installation called for a full scale turtle habitat project that has been ongoing for the past three years to help wood turtles on the site. Dr. Schluter is in charge of monitoring this.

We have also worked closely with the Parker River Clean Water Association and their efforts to protect turtles and their habitats in Groveland and Georgetown. We anticipate that Mark Grgurovic, a herpetologist and an expert with the Blanding's will also assist us on this project.

Comment – There are a number of existing culverts along the proposed trail. These structures should be inspected and any required repairs should be included in the preliminary estimate. All culvert work should conform to applicable stream crossing guidelines as outline in the Massachusetts Stream Crossing Handbook.

Response – Existing culverts along the corridor will be inspected at the same time the wire measurements will be taken. Most of the existing culverts are stone box culverts which have carried trains for over 100 years. We do not expect any damage but, if there is, the cost to repair will be included in the project.

Comment – The PNF states that a letter has been sent to the Groveland Historic Commission. Please detail any consultation or comments received from the commission.

Response – We have not received any comments from the Groveland Historic Commission.

Comment – A conceptual design along with a realistic preliminary estimate should be submitted. The estimate should include costs associated with utility relocation. Typical cross sections should be developed at critical sections and submitted along with the conceptual design. If connections to schools or other recreational and community facilities are envisioned, please include this work in your conceptual plan and preliminary estimate.

Response – A preliminary design with a realistic estimate developed by FST is included with this submission. Based on their experience with similar Rail Trails, they have included the appropriate contingencies in their estimate.

Comment – The Town must commit to funding of the design and acquisition of all right-of-way that will be necessary to complete the trail construction. This includes any property needed for parking areas, roadway junctures and crossings, utility relocations, retaining wall construction or slope adjustments. A state of the Town’s commitment must be submitted with the PIF.

Response – The design funds for the project were passed at both the April 28, 2014 and April 27, 2015 Annual Town Meetings. The warrant articles were as follows:

2015 Warrant Article:

ARTICLE 17: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of up to ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$150,000.) from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve FY-2016 to be made available for the purpose of the development of Phase 2 of a plan for the Groveland Community Trail to be managed by the town Finance Director and the Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee under the CPA categories of Open Space and Recreation and be completed no later than June 30, 2018, or take any action relative thereto. This project is for the second phase of planning and is being conducted to put a required plan in place to receive a MassDOT Transportation Improvement Plan grant for \$4-5 million to construct the Groveland Community Trail.

VOTE was majority, in favor - PASS

2014 Warrant Article:

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of up to ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$150,000) from the Community Preservation Fund General Reserve FY-2016 to be made available for the purpose of the development of a plan for the Groveland Community Trail to be managed by -- edited in the meeting to "Town Finance Director and The Open Space and Trails Committee -- under the CPA categories of Open Space and Recreation and be completed no later than June 30, 2017, or take any action relative thereto. VOTE was majority, in favor - PASS

We do not anticipate property acquisitions along the corridor. We have been coordinating with the MassDOT Project Manager of the School Street reconstruction project in regards to having the Center Street/School Street sidewalk extensions incorporated into the construction of that project.

Comment – This trail is proposed as part of a regional trail system. The Town should consult with the City of Haverhill and the Town of Georgetown regarding planning for connections into both communities and ultimately to other regional trails such as the Borders to Boson trail. Please include details of your discussions with neighboring communities and their plans with timelines for subsequent phases in the PIF documentation.

Response – The Committee has participated in a cross-town working group for the past two years. We have attended the 2-4 meetings per year that the MVPC host with Haverhill, Groveland and Georgetown project leads represented. Our Towns are very closely aligned and know ongoing where we all stand with respect to our individual projects. Our last meeting was May 20, 2015.

Comment – The Town is encouraged to obtain input from the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) regarding the ranking of this project in relation to the other project awaiting programming in the region and a realistic year that this project could be programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Information on the likelihood of the project being programmed can save the Town considerable effort and expense.

Response – We have been in close contact with the MVPC. Please see the attached letter of support from Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director.

Very truly yours,



Michael Davis
Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee

cc: Anthony Komornick, MVPC
Connie Raphael, MassDOT District 4 Office
Frank Suszynski, DPDE