



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

11 January 2024

Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

RE: Squannacook Greenways' "Squannacook River Rail Trail - Phase II" Application

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members:

The Groton Trails Committee enthusiastically supports the Squannacook Greenway's application for \$30,000 from Groton's Community Preservation Act funds to help meet the costs of the Phase II design and permitting. The full cost of this complex project will be covered by MassTrail Grants, additional CPA funding requests, other regional foundation grants, legislative earmarks, and private donations, just as for the Phase I project that will soon be completed from the Bertozzi WMA in West Groton to Depot St. in Townsend. But first its design must pass muster with the Groton Conservation Commission and the state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). As the trail passes through wetlands, Estimated and Priority Biohabitats, flood zones, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), the design will come under extensive scrutiny and hence require considerable expense.

We strongly support this project because it will serve the following needs: a) It will connect the existing Squannacook River Rail Trail with West Groton, thus providing a safe, off-Townsend Rd. route for horses, bikers, hikers, etc.; b) It will provide significant additional handicap accessible trail mileage in Groton, which is sorely needed; and c) It contributes to eventually achieving a goal of the Groton Trail Vision, which is to connect the Squannacook River Rail Trail to Ayer, thus providing additional recreational opportunities (e.g., easy access to the Groton Town Forest, Surrenden Farm, The General Field) as well as an alternative transportation corridor for commuters.

This Phase II project will, if permits are obtained, extend the Groton Trails Network (GTN), connect many more homes and subdivisions with the GTN, provide a significantly long and scenic accessible trail, and continue the momentum for connecting the Squannacook River Rail Trail with Ayer and the Nashua River Rail Trail. It is well worth the expenditure of these design funds to determine the feasibility of the Phase II project.

Sincerely yours,

Paul G. Funch, Chair