

## Public Comments Submitted to the Boston Region MPO

April 1, 2021

Written comments were submitted for the following projects since the last MPO meeting on March 25, 2021:

- **Belmont:** Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1) (#609204) (Scored for FFYs 2022—26 TIP)
- **Everett:** Citywide Transportation Management Association (TMA) (Scored for FFYs 2022—26 TIP)
- **Norwood:** Intersection Improvements at Route 1A and Upland Road/Washington Street and Prospect Street/Fulton Street (#606130) (Programmed in FFY 2022)
- **Swampscott:** Swampscott Rail Trail (#610666) (Scored for FFYs 2022—26 TIP)

**Belmont (#609204): Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1)**

March 26, 2021

Dear Mr. Matt Genova,

I'm writing to voice my support for the Belmont Community Path and request that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization provide Transportation Improvement Program funding for the project as soon as possible.

There are many reasons why I can think of to support this path. Primarily as it will affect me, it will create a clear, direct, and safe route connecting Belmont with Alewife Station, as well as the Minuteman Bike Path and a broader thriving bike network. The current path in this direction ends prematurely, and extending and connecting it would greatly increase the 'livability' of the community by providing safe active transportation options for more users!

In addition, the path and railroad underpass creates safe routes to school for children.

Thank you for your consideration and please support this project!

All the best,  
--Max

## **Belmont (#609204): Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1)**

March 27, 2021

Good morning Matt,

My name is Jessica Przysiecki and I am a new resident to Belmont, recently moving here from Somerville near Davis Square. I'm writing to you to voice my support for the proposed community path both as a new parent and a new neighbor, but also as a longtime user of local paths. In Somerville, my husband and I lived right near the community path, and I cannot express how lovely and convenient it was to have the path essentially in our backyard. It was a great place to meet friends, walk our new baby, go on runs and walk dogs; it was always so nice to see our neighbors taking advantage of the perks of our community. I'm hopeful that Belmont will move forward with building what will clearly become such a neighborhood staple - a safe, direct, functional and beautiful bike path for all. Thank you for your consideration and time,

Best,  
Jessica Przysiecki  
99 Clark St, Belmont, MA 02478

**Belmont (#609204): Community Path, Belmont Component of the MCRT (Phase 1)**

March 28, 2021

Hi Matt,

I'm reaching out to voice my support for the proposed community path in Belmont. My name is Zac Przysiecki and I moved to Belmont with my wife and baby daughter from Davis Square, Somerville to expand our family in an active, community-oriented town. I know firsthand how wonderful a community path is from my 10 years living in Davis Square that were spent walking, biking and running daily on the bike path there. I couldn't be more supportive of building a similar path in Belmont. I look forward to becoming an engaged member of the Belmont community, please let me know if there are any other local initiatives that I can help with.

Thank you,  
Zac Przysiecki  
617-834-4756



February 25, 2021

Mr. Jay Monty, Transportation Planner  
City of Everett  
484 Broadway, Room 25  
Everett, MA 02149

Dear Mr. Monty,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the City of Everett's Community Connections grant application for the formation of a Lower Mystic Transportation Management Association (TMA).

We are excited about the TMA and your vision for this organization to evolve into a Lower Mystic TMA. As you are aware, the City of Boston is in the process of updating our Transportation Access Plan Agreement (TAPA) conditions to strengthen our transportation demand management (TDM) requirements and reporting. The new TDM points system will balance the impact of proposed projects using a variety of TDM strategies including requiring TMA membership where applicable. The City of Boston plans include membership in the Lower Mystic TMA for projects in our Charlestown and East Boston neighborhoods once it is established.

The creation of this TMA is a valuable asset to support coordinated, collaborative TDM service provision for residents and employees of the Lower Mystic region and will be an important resource to assist the City of Boston in achieving its trip reduction and air quality goals for the Charlestown and East Boston neighborhoods. We look forward to working with you on this project as a municipal partner.

Sincerely,

Vineet Gupta, Director of Policy and Planning  
Boston Transportation Department



***TOWN OF NORWOOD***  
***DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS***

**One Lyman Place, Norwood, MA 02062**  
**Phone 781-762-1413 Fax 781-762-9378**  
**Email [mryan@norwoodma.gov](mailto:mryan@norwoodma.gov)**

**Mark P. Ryan**  
**Director of Public**  
**Works and**  
**Town Engineer**

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March 24, 2021

Matt Genova  
Transportation Improvement Program Manager  
Central Transportation Planning Staff  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, Ma 02116-3968

RE: 606130 – Norwood Intersection Improvements at  
Route 1A (Washington Street and Upland Road) and Prospect St.

Dear Mr. Genova,

On behalf of the Town of Norwood, while disappointed the above referenced project has been delayed again, I urge the Boston MPO to provide construction funding in FFY 2023 for the proposed intersection improvements at Route 1A (Washington Street and Upland Road) and Prospect St. as shown on the Draft FFY 2022 – 2026 Transportation Improvements program (TIP).

We understand the difficulties associated with making this project ready for FFY 2022. After our consultant discussed the additional design services and expected timeframe with MassDOT, we are now confident that this important project is on a realistic schedule and that it will be ready for construction to commence in FFY 2023.

Respectfully, on behalf of the Town of Norwood, I request that the Boston MPO support funding this project for construction in FFY2023 and, for MassDOT to keep the project on schedule.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 781-760-8341 or by email at [mryan@norwoodma.gov](mailto:mryan@norwoodma.gov)

Regards,



Mark P. Ryan  
Director of Public Works and Town Engineer

CC:

Norwood Board of Selectmen

Tony Mazzucco

Rep. John Rogers

Sen. Mike Rush

Thomas O'Rourke

File

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 24, 2021

Mr. David Mohler, Chair  
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116  
c/o Matt Genova [mgenova@ctps.org](mailto:mgenova@ctps.org)

Dear Mr. Mohler:

I am writing to you to express my strong support for the Swampscott Rail Trail Construction Project as referenced above. I am an abutter to the trail, and I have lived in my present home for more than twenty-five [25] years. I also grew up in Swampscott and attended the public schools in this town. I graduated Swampscott High School in 1971. As a child, I played intramural sports and I was a cheerleader for the Hockey Team. My friends and I would ride our bicycles all over town. Back then, in the 1960's and 1970's, it was not as treacherous to have an outing on a bicycle with friends. There was not as much traffic and the roads were much quieter than they are now.

The Rail Trail will provide a safe off-road path for cyclists and pedestrians. It will also be a linear park for all ages to enjoy being outside with nature. For many years, as I sat outside in my back yard, I wondered when the Town of Swampscott would transform this unused railroad bed into a lovely path to travel through the town. Not only will it provide a safe and scenic travel route for children and adults, but it will also connect us to trails in Marblehead, Lynn, and Salem. In addition, it will connect three of the town's public schools.

In 2017, when I found out that plans were underway to propose the construction of the Rail Trail, I immediately joined forces with other volunteers and called Town Meeting Members and friends, knocked on neighbors' doors to give them information, held signs at the Railroad Station and the Farmer's Market, and worked tirelessly as an organizer on the campaign to approve the town's financing for the design of the Trail. It has been a worthwhile endeavor. I am very excited that one segment has been completed and that the second segment is almost finished. It looks beautiful, and there are always people walking, bicycling, and exercising their dogs on this new portion of the trail. My neighbors often stop and ask me for an update on the trail construction. This is a wonderful project which will benefit our community in countless ways and will bring people together.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

*/s/Frances J. Weiner*

Frances J. Weiner  
51 Suffolk Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907



Lisa A. Hayes  
2 Phillips Ave  
Swampscott, MA 01907  
508-246-0114  
lisaahayes@gmail.com

March 25, 2021

David Mohler, Chair  
Boston Region MPO  
State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116-3968

RE: Rail Trail 610666

Dear Chairman Mohler and members of the Boston MPO,

I am a longtime resident of Swampscott, MA. I am writing to you in opposition of your funding of the rail trail. I do not oppose rail trails, but I am against the taking of land easements by eminent domain. I am an abutter of the rail trail, they will be taking land easements of my property which I feel is worse than taking the land itself. My backdoor, as well as my neighbors, are within thirty-five feet of the trail. Once they clear the trees and brush, they will be opening my yard to the main street which will expose my property to car traffic noise and potential trespassers. This in truth will effect my property value since I am currently protected from the main road by the wooded area. The trail was originally proposed to the town to start by the Swampscott train station and stretch to the Marblehead Rail Trail, promising great things for commuters. This since has changed as well as many other elements of the initial proposal. This rail trail will significantly impact our town's wildlife conservation land and overall environmental issues that have not been resolved prior to the rail trail proposal. Our town officials have not been transparent from the beginning. They led town voters to believe that the land was owned by National Grid, when in truth has always been owned by rightful abutters. This is why 51% of the town voted to take the easements by eminent domain, while 49% voted against. Forty families are being negatively impacted by this rail trail, some more than others. My portion, as well as my neighbors portion, seem to be flawed. Why would you tear down trees and create an unnecessary pathway when there is a safe sidewalk running alongside the entire length of the trail? Unfortunately, many of my neighbors were coerced into gifting their land by threats made from officials regarding extensive lawsuits and 'making our lives miserable if we did not agree to gift our land to the town'. The town seemed it was appropriate to offer ten dollars for our land easements and no official assessments of property value have been made. Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns, this has been a very upsetting situation that has been going on for far too long.

Sincerely,  
Lisa Hayes

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 25, 2021

Hello Matt & David,

My name is Kristine Keeney from the East Coast Greenway Alliance and I understand that today the Swampscott Rail Trail is being considered for inclusion on the FY 22-2026 TIP during today's MPO meeting. I just wanted to extend my support for this important project as a key section of the [Border to Boston Trail](#) (from the New Hampshire border to Boston). The Essex National Heritage Area and the East Coast Greenway Alliance have been working closely with partners and communities up and down the corridor to support the development of traffic-separated multi-use trails in an effort to complete this regional vision, as well as a new map for the trail, which you can find in draft form attached below.

Given the high use of the first completed segments of the Swampscott Rail Trail in 2020, we know that it will be a very popular place again this spring, summer, and fall as people get back to work and use the trail for active commuting, as well as getting outside for exercise and mental health.

I hope you and your colleagues will consider supporting Swampscott Rail Trail to be included on the FY22-2026 TIP during the meeting today.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Kristine



NEW HAMPSHIRE  
MASSACHUSETTS



70 MILES - NH to Boston



### Border to Boston Trail

- 2021**
- On/Off Road MARKED ROUTE
- Upcoming Construction
- 0 1 mile
- MBTA.com

- Paved Trails**
- Marsh Trail:** Salisbury
  - Clipper City Trail:** Newburyport
  - Independence Greenway:** Peabody
  - Leslie's Retreat Park:** Salem
  - Beattie Park:** Salem
  - Tracey Path:** Salem
  - Salem Bike Path:** Salem
  - Northern Strand:** Lynn, Saugus, Revere, Malden, Everett
- Stone Dust Trails**
- Topsfield Linear Common:** Topsfield
  - Wenham Rail Trail:** Wenham
  - Danvers Rail Trail:** Danvers
  - Crowley Spur:** Peabody
  - Marblehead Rail Trail:** Marblehead
  - Swampscott Rail Trail:** Swampscott



ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA  
essexheritage.org/bordertoboston

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 28, 2021

Dear David,

I am a resident of Swampscott, MA, not an abutter, and have some concerns about the Swampscott Rail Trail. While in theory, it is a beautiful idea, but it has been rife with untruths and mis-information regarding the finances and implementation. The current BOS has misled the townspeople regarding the cost, land ownership and impact on the environment. As an example, when the town was pushing hard for the approval, I asked specifically if the land they were planning on using was all owned by the town or if it was owned by the landowners along the trail (as the landowners had stated it was). I was told that the town absolutely owned the land, did their legal due diligence and the abutters did not own the land . . . a lawyer and short decision by the court declared this was untrue. The land was in fact owned by the abutters. Also, the clearing needed to complete the trail is destroying wild-life in an already over-developed town with not enough green space. I regret my vote in favor of the trail. What is interesting to me is the town and Swampscott Board of Selectmen up to more of the same with the proposed new school project – not being forthcoming with the neighbors, trying to take land via eminent domain, and misrepresenting the finances – all over a project that when town surveyed, did not meet the majority opinion. What is also interesting, this is the same group that tried to cram the same project .6 miles from the new one in 2014 and lost a town wide vote. My hope is that you and your team will take this into consideration when deciding on funding for the rail trail.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sarah Brogna

58 Sherwood Rd

Swampscott, MA 01907

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 28, 2021

Dear Chairman Mohler and members of the Boston MPO

I have been a resident of Swampscott all my life (my mother and her parents are also lifelong Swampscott residents) and I write to express my opposition to the town of Swampscott's request for funding related to the Swampscott Rail Trail.

I am what the town and most residents refer to as an abutter to the rail trail. In fact what I am and what most residents and trail supporters were misinformed to believe to the contrary is a landowner. What I do about is other landowners, my neighbors. I am one of twenty of those landowners that have hired a land attorney, at our own expense and worked with National Grid, and had our deeds corrected to reflect ownership. It has been proven, and it's been agreed upon by National Grid, who was erroneously thought to have owned the entire corridor. The corrected deeds are public records.

The lack of transparency from the town about land ownership and the removal of healthy trees that provide shade cover and green screening without any environmental study of the impact of removing so much of our limited "green space" should bring pause to your funding considerations. Before making any funding decision I would invite you to view our portion of the path that the town plans to take from us by eminent domain which should also make you take pause, as the town has asked the homeowners to sign a Waiver of Appraisals and Damages which states that for \$10, the landowner consents to the taking and waives all rights to appraisal and damages. I should also note that the town has not completed/provided an appraisal of our section of properties to be taken for the trail. The taking of our land by eminent domain would be a long and costly endeavor for a town of this size.

As such, I respectfully request that the town of Swampscott's request for funding related to this project be denied.

Sincerely,

Steven and Betsy Correnti  
21 Morton Road  
Swampscott, MA 01907

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 28, 2021

Subject: Swampscott Rail Trail Grant comment  
Importance: High

Dear Mr. Mohler,

My name is Edward Mulvey, I am a town meeting member. I live at 110 Norfolk Ave. in Swampscott. When this project was first introduced ,at that time I was an abutter in the first section and proposed entrance of the trail. The town did go thru the process of having meetings and some questions were answered, but the plan was vague in execution with no solid answers from Swampscott town hall.

Example number one, the trail at the initial posting of the project was to start at the Swampscott train station where the MBTA runs its rail service. As an abutter to the tracks, I voiced my concerns to the appropriate people with no response. I personally assumed, the MBTA would not allow a Rail Trail to start there along live tracks. After almost a year, I saw a person on the tracks and myself and a neighbor approached him and we talked. He realized at that moment this would not be allowed. My question, which was never answered was how did the town itself and Stanton, the firm they hired didn't come to the same conclusion we did after the draft of the proposed trail? Money was wasted and the entrance has been changed for safety sake to start at Stetson Ave. and Norfolk. The Stetson image is the stone embankment of the old Swampscott to Marblehead line. This is the entrance and as you can see abuts property on both sides. I have not seen any designs for how to enter the beginning of the trail which once again is an elevated stone embankment. This area is also prone to flooding and this section during the warmer months will be blocked due to water. Please see attached photo.

The Humphrey Street crossing of the trail is on a state road and abuts a National Grid substation. National Grid has also come out and said there were issues with the plan and that they would not move their poles. Please see attached documents.

This area is over 30 feet elevated as you can see in the pictures. It is also elevated at the Walker Road crossing but not as high. I am wondering about the cost of making this ADA compliant and safe for people to cross. This section is elevated and how do we protect people from falling? Will 6 foot stockade fencing be used again?

I have yet to see any plans of the cost of the beginning of the trail where I feel most of the grant money will be spent and possibly more.

I also feel that the town is representing progress of the trail by the path of least resistance. They are starting it from the Marblehead side where it is flat for the most part. They have basically cleared a 2 block area for the path for progress to date. If you examine the picture I sent of the scenic path. Pay attention to how the fence was put in. Once side is facing one way and the other is opposite. Why? Done in a rush or just poorly planned? What is scenic about this? The fencing used at this point is stockade fencing 6 feet high on both sides. I see nothing pleasant about walking down a corridor with no interaction of nature to look at because the town has

clear cut the area of trees and habitat.

Example number two, filling of wetlands, ponds and streams. The middle part of the trail is in a sensitive habitat where right down the middle along the National Grid right of way is this area of nature. This area is behind our middle school and abuts the baseball fields. There is already a path in this area well known to most townspeople. The track team runs it for practice. Why are we going to fill in this area, cut down trees and displace animals? This has yet to be answered. The most important issue to me in this letter to you is our green space. I would think that protecting our fragile environment at this time is paramount to a rail trail. Furthermore, it just common sense to use the path we have and mitigate any further damage to the environment in Swampscott. If you Zoom in on the pictures and see the orange ribbon this is what will be filled in. Notice these two ducks? They come every year to nest here with their ducklings. I see no reason why in good conscience this path can't follow the established path already in this area with less disruption to nature.

Example three, If the town does fill in this area where does the water go. Nason Road abuts the middle section of the trail. No one knows for sure where this water will go and who will pay the homeowners if flooding starts? Did the town reach out to the Nason Road residents about this?

Example four, <https://www.facebook.com/swampscottrailtrail> This web site misrepresents the trail thru pictures that are not from Swampscott. New residents believe this is what they are donating too in this presentation. <https://www.itemlive.com/2021/03/08/swampscott-rail-trail-opens-new-section-new-logo/> This article in the Lynn Item states the trail will be done this spring! So do they need this grant? Has it been funded privately already?

In conclusion, I believe the town thru its actions to date have not been good stewards of the monies already given to the project. They have not at any town meeting given updates on costs and issues to date for everyone to digest. Please ask them if they had because I have not seen it. I am for the project going forward in some form but not at the costs of our Green Space and animals. There has been no compromises to date of the plans and no transparency of what they are doing. They also have not resolved any issues with National Grid or kept town meeting members up to date. We find out by reading the local papers! This email is a perfect example, I knew nothing about this grant request till the last minute, which means the rest of town meeting members are probably uninformed of this too. I feel a postponement is warranted, till the above issues are addressed in town meeting and made public. They can always do another request at a later date.

Regards,

Edward Mulvey

Town Meeting member  
110 Norfolk Ave.  
Swampscott Mass. 01907  
781-599-9255

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

## National Grid, Conservation Commission voice concerns on rail trail design

By Bella diGrazia | October 4, 2019

SWAMPSCOTT — The town may have to make changes to parts of its proposed rail trail plan after a number of issues were raised by National Grid.

Swampscott's Conservation Commission held a public hearing in late August for the notice of intent submitted for construction of the rail trail segment running from Lexington Avenue to Humphrey Street, which is under the commission's jurisdiction because it consists of wetlands. The segment falls under the wetlands protection act, which prohibits the removal, dredging, filling or altering of wetlands without a permit issued by the commission.

At the meeting, representatives from the Massachusetts electric company raised several deficiencies in the construction proposal presented by LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc., the design consultant hired by the town.

“There are significant issues we have seen with the plan that is being implemented now with respect to National Grid's infrastructure,” said National Grid representative Nina Pickering-Cook at the meeting. “What they are presenting here is premature and not ready for an order of conditions.”

The first concern raised by Pickering-Cook was that the notice of intent is premature, since the town acknowledges it is still determining the final design of the complete rail trail. The electric company also said that in the proposal, there would not be enough accessibility for National Grid utility trucks or emergency vehicles.

The town's design proposal that states a plan to relocate a stream in the Lexington Avenue/Humphrey Street segment and leave the electrical poles in their current locations was also a matter of concern.



Pickering-Cook said there are three poles currently located within the proposed relocated stream area, and that is not feasible in the eyes of National Grid. That would move the stream to directly underneath electrical poles with live transmission wires, she said.

“We feel as though National Grid and our infrastructure are being treated essentially as a footnote in this plan or an afterthought with the application,” Pickering-Cook said.

“The town admits that certain National Grid poles and wires will be relocated and that is significant because where one pole moves has a ripple effect on where other poles are,” she added. “Essentially, the pole and transmission wires need to be straight, you can’t move one conveniently out of the way to go around a certain property area. It has impact along the whole way. As far as National Grid is concerned, it’s not optimal to have a recreational path underneath live transmission wires, and that is where that redesign is actively happening.”

Because of the sensitivity of the wetlands, the Conservation Commission hired Linden Engineering Partners LLC, their own third-party consultant, to do a peer review of the proposal. The consultant representative was introduced at the August commission meeting, before the National Grid comments were made.

Linden Engineering Partners LLC is an environmental engineering firm specializing in wetlands permitting and peer review services. It will review filing, plans, and information for conforming with the requirements of wetlands protection act and the regulations.

“The commission decided to spend some of our money to hire a consultant just because of all the interest in this project, to make sure we had an objective and very professional review of it,” Conservation Commission Vice-chair Tonia Bandrowicz told the *Item* on Friday. “That is something we normally don’t do. We felt in this case it was appropriate.”

The commission’s consultant looked at the proposal for the notice of intent and has since raised issues relative to what National Grid said in August, said Bandrowicz. Now, she said, the town needs to respond to those concerns and the consultant needs to evaluate the response before the commission can issue a permit.

“In light of all the comments made, the town may have to make changes or provide more information on this design proposal,” said Bandrowicz. “There is a list of things they need to address ... “(Thursday) at our meeting, we explained that our consultant had comments and needed to get a response from town. Since we don’t know exactly when all this will be sorted out, we will be waiting on a vote.”



**NINA PICKERING-COOK**  
[npickeringcook@andersonkreiger.com](mailto:npickeringcook@andersonkreiger.com)  
T: 617-621-6536  
F: 617-621-6636

September 10, 2019

**BY EMAIL**

Tom Ruskin, Chair  
Town of Swampscott Conservation Commission  
22 Monument Avenue  
Swampscott, MA 01907  
c/o Marzie Galazka ([mgalazka@swampscottma.gov](mailto:mgalazka@swampscottma.gov))

***Re: Massachusetts Electric Company High-Voltage Electric Utility Corridor in Swampscott, Massachusetts***

Dear Mr. Ruskin:

I represent the Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (“National Grid”) with respect to the Town’s taking of easement rights to construct and maintain a recreational path (the “Rail Trail”) along National Grid’s high-voltage electric utility corridor in Swampscott (the “Corridor”). Thank you again for allowing National Grid to present its concerns at the public hearing on the Town’s Notice of Intent (“NOI”) to undertake work on certain portions of the Rail Trail.

National Grid has reviewed the Town’s NOI application and the set of plans for the proposed Rail Trail dated August 2, 2019 by Stantec. We would like to supplement National Grid’s general comments made at the hearing on August 29 with the following specific areas of concerns that we have identified in the Town’s submissions to the Commission.<sup>1</sup>

**1. An NOI is premature where the path of the Rail Trail has not been finalized.**

The Town admits that it is still determining the final design of the complete Rail Trail. Nonetheless, it seeks an NOI for construction of a portion of the Rail Trail now from the

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<sup>1</sup> National Grid reserves its right to further supplement its comment on the Town’s NOI based on any response to these concerns from the Town, Stantec or the Commission’s Peer Reviewer, William Jones (who is copied here).

Mr. Tom Ruskin  
September 10, 2019  
Page 2

Commission. Although National Grid understands that the Commission purview is ostensibly limited to examination of the resources area for the portions of the Rail Trail being submitted in the Town's NOI, we implore the Commission to look broadly at the status of the Town's plans.<sup>2</sup>

The Town attempts to allay concerns on the impact to National Grid infrastructure by stating that it will not be relocating any of the National Grid poles in the area of the proposed Rail Trail under Commission review. This statement is misleading. As we mentioned at the August 29 hearing, from National Grid's perspective, the design of the Rail Trail is interdependent among the sections and cannot be segmented. The Commission must be aware that changes to National Grid infrastructure in other sections of the Rail Trail will likely affect the layout and placement of utility infrastructure in the section presented to the Commission now for permitting.

National Grid has continually made it clear to the Town that the current design and layout of the Rail Trail as depicted on the construction plans provided to National Grid in January (labelled the "Preliminary Construction Plans") had substantial deficiencies with respect to its impact on National Grid's infrastructure. These deficiencies include lack of or inaccurate details, as well as reflecting a design that is infeasible with National Grid's operations, such as the placement of fences separating existing poles from the right of way, the proposed relocation of poles and unworkable grade changes. Similarly, the NOI plans also reference "minor grade changes" but detail is needed to know whether those grade changes may impact clearances and foundations related to National Grid's poles and wires. National Grid has attempted to work with the Town's engineers at Stantec to assist them in better understanding those potential impacts and the costs involved, all of which would be the responsibility of the Town as a matter of law. That work is ongoing and, even the Town admits, is not yet done. On page 11 of the LEC Notice of Intent Application, the Town's consultants state: "Where needed, the existing utility poles, anchors/guy wires, and overhead wires will be relocated to accommodate the new trail alignment."

Simply put, changing the location of one or more poles will have a ripple effect on the location of the remaining poles along the Corridor, and may require installation of additional poles/guys and potentially refitting the entire line. As a matter of operational safety and efficiency, electric utility poles (and wires) must be as straight and even-height as possible. The changes may also impact other gas and electric facilities owned by National Grid, including National Grid's substation facilities along the Corridor, resulting in additional customer impacts for the people of Swampscott. At this time, because there are no acceptable design plans for review, we have no ability to determine the full extent of the Rail Trail's impacts and what else in the plans may require modification. As a result, the NOI plans in front of the Commission are likely to change and should not be viewed as the final layout of the Rail Trail.

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting by way of comparison, that typically MEPA requires analysis of a complete project and does not allow segmenting of a project like that proposed by the Town here.

## 2. Specific Technical Issues with NOI Segment Plans

Separate and apart from the generalized concerns expressed above and at the August 29<sup>th</sup> hearing, National Grid provides the following technical comments concerning the Town's NOI for certain sections of the proposed Rail Trail:

1. The Town seeks to construct a new stream crossing (concrete box culvert) where the Rail Trail is proposed across an intermittent stream. Because the proposed culvert constitutes a new crossing, the Town must comply with the MA Stream Crossing Standards to the fullest extent, as acknowledged by LEC on Page 13 of the Project Narrative. Although the Town appears to demonstrate that Standards 2, 3, and 6 are satisfied in the Project Narrative and tables provided on Sheet 7 of the Project Site Plans, Standards 1, 4-5 are not specifically addressed by LEC. National Grid's comments on those Standards as applied to the proposed Rail Trail plans are below:
  - a. *Standard 1: Spans (bridges, 3-sided box culverts, open-bottom culverts or arches) that preserve the natural stream channel are strongly preferred:* The project proposes a four-sided culvert in the location of the proposed stream crossing. The goal of Standard 1 is to minimize disruption to the streambed. However, under the proposed design, the entire streambed will be impacted in order to install the proposed crossing. Justification should be provided as to why an open bottom culvert is not proposed for this crossing.
  - b. *Standard 4: Natural bottom substrate within the structure:* The resource area descriptions note that the existing substrate within the stream is comprised of "coarse and small stones". The project proposes to restore impacted areas of the intermittent stream using the natural substrate overlain with 6" of 2-4" diameter rounded river stone. Since the goal of this standard is to approximate the natural stream substrate as much as possible, the applicant should 1) provide additional documentation that the proposed natural stream bed substrate matches both upstream and downstream of the crossing, and 2) provide additional justification as to why the existing stream substrate will be buried with imported material as opposed to stockpiled and preserved for reuse during restoration.
  - c. *Standard 5: Designed with appropriate bed forms and streambed characteristics so that water depths and velocities are comparable to those found in the natural channel at a variety of flows:* The Site Plans provide a basic profile of the proposed crossing on Sheet 20. However, additional information is needed to review the Project's compliance with this standard. At a minimum, the Ordinary High Water (OHW) elevation should be depicted on this plan set to demonstrate that the crossing will preserve water depths at a variety of flows across the channel. A continuous thalweg should also be maintained throughout the crossing, which is not currently proposed. The Project Narrative (Page 12) notes that dry wildlife passage will be provided within the crossing, however, this is not shown on the provided crossing profile. A more detailed cross section should be prepared identifying the proposed stream bed

and dry wildlife passage material elevations, OHW and flood elevations, and a continuous thalweg across the channel.

2. MassGIS indicates the presence of four (4) Certified Vernal Pools (CVPs) along the project corridor with one located near STA 56 and three (3) near STA 73. These CVPs should be noted on the Site Plans, as work appears to be proposed within their associated 100-foot Buffer Zone. Page 16 of the Project Narrative acknowledges the presence of these CVPs, although no discussion is provided as to the project's effect on these areas. In both locations, clearing and grading within otherwise undisturbed portions of the 100-foot Buffer Zone to the CVPs is proposed that may be considered significant wildlife habitat.
3. The scope of work has not been fully depicted on the Site Plans as a grading plan has not been prepared for this section of the Rail Trail. Although representative cross sections have been provided, Page 12 of the Project Narrative notes that "minor grading beyond the shoulders may be required to blend into adjacent grades." Given that several areas along the Rail Trail Corridor are located in close proximity to wetland boundaries, a grading plan or statement clarifying what is included in the limits of work should be provided by the Town to clearly depict the limits of "minor grading", as it is unclear if this work has been accounted for on the Site Plans within the limits of work.
4. For portions of the relocated stream and proposed drainage channel (STA 61+33 to 67+36):
  - a. In areas where the stream channel will be relocated, the NOI plan proposes a 2-foot vegetated shoulder between the stone dust path and the stream. The path will be graded in a 1.5% slope to drain towards the stream. But the NOI is void of any explanation as to how the proposed design will prevent runoff and stone dust from the Rail Trail from resulting in sedimentation to the stream given the proximity and proposed grades.
  - b. Page 12 of the Project Narrative indicates that an approximately 10-foot segment of the relocated stream will be comprised of modified rockfill. However, this substrate generally provides limited habitat value and may impact aquatic organism movement within the stream. The Town should explain whether it is possible to design the stream to be comprised of modified rockfill overlain with a more natural stream bed material to match the surrounding native substrate, or incorporate compost/seed into the modified rockfill.
  - c. Page 12 of the Project Narrative indicates that the bottom of the stream channel will be loamed and seeded with a FacW wed meadow seed mix. But the NOI is void of any explanation as to how the proposed design in this area will be stabilized to prevent erosion and downstream sediment deposition in the event of channel flows while the vegetation within the channel is becoming established.
  - d. The Town should describe what alternatives were considered for the overall project design as it relates to impacts associated with the relocation of the stream channel.

The NOI Application notes that a priority of the project was to retain household encroachments and a vegetative buffer between the trail and adjacent residential properties, but it does not detail, for instance, whether the feasibility of a retaining wall, narrowed trail width, or other avoidance measures considered as alternatives to resource area impacts.

- e. The stream is being relocated towards National Grid's existing overhead utility pole line. Grading associated with the stream relocation appears to directly affect these facilities, as the poles are within the limits of grading. Particularly near STA 65, the proposed drainage channel which receives discharges from the stream is nearly within the direct path of the existing utility pole. The Town must explain how this will affect these facilities, and how will the Town proposes to protect the poles from impacts of the stream flows.
  - f. The NOI Site Plans should clarify the proposed limits of the relocated stream, including the approximately 586 linear feet of Bank, that will be constructed as part of the stream relocation. The proposed channel centerline is currently all that is shown on the plans and it is unclear where, particularly in relation to National Grid's overhead utilities, the stream flows will be located.
  - g. Page 20 of the Project Narrative states that "the water carrying capacity and groundwater and surface water quality of the channel will be maintained...". However, since the project does not provide a grading plan, the water carrying capacity of the relocated stream is unclear. Although a typical cross section has been provided on Sheet 5 of the Site Plans, without additional information demonstrating that the proposed grades and elevations will maintain flows within the channel, it is unclear if the Town's proposal can meet this performance standard.
5. The resource areas present along the south side of the trail near STA 48, in the location of the proposed box culvert, are not clearly defined. The resource area descriptions in the Project Narrative indicates that WF#333-335 indicate the boundary of Inland Bank associated with the intermittent stream, WF#322-328 indicate the boundary of Inland Bank associated with the pond, and implies that the remainder of the 300-series flags constitute the limits of BVW (see Project Narrative, Page 9), although per the resource area descriptions, "while a wetland occurs intermittently along the pond's edge, the wetland flags largely represent the Bank to Pond." The resource area in this location should be clarified (BVW vs. Bank), as direct impacts are proposed, so that the project can be evaluated under the appropriate performance standards. If BVW will be impacted, the Town should propose, or be required to include, some mitigation in the form of wetland replication.
  6. The Project Narrative (Page 18) notes that "minor grading within the adjacent BVW may be required to achieve stream continuity for the proposed stream channel", however, it is unclear where this activity is being proposed and what constitutes "minor" if no grading

plan has been provided. As written, the NOI Application does not propose impacts to BVW, and should either be revised to provide an area of alteration or more clearly commit to avoiding work within this resource area.

7. As written, no monitoring is currently proposed under this NOI. National Grid would expect that the Town would be required to monitor the relocated stream channel to ensure that vegetation reaches sufficient establishment for successful stabilization.
8. Overall, as a significant portion of the Rail Trail will occur within existing vegetated portions of the 100-foot Buffer Zone and will include clearing, grubbing, and a permanent change in surface type, the Town should consider additional ways to mitigate the reduction of the capacity of the buffer zone to slow, detain, filter, store, and infiltrate runoff prior to reaching the resource areas that will be impacted by the project.

### 3. Summary of August 29<sup>th</sup> Comments

Beyond the general premature nature of the Town's plans, National Grid highlighted the following concerns with the Town's NOI Application during the August 29 hearing:

- The Commission requires that contours should the elevations and grading on any NOI plans; none are shown on the Town's Rail Trail plans;<sup>3</sup>
- The load bearing capacity of the box culvert appears to be deficient for the current required load to bear National Grid utility trucks (HS-25) and emergency vehicles (which may also require the bridge area to be AASHTO-rated), and the railings proposed for the trail above the culvert would need to be made removable to allow for first responder access;
- Grading changes along the Rail Trail may impact the accessibility of utility poles, requiring further relocation of National Grid infrastructure or redesign of the Rail Trail; although until grading is shown along the entire NOI plan section, it is difficult to determine with precision; and
- Stormwater data is needed to determine any impact on or exacerbation of current flooding of National Grid infrastructure and abutting substations.

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<sup>3</sup> It should also be noted that where the Town is proposing construction of a public trail in a high-voltage environment, a comprehensive civil engineering design is mandated. National Grid cannot permit any field contractor to "grade as needed" without knowing precisely what is needed. Construction work in a high-voltage environment needs to be well planned in order to help alleviate indecision in the field and maintain operations and safety.

Mr. Tom Ruskin  
September 10, 2019  
Page 7

## CONCLUSION

The Town's NOI filing and plans provided to the Conservation Commission lack necessary detail as to how the construction of the Rail Trail and the proposed drainage will impact National Grid's facilities within the Corridor and on its abutting properties. Where such impacts were purportedly of paramount concern to the Town, National Grid is concerned with that apparent disconnect.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Town on the issues raised in this letter (in addition to those outside of the Commission's jurisdiction). National Grid's goal is to engage with the Town to ensure that the construction and maintenance of this Rail Trail does not jeopardize public safety or National Grid's ability to provide safe and reliable service to the Town of Swampscott.

Very truly yours,



Nina L. Pickering-Cook

ecc: William A. Jones, Linden Engineering Partners, LLC  
Jonathan D. Eichman, Esq.  
Megan F.S. Tipper, Senior Counsel, National Grid



## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 28, 2021

Mr. David Mohler, Chair  
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Swampscott Rail Trail Project #610666

Dear Mr. Mohler:

I am a 47 year resident of Swampscott, MA and respectfully request that you **decline funding** the Swampscott Rail Trail at this time.

My section of the proposed trail runs between Bradlee Avenue and Humphrey Street. This section of the proposed trail is definitively owned by the adjacent property owners, including myself. The Town's campaign in 2017 to support the provision of \$850k for the design and related land acquisition costs was largely run on vague and misleading information related to the true ownership of the related property.

Additionally, the Town of Swampscott will use eminent domain to take an easement for a recreational path in this section. Although the Town maintains that property owners will continue to "own the dirt underneath the easement", once the land is taken via eminent domain for a recreational path, the use of the land is forever changed and will never return to the property owners.

While I am not opposed generally to Rail Trails, I am vehemently opposed to using eminent domain for such Trails. Eminent domain is meant for hospitals, schools and highways, not recreational paths.

Additionally, this section of the proposed Rail Trail would run between a dense area of homes, many of whom have maintained the property as part of their yards, because it is! This tract is full of mature trees and vegetation, including native blackberry bushes on my property.

As an alternative, we have suggested that the Town move this section to the quiet adjacent street in front of this section, rather than take property via eminent domain for a recreational path behind our homes. To date, the Town has not been willing to consider any alternative outside of the proposed Trail.

I respectfully ask that you decline any additional funding until the Town of Swampscott is willing to consider alternatives that don't include the use of eminent domain, even for a recreational easement.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Nassar  
27 Morton Road  
Swampscott, MA 01907

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Mohler,

Please find my letter in opposition to Project # 610666 attached. I assure you that if it comes across as personal it is surely because it is. If someone was blatantly looking to take a large chunk of your most valuable asset for an ill conceived and wholly inadequate outcome by misrepresenting your ownership of that asset to others, dismissing and belittling your concerns on public forums and brazenly not once have a fair and honest conversation about it with you, than I suspect you too may harbor a reasonable amount of animus toward that person. If correct I would suggest you never move to Swampscott where that is business as usual and in the words of our selectman, "how to get things done".

I am attaching not only my letter of formal opposition, but also a picture of my yard from my backdoor and a well written recent article in the Salem News written by a Swampscott resident that is not on the trail and not in favor of it. I share this picture so that you can see it for yourself and to consider realize that I stand to lose between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of it's area and the only offer I have ever heard suggested in 4 years that this project has been under way for this monumental intrusion on my land is a sum of \$100. Add in the fact that my children will now be playing next to a public way and my backdoor will be easily accessible to anyone that might have bad intentions and you may further understand how that is not an acceptable offer made in good faith and how I might not want that intrusion at almost any price for that matter.

Thank your for your consideration in this matter and for the important work you do for our state.

Respectfully,

Matthew Roddy

March 28, 2021

Mr. David Mohler

State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116-3968

RE: Project #610666 – Swampscott Rail Trail Project

Dear Mr. Mohler,

Please accept this letter in strong opposition to the project referenced above. I oppose this trail for many reasons, but to be sur my main reason is the complete lack or honesty and integrity that has been the hallmark of how this plan has been proposed, designed and to date implemented. The Chair of our Select Board, Peter Spellios, has pushed his agenda forward on this trail through misrepresenting, misleading and mistreating the tax payers of Swampscott he is elected to serve. He has taken every opportunity to dismiss and disparage the landowners this trail will acutely affect and never once has he spent any time working with them. He would rather run over them, like he plans to our properties, by calling us selfish, NIMBY's and offering nothing in the way of conversation and fair negotiation. If you have any doubt about this please feel free to ask many of those whose properties he has already run over and how they felt they were treated.

From the day this needless quest on his part was started in a town with plenty of quiet streets, boardwalks and beaches for walking and biking, and too few trees for clean air, he has NEVER ONCE acted in good faith or in good conscience to listen and work with those affected. First, he lied about our landownership, then he misrepresented to the town the ability to complete the trail to the all too important train station (a main reason it was being built per the initial marketing), and misled the voters on how much land would be needed, what it might cost, how it would be maintained, and what impact it would have on their neighbors.

In summary, I believe that your organization would be well served not only steer clear of the rotten dealings of this project and the leadership that brought it to your doorstep, but furthermore suggest the better way to spend the state's money would be to have ethics division look into how this project and many other things have been handled in this small town where one man acts as if he is the king and the tax payers are his disciples.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Matthew Roddy

41 Morton Rd.

Swampscott, MA 01907



# Two projects foretell our fate

By **Brian T. Watson**

People just want what they want. We can talk all we like about global warming, educate ourselves about carbon dioxide accumulating in the atmosphere, learn about the coastal flooding to come, and advocate for “green” energy and electric cars, but in the end it still remains difficult for us to truly transform our old habits and approaches.

Two current development projects – one in Boston and one in Swampscott – put me in mind of that observation.

The first project is a proposal to replace the Bunker Hill public housing complex with a new and larger one. The existing housing – built in 1940 – is outdated, worn-out, and literally moldy. It contains 1100 units of low-income housing. The new project will include almost that number of affordable units and also add roughly 1700 market-rate units. So far, so good.

But the existing site of 26 acres contains 340 large, mature trees – maples, elm, and pine. Many are 60 to 100 years old and have substantial shade canopies. Shockingly, constructing the new buildings would require the removal of a full 250 of the trees.

Now, we all know and accept that some developments require some tree removal. We do our best to balance all of the gains and losses that exist in any complex project. But in 2021, with guaranteed heat misery coming our way within 10 or 20 or 30 years, removing two-thirds of the Bunker Hill apartments’ trees is just folly. Sure, the developers say they’ll plant new trees. Do you know how many decades it takes for a 2-inch caliper sapling to reach even, say, 50 feet in height? We can’t have those decades.

In Swampscott (where I live), a similar fiasco is underway. Well-intentioned, but completely myopic, the town has embarked on constructing a 2-mile “rail trail” along an abandoned track right-of-way. The trail, with a walking surface designed to be 10 feet wide, requires clearing a 14-foot swath through areas of varying vegetation. Some parts of the trail are already open, some have just weeds, and some are filled with brambles, bushes, and trees of varying sizes.

The tree removal – already started in some sections – is significant. Many dozens of trees from small to very large will be cut down.

Given the extreme levels of carbon dioxide already in the air, and the extreme heat we’ll soon see, building this trail is short-sighted and destructive.

And unlike in Charlestown, where at least the construction provides something dearly necessary, in Swampscott we are building a “trail” that adds little to the town’s infrastructure. Swampscott is a tiny hamlet of 3 square miles, substantially developed, and with few areas of sizable woods or green space. The proposed “trail” is ludicrous. Calling it a “trail” conjures the wrong impression because in most sections it parallels roads and yards and housing. It is often wedged between stockade fences or rows of cheap arborvitae shrubs, newly planted to provide screening from adjacent yards. It won’t be a walk in nature. It’s more like a backyard cut-through.

On the rail trail website, the proposed path is touted as a “2-mile linear park.” Well, the only things remotely parklike about this narrow, 40-foot corridor are the trees and wild vegetation now on it – vegetation that will be removed to construct the walk. My well-paved town doesn’t have the good sense to see this tiny



A section of the Swampscott Rail Trail.

strip of land as the natural relief it already is.

What’s really silly is the supposed rationale for the “trail.” Sold as a safe place for children and adults to walk and bike, it often parallels residential streets that are already safe for children and adults. And the small neighborhood streets crisscross the town like a lattice.

Lastly, building the trail requires time, money, energy, and resources. Some of the money assuredly comes from grants – as though that money doesn’t count. But climate change will affect all of humanity, so we’ve got to recalibrate our sense of who “owns” resources. In fact, all the costs of a rail-trail come from a larger society that would do well to harbor its resources for the unavoidable costs and choices that are coming. By comparison with the rising-ocean emergencies that will within decades face Swampscott (and other seaside communities), building the rail-trail is a tone-deaf, reality-ignoring, colossal and counterproductive waste of society’s money.

I find the pursuit of these two projects – with their blithe tree removal – depressing and emblematic of our general lack of responsibility and imagination. That both Charlestown and Swampscott of all places – coastal communities – can be so unresponsive to and dismissive of what

daily stares us in the face bodes poorly for our future. We’ve got to start connecting what we do today – removing trees – with the overheating atmosphere and the rising seas.

It isn’t that halting or reforming these two projects would save us. It’s just that we’re unwilling to do even that. We want what we want – now – and we disconnect ourselves from considering whether the gathering crises of the future ought to change what we do now.

Boston developers are smart and sophisticated and Swampscott residents are progressive, educated, and caring. That both groups can nonetheless embrace such present-oriented approaches indicates the difficulties we are having in transforming society in preparation for the climate catastrophe already on the horizon.

Parts of Boston already see new coastal flooding. Swampscott will soon. If we really want to give our children some safety, let’s give them an actual future – a future at all – rather than a denuded housing project and a sliver of walkway built where greenery used to be.

Brian T. Watson of Swampscott is author of “Headed Into the Abyss: The Story of Our Time, and the Future We’ll Face.” Contact him at [btwatson20@gmail.com](mailto:btwatson20@gmail.com).

## **Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail**

March 28, 2021

I write to express my opinion on the subject project. I am a resident of Swampscott. I am not an abutter and do not live in the same neighborhood as the proposed Rail Trail. I believe that this is a poorly conceived project. The ownership of portions of the proposed trail is in question. It is unclear whether National Grid is willing to cooperate. There are considerable environmental issues that either have been ignored or intentionally left out of the plan. Street crossing will require additional land taking from residents.

I believe that this project is not in a position where your support is warranted.

Clark Sprague  
32 Greenwood Terrace  
Swampscott, MA, 01907  
781-599-2737

## **Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail**

March 29, 2021

Dear Mr. Mohler,

As residents of Swampscott we are opposed to the Swampscott Rail Trail - Project #610666.

Our property is on one of the sections of the proposed rail trail that runs between Bradlee St. and Humphrey St. The mature trees, vegetation and current green space will be destroyed by the construction of this trail.

The town has not been transparent about the ownership of this land, which we own. Nor has it been transparent about the design, plans and finances. The town vote was based on inaccurate and misleading information.

We sincerely request that MPO decline any additional funding for the Swampscott Rail Trail project.

Sincerely,

Virginia Booras  
Mary Tuite  
61 Morton Rd.  
Swampscott, Ma.

Mr. David Mohler, Chair  
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Swampscott Rail Trail Project 610666

Dear Mr. Mohler,

I have been a resident of Swampscott for 28 years and I write to express my opposition to the town of Swampscott's request for funding related to the Swampscott Rail Trail.

I have two main reasons to support this.

First, my section of the proposed rail trail runs between Bradlee Ave. and Humphrey St. There are approximately 30 landowners in this dense section and it's been proven that the land is owned by the adjacent property owners, including myself. The town does not own this land, which I believe is a prerequisite to receiving the grant. If the town chooses to move forward with Eminent Domain, not only would it be a drawn out, costly endeavor for such a small town, but I believe it would be a grave misuse of power. Eminent Domain may be necessary in extreme cases, but to use it for a recreational path is misguided and I believe setting a dangerous precedent.

My second and perhaps even more compelling reason are the effects on the environment. Two short segments have already been completed and the decimation of trees, brush, plants and wildlife habitat is inexcusable and completely unnecessary, especially in this time of accelerating global warming. We live in a beautiful seaside town with tremendous access to the coastline, including a well maintained boardwalk from Swampscott, along Lynn Short Drive and into Nahant. We are also lucky to have not only our own Harold King Forest with a 1 mile walking loop, but we are in close proximity to Salem Woods and Lynn Woods, allowing plenty of opportunity for walking and recreation. Respectfully, this is not the time to be destroying trees and vegetation, especially when there is no need.

I am attaching a recent Salem News article written by Brian Watson, where he elaborates on many of the environmental concerns I state here. Brian is a Salem News columnist, a registered architect and served 10 years on the Swampscott Planning Board. He was also the town's representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning council. I hope you can carve out some time to read it. It certainly begs the question of why we need to disrupt nature in this small town for a path when we already have so many wonderful, natural amenities around us to enjoy and live a healthy lifestyle.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. Attending these past few MPO zoom meetings has made me realize the amazing work the board does and the sheer volume of projects you have to analyze and prioritize. We appreciate your efforts!



**I respectfully request that the town of Swampscott's request for funding related to this project be denied.**

Sincerely,

Maura and Bill Carroll  
33 Morton Road  
Swampscott, MA 01907

# Two projects foretell our fate

By **Brian T. Watson**

People just want what they want. We can talk all we like about global warming, educate ourselves about carbon dioxide accumulating in the atmosphere, learn about the coastal flooding to come, and advocate for “green” energy and electric cars, but in the end it still remains difficult for us to truly transform our old habits and approaches.

Two current development projects – one in Boston and one in Swampscott – put me in mind of that observation.

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Now, we all know and accept that some developments require some tree removal. We do our best to balance all of the gains and losses that exist in any complex project. But in 2021, with guaranteed heat misery coming our way within 10 or 20 or 30 years, removing two-thirds of the Bunker Hill apartments’ trees is just folly. Sure, the developers say they’ll plant new trees. Do you know how many decades it takes for a 2-inch caliper sapling to reach even, say, 50 feet in height? We can’t have those decades.

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Given the extreme levels of carbon dioxide already in the air, and the extreme heat we’ll soon see, building this trail is short-sighted and destructive.

And unlike in Charlestown, where at least the construction provides something dearly necessary, in Swampscott we are building a “trail” that adds little to the town’s infrastructure. Swampscott is a tiny hamlet of 3 square miles, substantially developed, and with few areas of sizable woods or green space. The proposed “trail” is ludicrous. Calling it a “trail” conjures the wrong impression because in most sections it parallels roads and yards and housing. It is often wedged between stockade fences or rows of cheap arborvitae shrubs, newly planted to provide screening from adjacent yards. It won’t be a walk in nature. It’s more like a backyard cut-through.

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A section of the Swampscott Rail Trail.

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Brian T. Watson of Swampscott is author of “Headed Into the Abyss: The Story of Our Time, and the Future We’ll Face.” Contact him at [btwatson20@gmail.com](mailto:btwatson20@gmail.com).



# Town of Swampscott

OFFICE OF THE SELECT BOARD  
Elihu Thomson Administration Building  
22 Monument Avenue  
Swampscott, MA 01907-1940

Peter A. Spellos, Chair  
Polly Titcomb, Vice Chair  
Neal Duffy  
David Grishman  
Donald M. Hause

Sean R. Fitzgerald  
Town Administrator  
Tel: (781) 596-8850  
Email: [sfitzgerald@swampscottma.gov](mailto:sfitzgerald@swampscottma.gov)

March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Re: Swampscott Rail Trail

Dear Mr. Mohler,

I am writing in response to the MPO's question regarding Town support of the Swampscott Rail Trail Project. The Swampscott Rail Trail is a visionary long-term project that will serve every neighborhood and every resident of every age in the Town of Swampscott by repurposing the former rail right-of-way into a two-mile linear park and addressing urgent public safety and health concerns in our community.

In May of 2017, Town Meeting approved (by a vote of 210 to 56) a warrant article to move forward with the Rail Trail and to provide funding for the design, engineering, and cost of acquisition. This warrant article was unanimously sponsored by the Board of Selectmen and supported by the Finance Committee, Capital Improvement Committee, School Committee, Planning Board, Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee, and Conservation Commission.

In June 2017, a town-wide election was held to bring the question of the Rail Trail project to the entire community. Swampscott voters affirmed Town Meeting's approval by an overwhelming margin of 12% which further affirms the public need for this project and its intrinsic effect on improving Swampscott's public safety.

The completed portion of the rail trail has been in near constant use since its opening; and as the current pandemic has shown us, the creation and preservation of outdoor recreation options is paramount to a physically and mentally healthy community.

I hope you will support our request and look forward to answering any more questions you have.

Sincerely,



Sean R. Fitzgerald  
Town Administrator

Cc: Marzie Galazka, Director of Community & Economic Development, Town of Swampscott

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 29, 2021

Mr. David Mohler, Chair  
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
State Transportation Building  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Swampscott Rail Trail Project #610666

Dear Mr. Mohler:

I have resided in Swampscott since 1974 (47 years) and live in the neighborhood where a section of the Swampscott Rail Trail is currently proposed. While my property will not specifically be impacted by the construction and use of the potential rail trail, I remain opposed and ask that you **DECLINE** provide funding for this project.

My home resides on Francis Road, which intersects the Bradlee Avenue and Humphrey Street portion of the proposed trail.

While I understand the Town of Swampscott is interested in creating green space within the community, the destruction of the current green space seems non-sensical – why would we want to tear down and tear out mature trees and plantings to create a new green space? Traditionally, the Town has had difficulty finding funding to replace trees lost due to storms – so much so, that some citizens created an online fund raising a few years ago to provide funding. In that instance, citizens provided funding for the trees and the Town's Department of Public Works installed the trees. I, myself, have provided 3 trees to the Town for installation on Town property.

Additionally, our sidewalks are not well maintained. It would make more sense to maintain our public sidewalks properly to allow residents and others to walk on the quiet and safe streets in **FRONT** of this section of the proposed trail, rather than tear up the green space and backyards of the residents who own the land to allow residents and others to walk **BEHIND** their homes.

Respectfully, I ask that you decline any funding for this project.

Sincerely,

Abraham J. Nassar

10 Francis Road

Swampscott, MA 01907

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 29, 2021

Dear Mr. Mohler –

The Town of Swampscott is requesting Massachusetts state grant funding for the implementation of a public right of way, The Swampscott Rail Trail.

**Please accept this sincere request that you deny any such funding request during the current consideration period and postpone any such approval until which time that Swampscott works through critical issues currently plaguing the trail.**

While Town Leadership has been very focused and aggressive on working to gain grant funding for a potential trail – they have unfortunately ignored severe and significant issues that could undermine the very project itself. At this point and until which time the town can prove otherwise – this project is currently stuck in its tracks and not feasible. Any attempt to fund this project now, and potentially above others that are actually ready for construction would undermine the mission of your committee.

The items I would like to point out to your committee are:

- **Land Ownership** - Large portions of the proposed rail trail are owned by Swampscott Residents. The Town has not yet paid for and or received appraisals for the property they would like to take and as such they cannot confirm they have the funding to acquire the necessary easements to actually build and or complete the trail.
- **National Grid** - owns a significant portion of the Rail Trail and they have hired lawyers who effectively stopped construction of a large portion of the trail in its tracks in October 2019. To date National Grid has stated that the towns rail trail design is inadequate and not feasible. The Town Requested approval from the Conversation Commission for this project in October 2019 and no meaningful discussions or change have taken place yet. As it turns out the town does not have approval from the Conservation Commission to build the trail – and while they make this look like a rubber stamp this could be years away or never.
- **Between Eminent Domain Takings and issues with National Grid – The Town cannot currently develop as much as 75% of the trail as contemplated.**
- **Eminent Domain Takings** – The town has used Grant Money to pay for Eminent Domain Takings and this is not legal a legal act under MGL 79. The Town must pay for these takings directly. Instead they are using your grant money to buy items of value which the town then provides to landowners as payment for eminent domain. This is not legal.
- **Matching Funds** – Swampscott currently has no money approved for rail trail construction and or support. Their current application outlines significant matching funds that they will contribute directly and this is not possible as this money is not and has not been approved.

- **Limited Resources** – The town has a set amount of money budgeted to acquire easements to build the trail – until they can prove to the board via appraisals that they can actually take the land then this project is not feasible.

Aside from the above items I want to point out that Town Leadership has not engaged abutters and town residents in a meaningful dialogue regarding this project. Specifically they have ignored several very real and potential options to mitigate negative externalities associated with the trail and work amicably with neighbors.

In theory the rail trail could be a nice amenity for the Town of Swampscott but current town leadership has unfortunately made it their personal mission to implement a trail at all costs.

Your committee does a great job, and there are so many deserving projects. The answer to Swampscott should be no for now – until they can prove they are working with national grid, abutters and land owners – and actually have the needed rights and approvals to build the trail.

There is no emergency here – please just hold those you fund accountable to a certain standard of ethics and readiness – when the trail is ready they can come back to you for consideration.

Thank you!

Tom Palleria

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 29, 2021

Hello David,

I don't know if you remember me, but from roughly 1985 to 2010 or so, I was the Swampscott representative to the MAPC's North Shore Task Force. I was the group's chairman for a number of years. Sam Cleaves was the MAPC liaison. I met you at a number of presentations, meetings, reviews, and events.

I am writing about the proposed Swampscott rail-trail. I understand that the town has applied for a grant to fund the trail, and that you are involved in reviewing the proposal.

I think that the trail -- as currently designed -- is not worthy of a grant. While conceptually a trail could be a good idea, the current design is a generic, "industry-standard" trail laid out to comply with one-size-fits-all specifications. That design is inappropriate for the specific right-of-way corridor in Swampscott where the trail will be imposed.

The location of the trail -- in a relatively narrow, 40-foot width utility easement -- is surrounded by houses, yards, stockade fences, and cleared land. Ironically, the only "nature" or extensive greenery and trees in most of the trail areas is on the easement itself. The current design calls for clear-cutting a 14 to 16-foot width of land, to make way for a 10-foot width trail. On the sections of the trail that have already been built, substantial amounts of small and large brush and trees have been removed.

The current trail design is rigid and inflexible, and does not allow for saving even the largest trees if they exist in the pathway. The trail should instead be site-specific, and site-responsive, and curve and bend around the significant trees. This consideration should be very important because there are precious few trees outside of the right of way.

In this age of coming climate change, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and increasing periods of unusual heat, we should be preserving our trees when we build new projects. The current generic design of the Swampscott rail-trail makes no effort to do this.

I encourage you to disapprove Swampscott's request for a grant.  
If you have questions, or if I can help with any more information, feel free to email or phone.

Best regards,  
Brian Watson  
781 367 2008

## Swampscott (#610666): Swampscott Rail Trail

March 29, 2021

Dear Chair Mohler,

I am writing in regards to the Swampscott Rail Trail, project # 610666 to which I am strongly opposed.

Swampscott has been my home for almost 60 years, and during that time, I've seen quite a bit of change - some for the better and some not. The proposed Swampscott Rail Trail falls heavily in the latter category. Never has our town been so divided over an issue as it has been over the proposed Rail Trail. While I am not against Rail Trails generally, the way Swampscott has approached this particular project, coupled with our failing infrastructure and the removal of mature healthy trees is very concerning.

Unfortunately, Town Leadership has a habit of working to ensure that those most impacted by a project are literally, the last to know about it, and the proposed Rail Trail is no different. We've had a number of other high profile projects in Swampscott where affected neighbors who voice legitimate concerns are viewed as less important citizens than those who want a particular project. In the the instance of the proposed Rail Trail, Town Meeting Members were led to believe that National Grid owns the majority of property in question, when in fact many who live along the proposed trail have proven that they are the actual owners.

Swampscott's infrastructure is also lacking. Our elementary schools have not seen significant renovation in decades, and our middle school is currently dealing with a failing roof which could have been mitigated through better planning and site management. Our school heating systems are inconsistent, and pre-COVID when school was in session, we had some students in winter coats in the summer and others in tee shirts during the winter to compensate. You may have heard from School Committee members about the need to provide safe walking routes to schools, to which I would counter if the Town fixed the sidewalks, we would have less of an issue. Additionally, walking behind homes in a densely populated and fenced-in corridor with very few entries and exit points hardly sounds safe.

Finally, the removal of mature trees that provide shade, greenery, and oxygen is quite troubling. We live in a seaside town with plenty of beachfront access. Views of the Atlantic Ocean provide limitless open space. Why tear down trees and disrupt neighborhoods when nature has already provided us with a bounty of open space?

For these reasons and more, I respectfully ask that you decline any funding to the Swampscott Rail Trail Project.

I would be appreciative if you could confirm receipt of my email.

Sincerely,

Joan P. White  
60Mountwood Ave  
Swampscott, MA  
01907 - 2904