



# The State of the SNETT

*Southern New England Trunkline Trail  
Assessment & Recommendations*

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SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND TRUNKLINE TRAIL  
A NATIONAL RECREATION TRAIL  
FALL 2014





Cross-country skiers in Douglas. The SNETT provides four-season recreation.

Front Cover: Eagle Scout Ryan Gonthier built and installed a trail kiosk, two benches, and landscaping at the new SNETT Center Street Parking lot in Bellingham. Ryan was assisted by Boy Scout Troop 100 and parents.

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# Executive Summary

## THE SNETT TODAY: USED AND LOVED

The 22-mile Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT) in Massachusetts follows an old railbed from the Connecticut state line in Douglas east to Grove Street in Franklin. The SNETT was acquired by the Commonwealth in 1984 and is managed as a recreation trail by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Solidly anchored by Douglas State Forest and Franklin State Forest, the SNETT passes through Douglas, Uxbridge, Millville, Blackstone, Bellingham and Franklin. The SNETT welcomes pedestrians, equestrians, bicycles and non-motorized vehicles.



DCR Trailhead in Franklin

Designated as a National Recreation Trail in 1994, the SNETT has not received much respect since its demise as a working railroad in the 1970's. Highways and roads have disrupted it; drainage structures have been neglected; and ongoing ATV/dirt bike damage is extensive. The most remarkable news about the SNETT today is that it is being used and loved, in spite of damage from ATVs/dirt bikes, and in spite of the trail's major discontinuities. Local residents are enjoying its scenery and getting exercise, walking dogs, riding horses and mountain bikes. Local committees and organizations are working to improve the SNETT for the health, recreation and transportation in their community.

## CONNECTIVITY, PARKING, AND SURFACING

In the summer of 2014, trail consultants assessed the trail and developed recommendations for realizing the SNETT's potential as multi-community recreational trail and a link in the statewide trail network. The study was coordinated by DCR and National Park Service



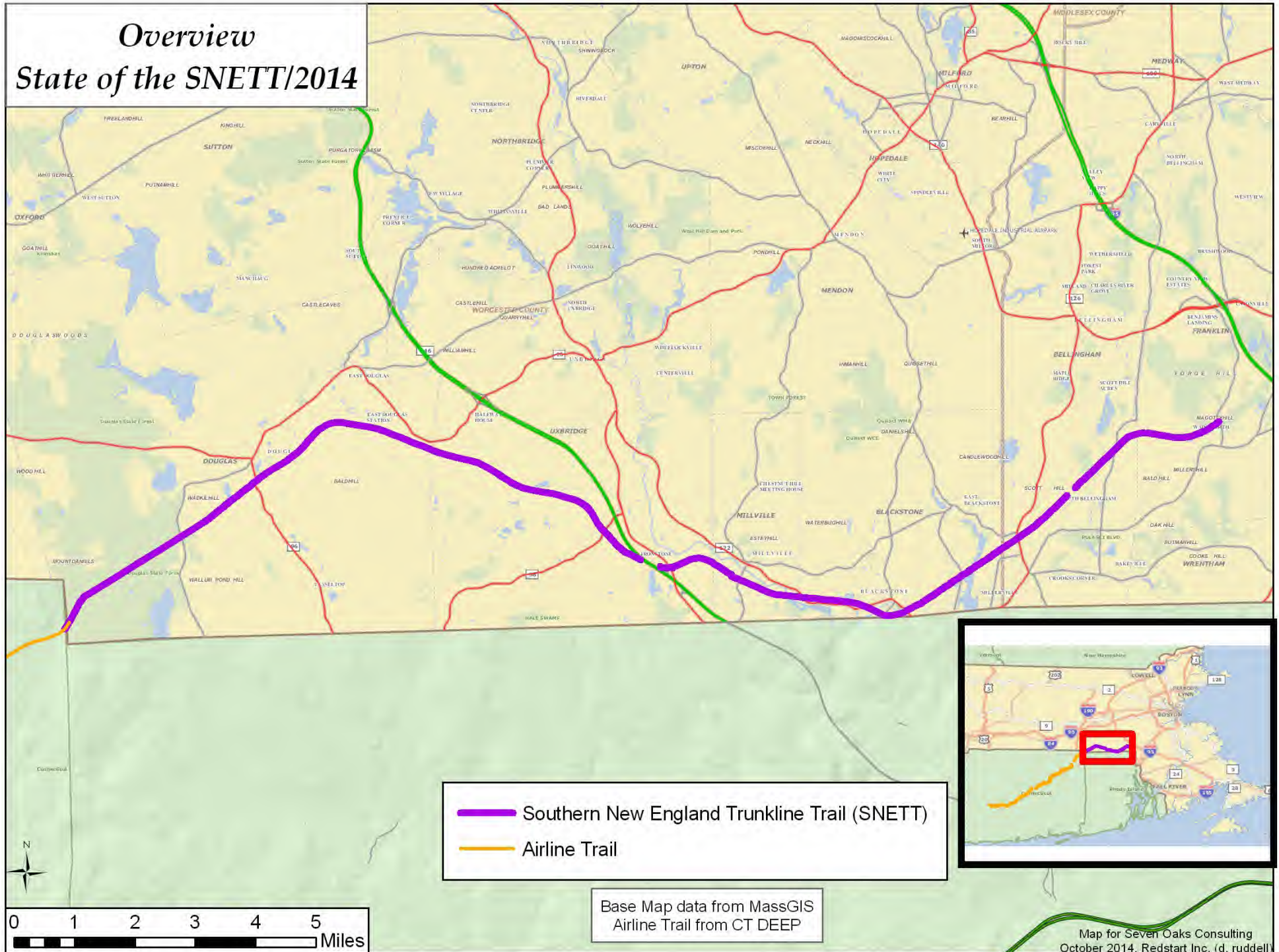
Boy Scouts installing new trailhead sign.

staff and funded by the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program.

The major recommendations for improving the SNETT are restoring connectivity, developing parking and visitor facilities, and repairing extensive damage to trail surface and drainage. Improving the SNETT will require coordination between the towns, DCR, transportation planners, and citizen organizations.



# Overview State of the SNETT/2014



## VOLUNTEER-POWERED CHANGE

The SNETT today is on the rise, but it has always had citizens who care about it. More than three decades of volunteer stewardship projects led by the energetic Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA) in partnership with DCR, including brushing, grading, erosion control, cleaning, and promoting public awareness, has steadily improved the western section. Citizen activism in Franklin and Bellingham on the east—catalyzed by the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee (FBRTC)—is steadily leading to significant improvements in the treadway and trail user amenities. Trailwide, the Friends of the SNETT have been advocating that state and local agencies manage and plan for the trail as a whole.

## SNETT CONNECTIONS: INTERSTATE TRAIL SYSTEM

The SNETT connects to many existing and proposed state and interstate trails. The SNETT comprises the easternmost section of the larger Titanic Rail Trail, which will extend from Blackstone to Palmer. To the southwest, the SNETT in Douglas is the main connection to the Airline Trail State Park, starting in Thompson,

Connecticut. In the towns of Uxbridge, Millville, and Blackstone, the SNETT is concurrent with the Blackstone River Bikeway—which is undergoing a major bridge and paving upgrade—and will connect to Worcester in the north and Rhode Island to the south. Within Douglas State Forest, the SNETT intersects the Mid-State Trail, one of the Commonwealth's long-distance hiking trails.



## A SHORT HISTORY

The railroad line that is now the Southern New England Trunkline Trail was built in stages, connecting towns in south central Massachusetts with Connecticut and operating for approximately 100 years. The first leg of

the railroad, from Franklin to Blackstone, was completed in 1849, and the leg from Blackstone to the Connecticut border was completed in 1854. Built by separate companies, both sections came under common ownership in 1854, passing to the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company. The railroad then extended into Connecticut along what was first a passenger rail line, and later a freight line; the abandoned bed is now part of the Connecticut state park system. After flooding in the 1950's, a 1969 Blackstone bridge collapse, and the general economic demise of rail that occurred in the latter half of the 20th century, the route in Massachusetts all but shut down, the only continuing operation being a weekly freight run to East Douglas, handling mostly grain and animal feed shipments.



## A Tale of Three Trails

The SNETT today can be best understood as three trails—West, Central and East: major gaps created by Route 146 and Route 146A in Uxbridge and the Blackstone Viaduct/Seven Arches/Blackstone River in Blackstone disrupt the continuity of the recreational experience and hamper DCR’s trail management efforts.

### SNETT WEST

The west section, from the Connecticut border to Route 146, is a largely intact and developed rail trail. There are parking areas, trail crossing signs and visitor amenities provided by the Douglas

State Forest. Thanks to the long-term volunteer stewardship and activism from the BSTRA in partnership with DCR, “SNETT West” is an inviting and pleasant trail experience, with scenic lakes, ponds and quiet woods. This section has minor damage to the ballast surfacing by dirtbikes and ATVs and seasonally wet sections, but overall the trail treadway is in moderately good shape. Road crossings are marked and traffic is on the light side. This section ends in Uxbridge with the major barrier of Route 146.



The SNETT provides long-distance recreation for equestrians and has long been cared for by the BSTRA.

### SNETT CENTRAL

The central section from Route 146A in Uxbridge to St. Paul Street in Blackstone will soon be a major recreational asset to Millville and Blackstone as part of the Blackstone River Bikeway project. “SNETT Central” will be paved and major work will be done to the bridges and trestles in Millville and Blackstone. However, as a result of the construction, two short subsections at either end of this middle section are orphaned between the Blackstone River Bikeway and the sections on the either side. On the west, a 0.1 mile elevated section between Route 146A and Route 146 is stranded from meaningful use; on the east, the 0.25 mile Blackstone Viaduct/Seven Arches section is, for the time being, unusable.

### SNETT EAST

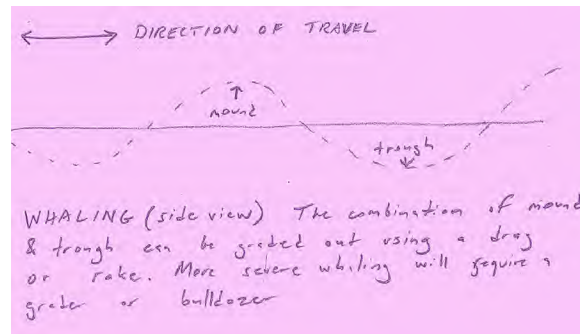
The east section begins at Route 122 in Blackstone and runs to Grove Street in Franklin. “SNETT East” has experienced development pressures in Blackstone, Bellingham, and Franklin, resulting in serious encroachments on

the railbed itself. Residential development and a landfill are adjacent to the SNETT in this section. In addition to public access issues, damage from ATVs/dirtbikes has deeply impacted the railbed so it resembles a corrugated washboard of gravel ballast. Other parts have been claimed by roads and one section is so wet that it is simply not usable. In some places infrastructure is missing, in others the SNETT has been filled to provide an above grade roadbed. In spite of these seemingly intractable problems and difficult challenges, Bellingham and Franklin have formed a local committee who are dedicated to improving the SNETT in their towns. These dedicated citizens see the great potential in the SNETT for health, recreation and transportation in their community and are working hard to realize it.

### "THAR SHE BLOWS!" WHALING ON THE SNETT

The terms "whales" and "whaling" are used in this report to describe the rutting that occurs on from ATVs/dirtbike use. The ruts run perpendicular to the direction of travel, creating a corrugated appearance that is sometimes

referred to as washboarding. Whales are common and even expected on motorized trails: on properly maintained motorized trails regular grading routinely removes whales. On trails receiving no periodic maintenance however, whaling quickly gets worse over time as ATV/dirtbike users accelerate to get out of a low part of a whale, kicking surfacing material on to the high part of the whale behind. Whales make most trails unpleasant to ride or walk.



Whaling is a serious problem on the SNETT; the severity varies from section to section. The most deeply whaled sections are found on the eastern section, where illegal motorized use is increasing. By contrast, the western section benefits from periodic grading. This report uses light, moderate, and severe to describe the depth

of whales on a given section. Light whales or whaling refers to ruts six inches deep or less. Moderate whales are from six to twelve inches deep. Anything over 12 inches is described as severe whaling. All ratings are approximate.



Planting lilies on National Trails Day in Douglas.



## Key Recommendations

### 1. RESTORING CONNECTIVITY

The SNETT is three separate and disconnected trails. The most critical breaks are Route 146 and Route 146A in Uxbridge and the Blackstone Viaduct/Seven Arches/Blackstone River in Blackstone. These need to be addressed for the SNETT to achieve its potential as a long-distance, multi-community trail of statewide significance.

**Routes 146/146A:** The MassDOT website describes the design solution as follows (Project #605215): “The project involves construction of a soft surface bicycle trail extending from the intersection of Colonel Drive and Chestnut Street to just east of Route 146A, where the trail will connect to the Blackstone River Bikeway, a total distance of 3,150 linear feet. The trail includes 1200 feet of on-road bicycle lanes along Elmwood Avenue, an at-grade crossing of Route 146A using ramped trail sections, and accommodations for equestrian use. The trail includes gravel sections as well as stone dust sections.”

**Blackstone Viaduct:** Connectivity at the Blackstone River may be restored using surface routes from Castle Hill Way/Route 122 to St. Paul Street. This would be a serviceable, rather than ideal option—but given the loss of the grades and bridge at Castle Hill Way and the deteriorated state of the Seven Arches viaduct—it may be the most practical approach.

**Prospect Street in Franklin:** At some point, the SNETT right of way was filled to provide a roadbed for Prospect Street in Franklin; now there is no safe or effective way to cross. The Prospect Street break separates the remainder of the SNETT to the east from the rest of the trail. However, progress is being made: at a recent site meeting of DCR and town officials, it was decided that a tunnel was the preferred option.

### 2. PROVIDING PARKING FOR TRAIL USERS

Parking on both ends of the SNETT in Douglas and Franklin is adequate, but there is no parking between Depot Street and Route 146 on the west side, a distance of 5.5 miles (and no designated

parking near Route 146), and there is no parking between Center Street and Route 122, a distance of 3.4 miles.

**Uxbridge:** On the west side, parking at Chocolog Road would be a good intermediate location.

**Uxbridge:** If the Route 146/Route 146A barrier is resolved, parking at Adams Drive may be adequate, but designated parking at Colonel Drive could be established in the interim.

**Blackstone:** Farm Street would be a good location for a modest number of parking spaces on the east side.

### 3. SECURING TRAIL ACCESS

**Blackstone:** Public access on Castle Hill Way is unclear and the entrance sign is not welcoming (see photo on page 23). This, combined with the “Danger-Keep Out” sign and chain link fence west of Farm Street and the landfill fencing east of Farm Street are key public access issues for this section of the SNETT. If it is determined

that public access on Castle Hill Way exists, the entrance sign of Castle Hill Way should be revised accordingly.

**Uxbridge:** In order for the SNETT to not dead end at the perimeter fence for Route 146, a new connector route for the SNETT is needed to exit the railbed and rejoin it east of Route 146A.

#### 4. RESTORING THE TRAIL TREAD

**Wet or whaled:** Not long into the data collection, the team noticed a basic pattern: where the trail is *below grade the tread is wet*, where it is *above grade the tread is whaled*. This condition is most prevalent east of Route 122.

**Cupping and windrowing:** In some places on the SNETT, the ballast has been disturbed. Occasionally it has been excavated from the railbed and windrowed off to the side, creating a sunken, cupped tread. A smaller-sized excavator is probably the most efficient approach for pushing the windrows back into the tread, and removing vegetation. After the ballast from

windrows is used to fill the cupped tread, the treadway can then be graded.

**Whaling:** Whaling is prevalent on the SNETT, particularly on the east side. Whales are mounds with accompanying troughs that run perpendicular to the direction of travel. Whaling is caused by ATV/dirtbike use—and the damage from whaling is progressive—left unchecked it always gets worse. On the east, whaling damage is so severe that it will require a bulldozer to repair. In areas where the damage is light to moderate, a simple drag or york rake may be sufficient.

#### **Drainage structures on below grade sections:**

Below grade sections are generally wet, as the side ditches that once served to drain these sections have become choked with 50 years of material. In most cases, these ditches need simple cleaning with a grade-all or excavator. Much of the material is organic and will need to be hauled away. After the ditches are cleaned, these sections can be checked at wet times to determine if they need surfacing or other drainage work.

**Railroad ballast on below grade sections:** On some below grade sections, ballast may have become clogged over time with organic material so that cross drainage of the railbed is not occurring. In these cases, the railbed will continue to be wet at times due to the buildup of organic matter. These sections require several inches of new surfacing material. Geotextile fabric should be used to keep new surfacing from sinking into the existing ballast. New material can be 3/4 inch minus gravel and should be compacted after application and grading.



## Acknowledgments

Thanks to the trail users we met along the way, who shared historical recollections, why the SNETT is important to them, and their hopes and dreams for realizing its full potential.

Many people lent a helping hand to guide, support, and contribute to this report, including several DCR staff members: Val Stegemoen and Cary Vandenakker helped immeasurably with practical information and invaluable background; Paul Jahnige provided ongoing guidance and feedback on various drafts; Dan Driscoll, Amanda Lewis and Stella Lensing contributed to shaping the project scope; and David Kimball

provided DCR's SNETT GIS information and guidance. Thanks to DCR!

Jean Keyes and Stacey Wetstein from the Bellingham Planning Department and the Friends of the SNETT helped with logistics and shared their community perspective. Becky Kalagher and Kathy Wicks from Bay State Trail Riders Association provided vital logistical support and background, and Becky managed the Recreation Trails Program grant from DCR that supported the project. David Labonte from the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee helped review the report and offered key insights.

Finally, Daniel "Rudi" Ruddell of Redstart Forestry walked, recorded and checked hundreds and hundreds of data points, and produced the maps in the report.

*Carl Demrow, Seven Oaks Consulting LLC*

*Charles Tracy, National Park Service*



## DOUGLAS

7.44 miles

### OVERVIEW

Douglas has the SNETT's best parking and infrastructure, many of the most scenic sections, and the best trail surface. It features Morse and Aldrich Ponds, scenic wetlands, along with the recreational assets of Douglas State Forest. The Mid-State Trail crosses the SNETT in Douglas, and it also boasts the Wallum Lake Road bridge, Grand Trunk abutments, and an old mill site adjacent to Aldrich Pond. Douglas has two dedicated parking areas on the SNETT. With the exception of three areas of beaver and/or flood-related damage, the tread is in good shape and has only short sections of moderate and light whaling.



Looking west to Connecticut.

### Connecticut State Line to Wallum Lake Road (2.46 miles)

Starting at the Connecticut State Line, with a granite marker on the south side of the railbed, this is one of the most remote and scenic sections of the SNETT. At the state line, a post notes that the tri-state marker is 0.3 mile through the woods to the south. The bed widening and improvements seen on the Connecticut Air Line State Park Trail extend into Massachusetts (20' wide, crowned and graded) until a gate and a foot trail junction on the left. There is a culvert to drain the south side ditch under and below the SNETT on the north side. A foot trail, which terminates here, will cross the SNETT again in a short distance. Beyond the gate, the SNETT is below grade until the next crossing of the footpath.

Starting at the gate, the railbed narrows and the surface is sandy; much of the original ballast is missing. Also beginning at the gate, the SNETT is above grade compared to the north side and below grade

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase visibility at the Depot Street parking lot with signs and a trailhead kiosk.
- Three sections that have been impacted by flooding due to beaver activity. The first area is east of Morse Pond, where flooding on the north side has impacted the tread; the second is west of Aldrich Pond where the millrace has been dammed; the third is the timber bridge east of the Wallum Pond Trail crossing.
- A few sections need light grading.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Drain and fill the 25-foot puddle west of Wallum Lake Road.
- Monitor beaver activity in the millrace south of Aldrich Pond.
- Monitor water levels east of the SNETT crossing with the Wallum Lake Trail and provide drainage for times of high water.
- Fix the sunken cupped tread west of here for approximately 800 feet.



# Douglas State of the SNETT/2014



compared to the south. After the next crossing of the foot trail, the surface becomes moderately whaled. Eventually it passes to below grade, turns gradually to the east, and beginning here the surface has been eroded and cupped by water flowing west on the SNETT from flooding east of the crossing with the Wallum Pond Trail. The below grade segment in this section requires repair of the drainage structures at the timber bridge east of the Wallum Pond Trail crossing. At the road crossing the SNETT straightens and holds this alignment for the remainder of this section.

At the Wallum Pond Trail crossing, the south trail connects to the Coffeehouse Loop Trail and Mid-State Trail while the north trail connects to Southeast Main Street. Past this junction, the SNETT climbs gently to a second timber bridge. Problems with flooding and possibly beavers here are causing water to flow west along the below grade SNETT. After the timber bridge the SNETT passes through a remote section of Douglas State Forest with marshes on either side. The SNETT here is at or above grade; surfacing here is good, with occasional short sections of light whaling. After the second timber bridge and west of the junction with the Mid-State Trail, ballast and cinders have been windrowed to the north edge of the trail.

The SNETT meets Mid-State Trail, and then a 500-foot section that was rebuilt after damage from beavers further east at Aldrich Pond. At Aldrich Pond, the Coffeehouse Loop Trail enters on the south, and the SNETT enters a large wetland area with Aldrich Pond to the north and the remains of a 19th century mill off the SNETT to the south. Beavers have dammed the millrace, raising the water which has flowed down the SNETT westbound. Turtles, waterlilies, and wetland views make this area scenic. From here to Wallum Lake Road, the SNETT is in good shape with no whales or tread issues. There are two minor footpath junctions on the north side. Before reaching the Wallum Lake Road crossing, the SNETT goes below grade.

## RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- Provide off-grade drainage at the junction with the Wallum Loop Trail.



Looking east at the Wallum Lake Road bridge. Historical photos show two rails lines on this section.



### Wallum Lake Road to Route 96/South Street (1.53 miles)

Wallum Lake Road crosses the SNETT on a beautiful stone arch bridge. The railbed is above grade past the Wallum Lake Road crossing and passes a large wetland to the north, reaching at grade through a wooded section of Douglas State Forest. It then becomes slightly above grade with wetlands and Morse Pond to the north and wetlands to the south. It passes a spot with a small “beach” used for watering horses and fishing. Water flows west onto the trail and drains off on the south side.

As Morse Pond gives way to woods on the north, a 4-foot wide, wood chip trail meets the SNETT at the pond’s edge. This trail appears to link private property; a golf cart type vehicle was observed accessing the SNETT from this trail during data collection. Beaver activity on Centerville Brook has forced water onto a 700-foot section of the SNETT; it was dry during data collection but it appears that flooding occurs during high water. Continuing east the SNETT reaches the Route 96/South Street crossing. The west side of the crossing has a gate, kiosk, and a large parking area for cars and horse trailers. ATVs/ dirtbikes have carved a trail up the bank south of the gate to get around it. A Douglas State Forest sign welcomes trail users at the parking area. The at grade Route 96 crossing has good sight lines.

### Route 96/South Street to Yew Street (0.73 miles)

Starting at Route 96, the SNETT exits the remoteness of Douglas State Forest and enters the East Douglas neighborhood. This section is more thickly settled and has more access trails; it begins with a large backyard access trail on the south side to a residence across the Route 96 parking lot. The SNETT is at grade for the first third of the distance to South East Main Street, then below grade for the remainder. In spite of this it is dry with the exception of one 45 foot mud hole. Between Route 96 and South East Main Street, useable trail widths are 8-12 feet, with light whaling on the at grade section close to Route 96. The South East Main Street crossing is at grade with a 30 mph speed limit. Sight lines are

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine status of the wood chip side trail near Morse Pond.
- Monitor the beaver activity east of Morse Pond. Once it has stabilized, grade and add gravel to the railbed approximately 700’ from Centerville Brook to Morse Pond.
- Close off ATV/dirtbike access on the bank south of the Route 96 west gate.



Typical warning sign on approaches to SNETT road crossings west of Route 146.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Add gravel fill to the mud hole and grade this section. **Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.**

good south, fair north. The crossing is gated on both sides; both have been breached by ATVs/dirtbikes. The entire section from South East Main Street to Yew Street is above grade, 8-12 feet wide, and has light whaling with a few pockets of moderate whaling.

#### Yew Street to Franklin Street (0.76 miles)

The Yew Street crossing is at grade with good sight lines in both directions. Traffic is light. Both sides are gated, but have been breached by ATVs/dirtbikes. Starting at Yew Street, the SNETT is slightly below grade for the first quarter of this section and side ditching no longer exists. This section is intermittently wet and the width is typically 8-12 feet (except for the section near Franklin Street). After a short path to nearby fields enters from the south, the railbed is above grade, and moderately whaled most of the way to Franklin Street. Several side trails enter from north and south before reaching a short below grade section with a sand and gravel pit to the south. It then goes above grade again with three more side trails before going below grade before reaching Franklin Street. This below grade section is 6-8 feet wide and the tread is sunken 1 foot deep.

#### Franklin Street to Depot Street (0.35 miles)

The Franklin Street crossing is at grade with good sight lines to the north, fair south. Both sides are gated, but neither is impeding ATVs/dirtbikes. This short section is pleasant with no whales. It is at grade, 6-8 feet wide and dry. There is one close backyard on the north side, Depot Street end but no encroachment. ATV/dirtbike use is light, despite the absence of a gate at the Depot Street end. Depot Street dead ends into the SNETT with a DCR parking area at the site of the old East Douglas station.

#### Depot Street to Martin Street (0.25 miles)

Another relatively short East Douglas section. From Depot Street (no gate) the SNETT is at grade, 6-8 feet wide, with moderate whaling that becomes light closer to Martin Street. This section is dry. Closer

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve side ditching for first 1000 feet. Add gravel surfacing if needed. *Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.*
- Grade this section. *Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.*

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to Martin Street, the SNETT has migrated to the north side of the original railbed right of way. Perhaps there was a siding or double set of rails here. This is also the case on the other side of Martin Street.

#### Martin Street to Monroe Street (0.56 miles)

The Martin Street crossing is at grade with good sight lines in both directions and light to moderate traffic. The speed limit is 35 mph. There are no gates at Martin Street; rock barriers are only preventing cars and trucks. The SNETT treadway has migrated to the north side of the original railbed for the first 1000 feet. This section is either at or above grade and is moderately whaled until the last 700 feet before Monroe Street. In this part, which is below grade, the ballast has been plowed off to the side in a windrow, and the SNETT treadway is cupped 10 inches deep and 4 feet wide. This section will need side ditching and grading for approximately 700 feet. Beginning at Martin Street, a gas pipeline (generally 50-75 feet from the SNETT) runs parallel to Aldrich Street in Uxbridge.

#### Monroe Street Douglas to West Street Uxbridge (1.44 miles)

The Monroe Street crossing is at grade and has good sight lines in both directions. Both sides are gated; like so many of the gates on the SNETT, the east side has a substantial breach for ATVs/dirtbikes. This section starts at grade and quickly goes above grade, then dips below, and is at grade where Scudden Brook passes under the SNETT. It then goes below grade for a short section and then emerges to at grade near a light industrial operation which abuts the SNETT on the north. It stays at or above grade to the Uxbridge line and shortly after passing into Uxbridge, the SNETT enters a cut with intermittent wet areas. The ballast in the cut is coarse 3-inch gravel and is moderately whaled; this cut section needs side ditching and grading. After emerging from the cut, the SNETT is above grade until West Street, which it also crosses above grade. This section from Monroe Street to West Street is pleasant; whaling is light and moderate in a few short sections. Tread width is 8-12 feet.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grade gravel windrow 700 feet to fill cupped tread close to Monroe Street. ***Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.***
- Side ditch for 700 feet near Monroe Street. ***Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.***
- Grade section. ***Completed with RTP Grant/September 2014.***

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Side ditch in cut for 300'.
- Add surfacing gravel to coarse ballast in cut.
- Grading needed but not urgent.



## UXBRIDGE

4.1 miles

### OVERVIEW

Uxbridge's section is probably the quietest on the SNETT. It has only three road crossings and minimal adjacent residential development west of the West Street crossing. ATV/dirtbike use is greater than on the Douglas section but less than the eastern towns. It has two major issues: parking and connectivity. Trail users can park and access the SNETT at the Colonel Drive lot, but no other parking is available until Depot Street. There are no obvious opportunities for parking at Aldrich Street, Chocolog Road, or West Street.

Restoring connectivity at Route 146 and Route 146A is the second major issue. The oblique angle that Route 146 crosses the SNETT makes a bridge unlikely. The MassDOT website describes the design solution as follows (Project #605215):

“The project involves construction of a soft surface bicycle trail extending from the intersection of Colonel Drive and Chestnut Street to just east of Route 146A, where the trail will connect to the Blackstone River Bikeway, a total distance of 3,150 linear feet. The trail includes 1200 feet of on-road bicycle lanes along Elmwood Avenue, an at-grade crossing of Route 146A using ramped trail sections, and accommodations for equestrian use. The trail includes gravel sections as well as stone dust sections.”

### West Street to Chocolog Road (1.82 miles)

This is one of the longest uninterrupted sections on the SNETT; the sense of remoteness is enhanced by the lack of adjacent residential or industrial development. West Street crosses the SNETT below grade. The approaches on either side of West Street are on a 15% grade for 75 feet. An approximately 200 foot bridge would be required to cross West Street on the existing grade. This is the last of the

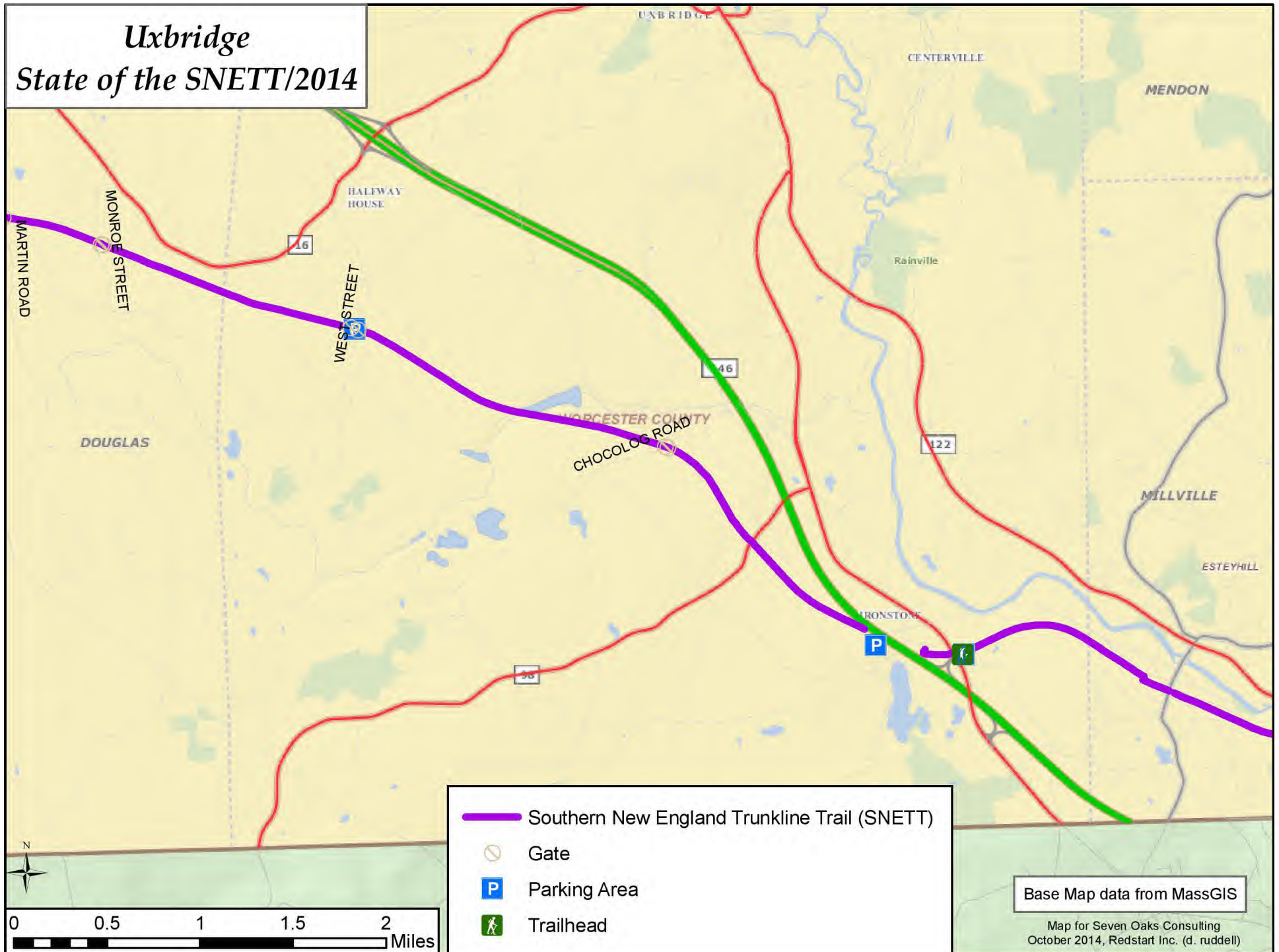
### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Uxbridge needs a dedicated parking area for 6-8 cars. The Colonel Drive lot may suffice, but it needs made official. Somewhere near the Chocolog Road crossing would also be a good place for locating a small parking area.
- It may be nearly impossible to keep dirtbikes off the SNETT, but ATVs can be kept off. The concrete blocks installed on the West side of Chocolog Road also need to be installed on the east side where ATVs use the gas pipeline to access the SNETT. A similar treatment is needed at Aldrich Street.
- Restoring connectivity at Route 146 and Route 146A.
- Brushing on the section from Aldrich Street to Chocolog Road to clear the trail to an 8 foot width at a minimum, 10 foot preferred.
- Fixing drainage issues west of Aldrich Street This section needs side ditching, grading, and gravel.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grading needed but not urgent.

# Uxbridge State of the SNETT/2014



sections that are in relatively good shape headed east. Width is 10 feet until Lee Pond; after Lee Pond it widens to 15 feet. This section has light whaling, is dry and pleasant. It should be noted that the Grand Trunk parallels the SNETT (on average 75-100 feet away) on the south side after Lee Pond. One of the interesting features on this section is the dugout structure on the north side.

### Chocolog Road to Aldrich Street (0.7 miles)

The Chocolog Road crossing has recently installed concrete blocks on both sides. The blocks on the west side may work, but on the east ATVs/dirtbikes enter up a bank north of the crossing. The crossing is at grade. Sight lines are good to the north, moderate to south, which has a curve. Both sides have gates but no parking. This section has moderate whales on the west side and is wet on the east. Some sections are getting overgrown.

As the SNETT exits the Chocolog Road crossing and turns gently to the south, it is moderately whaled. A gas pipeline is visible paralleling the SNETT to the north and the Grand Trunk parallels to the south. The first half is at or above grade. After reaching a stone culvert that drains a south side ditch across the SNETT, the railbed moves below grade and is overgrown and wet for the remainder.

From the culvert all the way to Aldrich Street, the trail needs brushing, side ditching, grading and in some cases, resurfacing. At the Aldrich Street end, the above grade road bed of Aldrich Street functions as an earthen dam. The tread on this end is cupped to a depth of 6 inches, and there is a 25 foot puddle at the bottom of the ramp to Aldrich Street where ATV/dirtbike whales have plugged drainage ditches.

### Aldrich Street to Route 146 (0.78 miles)

Aldrich Street crosses the SNETT above grade, with no gates on either side. There is no space for

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Brushing is needed on most of this section to an 8 foot width minimum, 10 foot is preferred.
- The construction of Aldrich Street damaged the SNETT's drainage system. This section needs side ditching, grading, and surfacing gravel. Ditching will need to direct the flow toward and possibly even under Aldrich Street.
- Grading is needed on the west end.



Dugout type structure north side of the SNETT.



parking at Aldrich Street. Sight lines are fair. From the centerline of Aldrich Street, the SNETT descends a ramp and is at grade for a short time before landing on a high berm, with the grade for the Grand Trunk visible below to the south. The SNETT crosses a large powerline cut above grade and transitions to at grade where ATV trails enter from both sides of the SNETT. Shortly after, the side trail to Colonel Drive enters at right; the SNETT continues through a cut Mass DOT perimeter chain link fence for Route 146. It then enters a deep cut before emerging 8 feet above the Route 146 roadbed.

#### Route 146 to Route 146A (0.12 miles) *No longer functionally contiguous*

This isolated, above grade section is squeezed between Route 146 and entrance ramps to the west and south, Route 146A to the east, and an industrial area to the north. The SNETT and the immediate surroundings are essentially an ATV/dirtbike playground. At the east end, the SNETT grade is approximately 20 feet above the roadway. The parking area for the newly-paved and bridged section is 200 feet east of the highway crossing.

The future of this section depends on how the Route 146 and Route 146A break in continuity is resolved. It could become part of an approach for a SNETT bridge over 146A.

#### Route 146A/Route 146A, Uxbridge to St. Paul Street, Blackstone (4.03 miles)

This section is receiving a major upgrade to its bridges, tunnels and surfacing. It is expected to open to the public in 2015.

The major challenge presented by this section will be how to integrate it with the SNETT to the east and west. On the west, Routes 146 and 146A are the major barriers; on the east, the Blackstone River and public access on Castle Hill Way and the sewer connector on the Blackstone-owned section of the SNETT are major barriers.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Grading is needed but not urgent.
- Parking is needed for this section.
- Resolve access issue for the Route 146 perimeter fence, which is breached.
- The chain link perimeter fence for Route 146 should be mended.



West end of the elevated section of the SNETT between Route 146 and Route 146A. View is looking northwest to Route 146. The motor lodge sign marks the approximate center line of the former railbed.



Looking west on the SNETT across Route 146A.

## MILLVILLE

1.5 miles

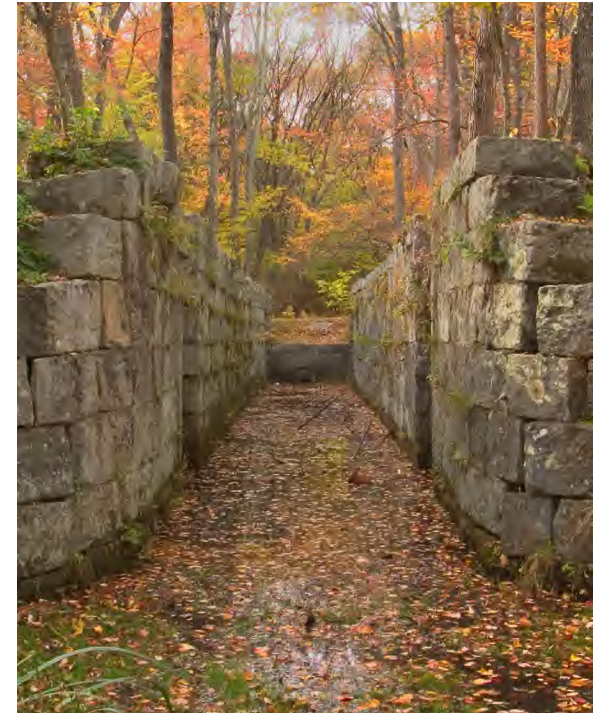
### OVERVIEW

The Millville section of the SNETT was not assessed for this study because it is currently under construction as part of the Blackstone River Bikeway project. A bikeway construction comprehensive overview (7/1/14) provided by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor includes this update for the Millville section:

“This 4.2 mile long section has been in final design, the bridges are being rehabilitated, and construction of the Greenway (3.7 miles of off-road path between South Uxbridge, Route 146A, through Millville and to the Blackstone “Depot” site) is imminent in 2014. This construction project also includes work on the incredible Triad Bridge, and goes by the Millville Lock, one of the best-examples of the canal and lock system that made the Blackstone so great!”



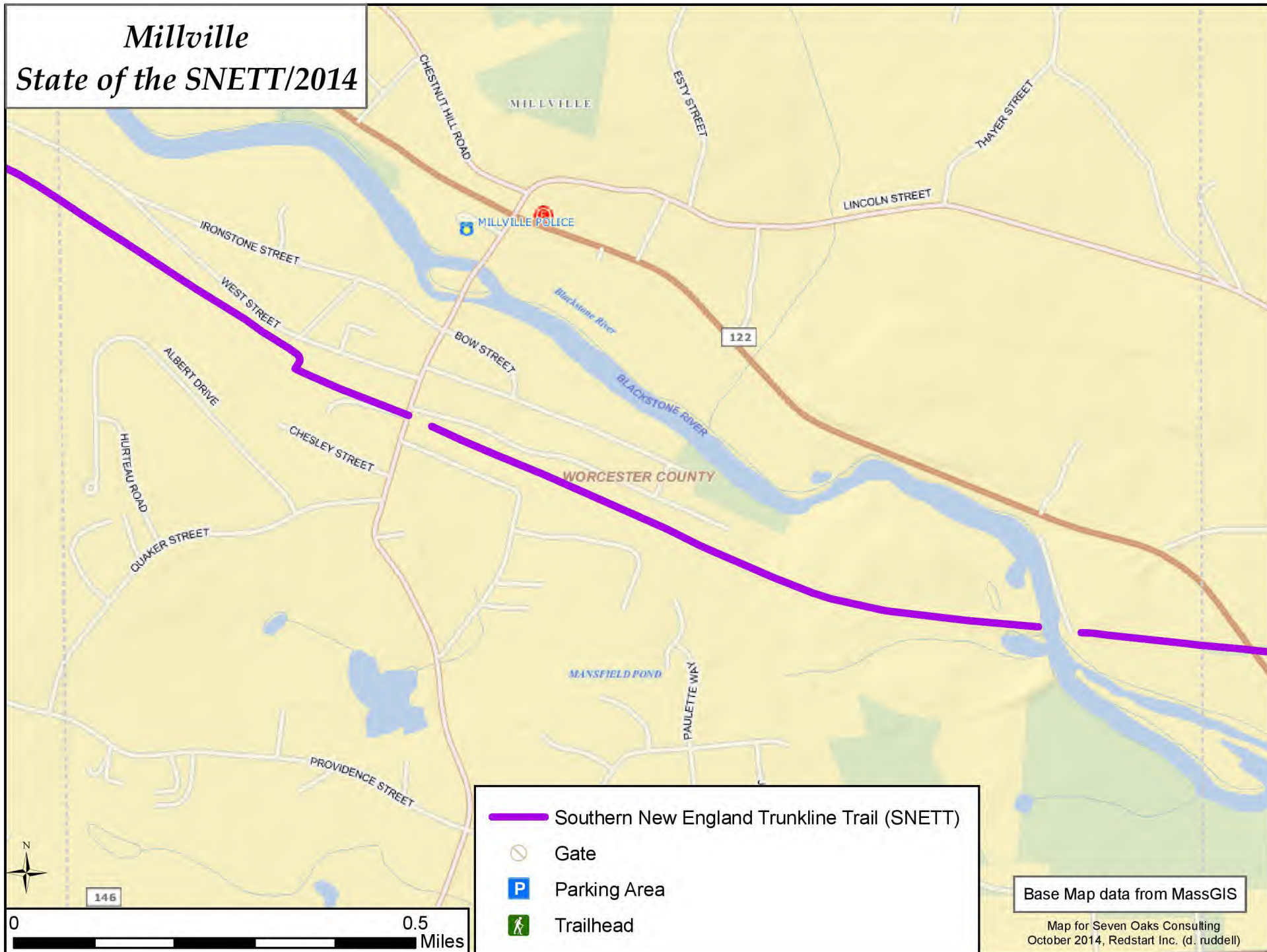
Built in the late 1800's, the Triad crisscrosses the Blackstone River at three different heights to allow three railroad lines to intersect and cross the Blackstone River.



Millville Lock, part of the Blackstone canal and lock system.



# Millville State of the SNETT/2014





## BLACKSTONE

1.9 miles

### OVERVIEW

East of the Blackstone River, the SNETT treadway is in good condition; the issue in Blackstone is public access. Residential development adjacent to the trail and the attendant risk of encroachment and dumping is also a concern. This section experiences moderate to severe damage from ATVs/dirtbikes, particularly on the east end. Blackstone is the only part of the SNETT with signs and fencing aimed at prohibiting public access.

#### St. Paul Street, Blackstone to Harris Ave/Route 122, Blackstone (0.2 miles) *No longer functionally contiguous*

This short, elevated section has the Seven Arches viaduct on the west side and the elevated approach to the former easternmost crossing of the Blackstone River. The former bridge over the Blackstone and Harris Ave/Route 122 is gone. It is difficult to envision how this short section could be restored to the SNETT. The stone arches of the viaduct--an interesting, but no longer safe, historical feature--became unstable 100 years ago and are now deteriorated. The former above grade crossing of the Blackstone River has no viable way to integrate with Castle Hill Way, even if there was a bridge over the Blackstone River and Route 122.

#### Route 122 to Farm Street (1.11 miles)

This section starts at Route 122 and the intersection of Castle Hill Way, east of the SNETT's eastern crossing of the Blackstone River. The last remaining abutment for the above grade crossing of Route 122 and the river is visible behind a private structure between Route 122 and the Blackstone River.

For the first 0.28 miles of this section, the SNETT is on what is now Castle Hill Way, a divided two lane access road to a residential development. Signs at the entrance note "Property Under Surveillance",

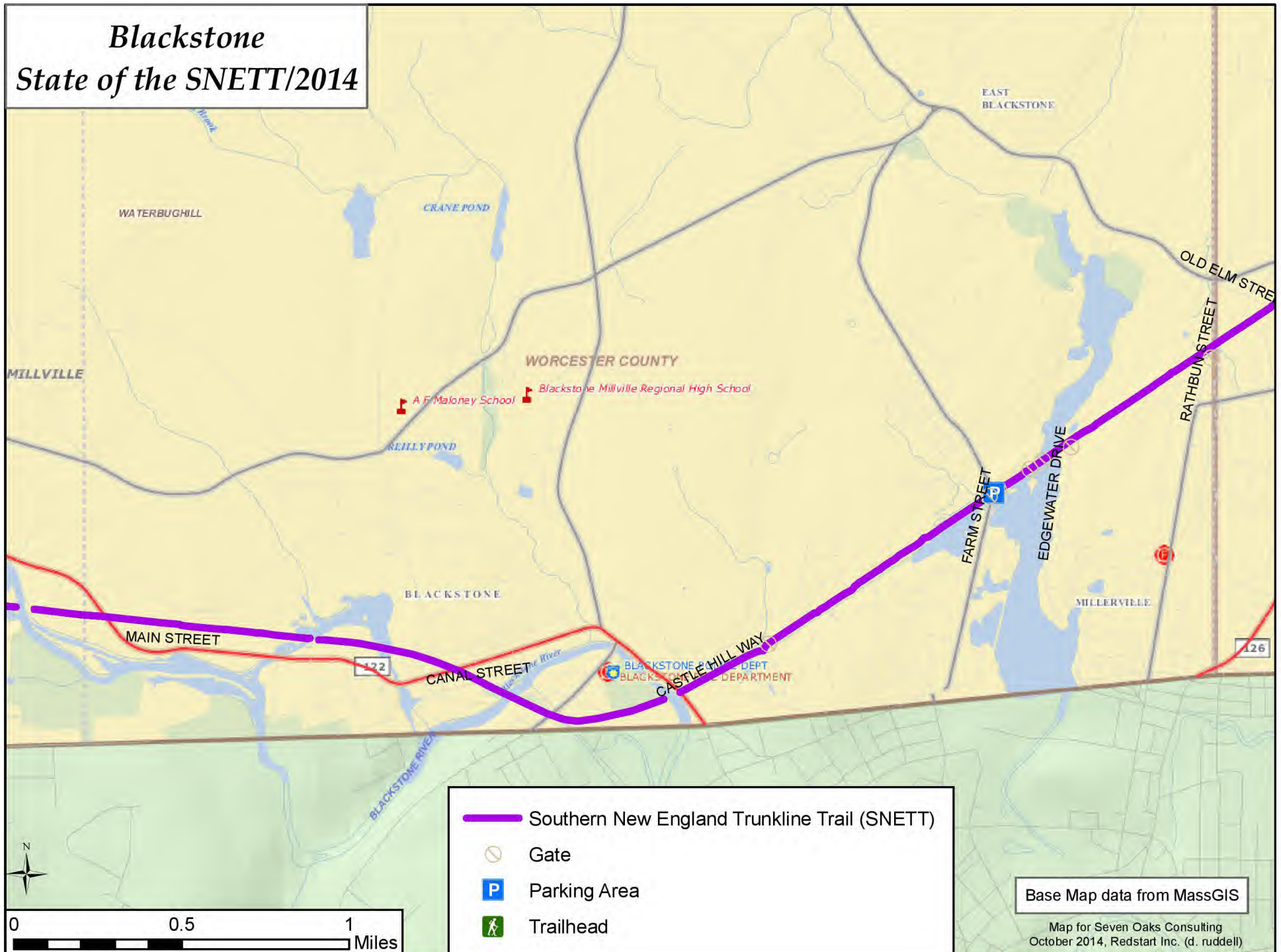
### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Negotiate a public access agreement with the Town of Blackstone for the sewer connector. Replace the chain link fence with a gate or bollards.
- Determine the status of public access on Castle Hill Way. If public access exists, revise the entrance sign of Castle Hill Way accordingly.
- Negotiate a formal agreement for trail parking at Farm Street.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Negotiate a public access agreement with the Town of Blackstone for the sewer connector. Replace the chain link fence with a gate or bollards.
- Develop interpretive signs for Grand Trunk abutments on Castle Hill Way.

# Blackstone State of the SNETT/2014



“Walking of Dogs Prohibited”, and “No Soliciting, Loitering, or Trespassing.” There is a sidewalk on the south side of Castle Hill Way. From Route 122, Castle Hill Way climbs gently to meet the original SNETT grade, and after reaching the original grade, the Grand Trunk line “crosses” in a NW-SE direction on two concrete abutments. A quarter mile from Route 122, Castle Hill Way curves to the south and the SNETT continues onto a grassy area until reaching a gate with telecommunications equipment to the south.

From here to the Bellingham line, a sewer connector runs under the SNETT and manholes for the connector are occasionally found on the trail. Much of this section is surfaced with wood chips. The SNETT then enters a slightly below grade section where the Rocco Drive residential development borders the SNETT on the north. In a short distance, the SNETT reaches an access road for the sewer connector project from Rocco Drive. Sand and gravel piles remain in the construction staging area to the south. The entire area is severely damaged by ATV/dirtbikes.

Leaving the backyards of Rocco Drive, a large backyard from Rayner Street borders the SNETT on the south. There are woods on both sides of the SNETT, punctuated with ATV/dirtbike access on the north side until the elevated SNETT reaches Reid Pond to the south and Rush Pond to the north. This section has silt fencing from the sewer project at the trail’s edge.

#### Farm Street Blackstone to Route 126 Bellingham (1.01 miles)

The Farm Street crossing is at grade with good sight lines. There is informal parking on the east side before the chain link fence for the landfill. The fence keeps out vehicles but not pedestrians or ATV/dirtbikes. Beyond the fence the SNETT skirts the south edge of the landfill until reaching another easily navigated fence, a hydrant, and some test wells. Harris Pond is to the south; there are large boulders here to prevent vehicle access, and the SNETT crosses above Harris Pond before reaching

#### RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- Determine the status of public access on Castle Hill Way. If public access exists, revise the entrance sign of Castle Hill Way accordingly.
- Resolve the SNETT reconnection at Canal Street.
- Add gravel around manhole standpipes.



Looking east on the SNETT, now Castle Hill Way, from Route 122.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Drainage maintenance is needed at and west of Route 126: this section has seen little use due to the wetness underneath the bridge and discontinuity with heavily used trail sections to the east. The integrity of the railbed here has not been affected, but the drainage, particularly the ditch



another sewer line construction staging area at the end of Edgewater Drive. Damage from ATV/dirtbike here is severe.

The SNETT then enters a cut until the backyards of David Drive become visible on the south side. The cut is intermittently wet and used occasionally by ATV/dirtbikes, which tend to favor a heavily-used trail which parallels the SNETT to the north. Once the SNETT emerges from the cut, residential backyards are continuous on the south side to Route 126. The north side is less residential with some farming. The SNETT remains above grade to the Bellingham line and then continues above grade through a wooded section until it reaches four backyards from old Elm Street on the south.

At Old Elm Street, old culverts in the side ditch indicate that it crossed the SNETT until early 1900s,



Looking west across Farm Street. Chain link fence with "Danger-Do Not Enter" sign.



The SNETT looking west of the Farm Street chain link gate.

but was removed to prevent collisions and Elm Street became the new road. Next, the SNETT corridor is overgrown, with only a 5 foot treadway, necessarily shifted from the centerline to the south edge of the right of way. Vegetation up to 8 inches in diameter is growing on the old railbed from here to Route 126.

on the north side of the right of way, needs to be cleaned for approximately 400 feet.

- Drainage in the cut area. This section needs ditching work on the north side of the right of way for 400 feet.
- Brushing is needed west of Route 126 for 600 feet. The centerline of the right of way has become so overgrown that use has shifted to the south edge of the right of way. Trees up to 8 inches in diameter are growing on this section.
- Address ATV/dirtbike damage from the farm dump to Edgewater Drive. ATV/dirtbikes access the right of way from town land to the north, west of the sewer connector and farm dump, creating severe impacts all the way to Harris Pond.
- The landfill is partially surrounded by an ineffective chain link fence. The fence blocks access at Farm Street, but can be skirted on the south or north side. The parking/access at Farm Street is not friendly to trail users.
- Similar to the previous section, negotiate a public access agreement with the Town of Blackstone for the sewer connector. Replace the chain link fence with a gate or bollards.
- Negotiate a formal agreement for trail parking at Farm Street.
- Request a safety crosswalk at Farm Street from the Town of Blackstone.

## BELLINGHAM

2.9 miles

### OVERVIEW

First the good news. Bellingham has an active local committee that believes in the SNETT and what it has to offer their town. They have made tangible progress by creating parking areas at Lake Street and Center Street and installing an information kiosk at Center Street. People are using the SNETT in Bellingham- during data collection, the team encountered more people using the SNETT in Bellingham than in any other town.

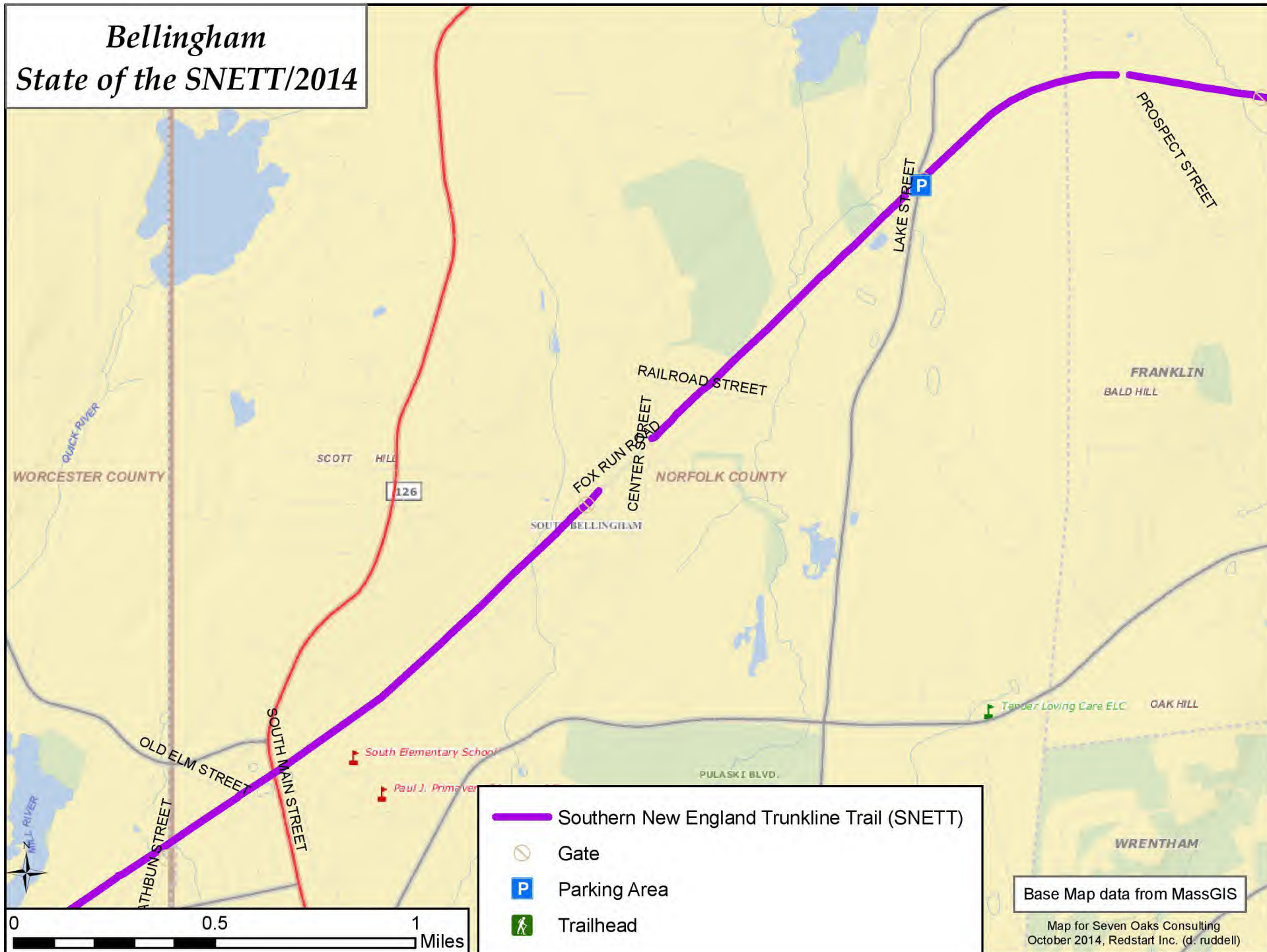
Now the challenges. Bellingham has 3 of the toughest miles of the SNETT. One section is entirely unusable due to poor drainage; another section has been paved as a residential street; on yet another section, the railbed has been disturbed for several hundred feet and the ballast is entirely gone. In addition, Bellingham has the greatest share of ATV/dirtbike-damaged sections of the SNETT. Severe whaling is the rule rather than the exception in Bellingham. In many places, the railbed will need to be rebuilt before it can be re-graded.

Ending ATV/dirtbike use in Bellingham will be difficult, but it is hardly insurmountable. ATV/dirtbike riders are habituated to illegal use of the Bellingham section of the SNETT and, given the difficulty of police enforcement, they will likely have an expectation to continue doing so. An education campaign, combined with physical barriers and enforcement is likely to have the most chance for success.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The wet section under and east of the Route 126 crossing should be repaired soon with the repair work for the Route 126 box culvert. Volunteers may be able to assist by cutting back vegetation on the railbed during the drier times of the year, but this section will need extensive side ditching and some of the ballast may need to be removed and replaced.
- The transition from the above grade down to Lake Street is eroded on both sides and the gate is not preventing ATV/dirtbike access. Ideally, these grades should be reduced by cutting farther in on the SNETT berm. The soil cut from here could rebuild the section near Fox Run Road where ballast has been removed.
- The section of disturbed railbed west of Center Street should be evaluated. It is unclear what happened, but in its current condition this part of the SNETT will not be able to support a 8-10 wide trail.
- Virtually all of the gravel ballast in Bellingham needs grading. In the worst places (east of Lake Street; Lake Street to Center Street; middle of the Route 126 to Center Street) surfacing material needs to be added before grading.

# Bellingham State of the SNETT/2014





### Route 126 to Center Street (1.25 miles)

This is the most problematic section of the SNETT. The SNETT crosses under the Route 126 bridge-scheduled to be replaced by a concrete box culvert. Most of the drainage infrastructure under the bridge has failed and the SNETT is extremely wet in this area; it is so wet and overgrown here it is currently unusable. It appears that a culvert from a private property in this area may be diverting water onto the SNETT. The drainage problem continues for 0.34 miles east where the SNETT is entirely below grade. There is no parking or access at Route 126. One could theoretically park at the Bellingham School complex southeast of Route 126 and access the SNETT from a network of ATV/dirtbike trails behind the school.

There is an established ATV/dirtbike trail along the south edge of the railbed, this reconnects to the SNETT once it emerges from the below grade swamp. This section is heavily damaged by ATV/dirtbikes with whales in places between 1.5 and 2 feet deep. The SNETT corridor is wooded on both sides until the 12 backyards of the adjacent Newland Avenue neighborhood. Much of the ballast here has been plowed to the side.



Looking west at the Route 126 bridge. Standing water on the SNETT railbed.



Looking east from the Route 126 bridge. The SNETT is under water.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The wet section from Route 126 east will be challenging, but replacement of the bridge with a box culvert will be a good start. The water from this section will need a place to go and side ditching to help it get there. Trees and brush on the railbed need to be cut and this section will likely need grading and resurfacing.
- Much of Bellingham is whaled so badly from ATV/dirtbike damage that grading alone the trail will not solve the problem, in fact grading will result in a sunken treadway. Additional surfacing material will be needed in many places. Landscape fabric may help with drainage and provide a barrier to whaling.



Snowshoeing in Bellingham.

A gas pipeline crosses the SNETT in the middle of the Newland Avenue section and beginning here the railbed has been severely disturbed. There is no ballast from here until Fox Run Road and boulders and large rocks are strewn across the trail. At the end of this disturbed section the SNETT enters a cut with occasional wet sections and a 70 foot puddle at the west end of the cut. On the approach to Fox Run Road is a gate impervious only to cars and trucks. Once the SNETT emerges onto Fox Run Road, the next 0.16 miles is on pavement to Center Street.

#### Center Street to Lake Street (0.92 miles)

This section is elevated for its entire length after it leaves the old Railroad Street crossing. While it is neither overgrown or wet anywhere along its length, this section is severely whaled from ATV/dirtbikes making it difficult to walk comfortably on, though people are out walking on it. There are numerous ATV/dirtbike access points, as a result, the railbed base is eroded in places. The Center Street crossing is signed and has a crosswalk. There is a new parking area and kiosk. The crossing is at grade.



SNETT crossing of Center Street.  
Note crosswalk, trailhead kiosk, and parking sign.

From Center Street east, the old rail line becomes more evident and the SNETT moves along with backyards to the south and woods to the north before reaching the old Railroad Street crossing. After this crossing the SNETT gains grade with farm fields to the south and woods to the north. Just before the farm fields end, a buried gas pipeline crosses the SNETT. The railbed is severely whaled from here to Lake Street. Starting at the pipeline there are numerous ATV/dirtbike trails that enter from both sides of the SNETT. In some places these trails climb the embankment to the railbed and are causing serious erosion to the SNETT's elevated berm.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Major ATV/dirtbike damage. This entire section is very severely whaled and difficult for walkers. Vegetation on right of way slope and the edge is problematic for grading these whales without creating berms on either side of the right of way. In other words, the whales are so deep that the entire top of the right of way needs to be graded to fix them.
- The pass-through near the sportsman's club is a cultural resource that at one time allowed passage under the right of way. It may be possible to restore and use it as an interpretive opportunity.

Before Lake Street, the SNETT passes over a narrow filled underpass. Both stone abutments to the underpass are intact. There is a small pond and sportsmen's club to the south. ATV/dirtbike trails enter the right of way on both sides, and there is a small concrete and asphalt paving dump on the north side of the right of way. The SNETT then descends to Lake Street, which the railroad previously crossed above grade.



Eroded illegal ATV/dirtbike access trails up the SNETT berm west of Lake Street.



SNETT parking area west of Center Street on Fox Run Road.

The gate at the Lake Street crossing is ineffective against ATVs/dirtbikes, which have badly eroded the area between the gate and Lake Street. These gates are preventing recurrence of illegal dumping. Until recently, trucks were regularly driving onto the SNETT and dumping here.

This section has been designated for the installation of a water main from Center Street to west of Lake Street. Negotiations between DCR and the town on a finished condition are ongoing.



### Lake Street to Prospect Street (0.58 miles)

This section is a tale of two right of ways: on the east side, it is pleasant, though wet and below grade; on the west, it is above grade and severely whaled by ATV/dirtbike use. There is no adjacent residential development on this section. The Lake Street crossing was at one time a bridge or trestle. The crossing has a crosswalk and sight lines are favorable; a signed parking area allows for up to 8 cars. From Lake Street the SNETT ascends to grade and an ineffective gate. There are farm fields on both sides to start and then woods as the SNETT begins a curve from a northeasterly to an easterly direction.



Braided and banked SNETT east of Lake Street.



Asphalt shingle dump between Lake Street and Prospect Street.



West of Prospect Street: ballast is cupped in the middle of the railbed.

This section is among the most severely whaled on the entire SNETT, with whales up to 2 feet deep across the entire elevated railbed. In some area, trees are growing in the center of the railbed but it is passable.

The SNETT moves below grade before Prospect Street. Here, the railbed is wet for 700 feet, and the ballast has been plowed to the north side leaving a cupped tread. There is an impressive dry stone retaining wall on the south side that continues for 0.25 miles under Prospect Street and emerges on the other side. There is no safe or through access at Prospect Street which will be covered in the next section.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The wet, below grade section west of Prospect Street needs side ditching and grading. The windrowed ballast should be graded back into the cupped tread.
- The west half of this section is severely whaled by ATV/dirtbike use and is not pleasant to walk on, though we did see groups of walkers using it.
- The gate area at Lake Street is eroded is not preventing ATV/dirtbike access.
- Remove the asphalt shingle dump halfway through this section on the north side.
- The crib wall on the east side is impressive and worthy of interpretation.



Looking east across Lake Street. Note eroded ATV/dirtbike pass through to left of gate.

## FRANKLIN

1.4 miles

### OVERVIEW

The short section of the SNETT in Franklin has the benefit of being anchored on the east by the Franklin State Forest. Franklin also has the benefit of a strong and active local committee that is responsible for many recent improvements, including: leveling of the entire Franklin treadway, trail parking and trailhead kiosk on Grove Street, and security gates on Spring Street. Franklin is also notable for the scenic cut west of Spring Street, the deepest cut on the entire SNETT. The treadway, except for a handful of wet areas including the cut, is in fair condition, with some light whaling in the Franklin State Forest and west of the cut. Franklin's major issue is the Prospect Street crossing; a solution will be expensive. The Prospect Street discontinuity separates the remainder of the SNETT to the east from the rest of the trail. However, progress is being made: at a recent site meeting of DCR and town officials, it was decided that a tunnel was the preferred option.



Franklin-Bellingham Rail Trail Committee's 2013 SNETT Bike Tour.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

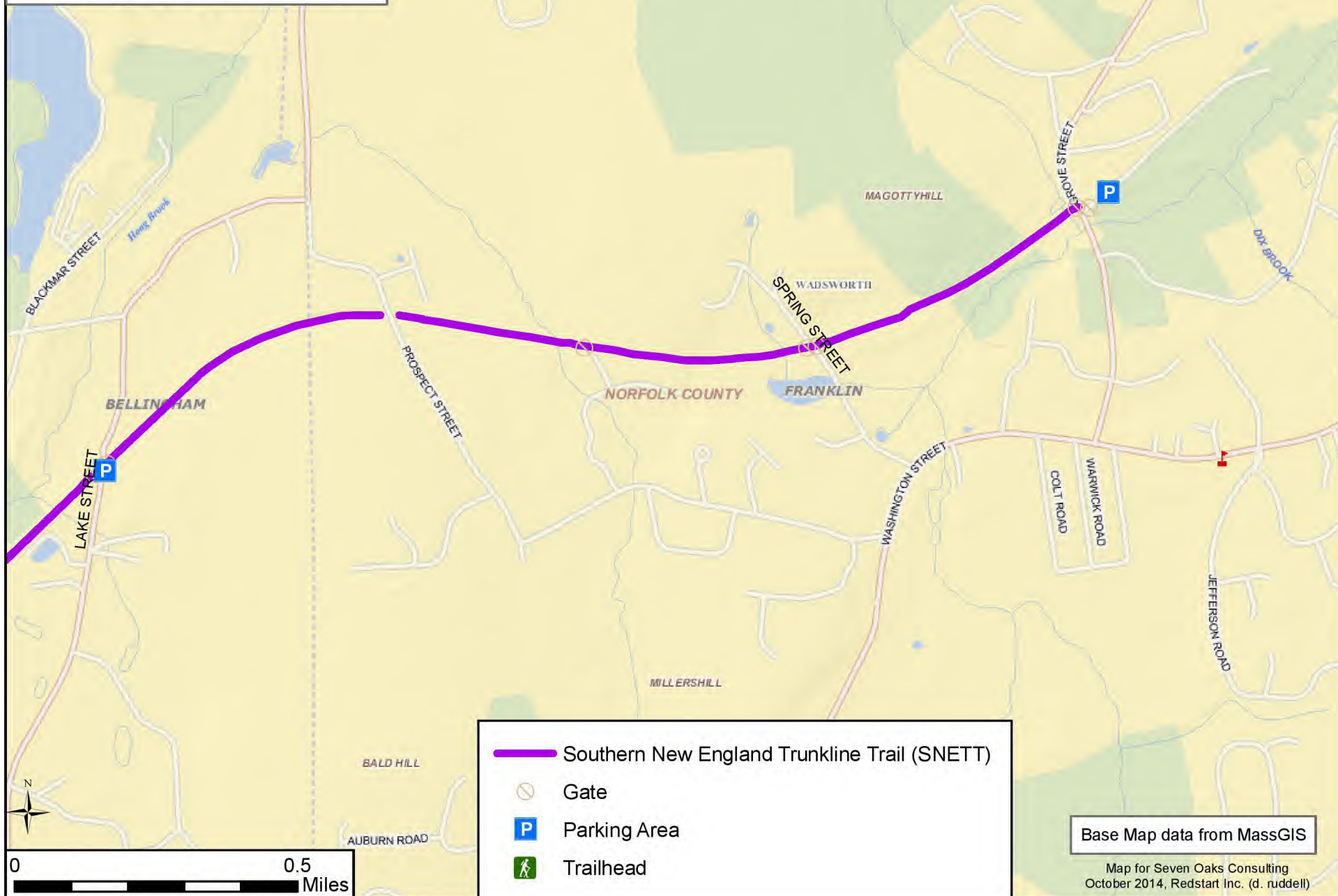
- Through access at Prospect Street; a tunnel is the preferred option.
- Historical research on the 0.25 mile crib wall at Prospect Street. This wall is one of the SNETT's impressive historical structures, along with the Wallum Lake Road bridge.
- Ditching and surfacing gravel for the 350 feet of wet areas east of Spring Street.
- Ditching and surfacing gravel for the 800 feet of wet section along the cut.
- Grading, particularly between Spring Street and Grove Street.



Prospect Street looking west from the SNETT.



# Franklin State of the SNETT/2014





### Prospect Street to Spring Street (0.74 miles)

Prospect Street is one of the biggest challenges on the east section of the SNETT: there is no safe or effective way to cross. At some point, the SNETT right of way was filled to provide a roadbed for Prospect Street which crosses the SNETT at approximately 22 degrees off perpendicular. The roadway is 33 feet wide and the banks on either side are between 25 and 30 degrees. The west bank is 50 feet long and the east bank 70 feet. All measurements are approximate. Access to Prospect Street is up a steep and eroding ATV/dirtbike trail that comes out on the south end of the west guardrail on Prospect Street. There is no parking at Prospect Street.

Currently trail users either follow the ATV/dirtbike trails on private property or climb the bank from the right of way up to Prospect Street, then climb over a guardrail, cross, climb another guardrail on the other side, and then scramble down the bank. There is a half-buried culvert that appears to convey water under the street on the right of way, but the culvert is not integrated with existing SNETT drainage structures. In fact, it appears to be in the right of way centerline.



Detail of the 0.25 mile dry laid stone crib wall under and west of Prospect Street.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Spring Street gate is not effective at stopping motorized use.
- The cut area is wet for approximately 800 feet. Ditching on the north side of the right of way needs to be cleaned and new surfacing added.
- While there is some “backyard access” along this section, there does not appear to be any major encroachments.
- ATV/dirtbike damage is moderate with light whaling on the west side.
- Whatever approach is used for through access at Prospect Street, it would be preferable to highlight the historic resource of the south side crib wall.
- The right of way is largely clear of vegetation on this section though it closes in on the eastern at-grade section.

East of Prospect Street, the 0.25 mile dry set stone crib wall that is a feature of this section ends and a major ATV/dirtbike trail enters from the south (this ascends to Prospect Street to provide ATV/dirtbike users a crossing), and shortly after that transitions to above grade. This section is dry and pleasant, with a few local foot and ATV/dirtbike access trails that climb up to the right of way.

The end of Depot Drive is reached on the south and a trail that appears to have been an old town or farm road crosses into the woods to the north. This is the beginning of a 0.25 mile scenic cut that buffers the SNETT from the Bubbling Brook Road backyards to the south. The cut is wet for 800 feet and drains onto the trail from the north side of the SNETT across from Depot Drive. The entire section needs new side ditching and drainage structures on both sides of the cut, and new surfacing will be needed, too. After emerging from the cut, the SNETT passes a final backyard at the south and is at grade until Spring Street with farm fields on both sides.

#### Spring Street to Grove Street (0.54 miles)

This section is pleasant and in good condition, with the exception of ATV/dirtbike damage and a wet area east of Spring Street. The right of way is generally cleared along this section. Starting at Spring Street, the crossing is at grade with gates on either side. The west gate is an ineffective barrier.



Enjoying an autumn walk in Franklin



Looking west into the Franklin cut, west of Spring Street.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is some “backyard access” on the east end of this section. Damage to the right of way has been caused by ATV/dirtbike access from private land.
- The 350 foot wet section east of Spring Street needs side ditching and surfacing material.
- The gate at Spring Street does prohibit vehicles, but not ATV/dirtbikes.

The east gate is stopping vehicles but not dirtbikes. The railbed descends below grade with one residential property on either side of the right of way at Spring Street. This section is wet from Spring Street for 350 feet. It stays below or at grade, skirting a swamp on the north side of the trail. There are two AT&T continental cable warning sign posts on this section, they appear to be unmaintained and possibly abandoned. Shortly after the swamp, a major trail enters on the north side from Franklin State Forest. From here, the SNETT is above grade until Grove Street. Between here and Grove Street, several ATV/dirtbike trails climb up to the SNETT. One trail on the north side closer to Grove Street has caused damage to the swamp below. The SNETT then reaches Grove Street.



Wet area, looking west towards Spring Street in Franklin. west of Prospect Street.

This is the eastern terminus of the SNETT, where the DCR section meets the Conrail property on the east side of Grove Street. The Town of Franklin and DCR have erected signs, a kiosk and a parking area for SNETT users. The crossing of Grove Street from the parking lot has a crosswalk, and there are large boulders at the beginning of the SNETT to prevent vehicles from accessing the SNETT.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is some “backyard access” on the east end of this section. Damage to the right of way has been caused by ATV/dirtbike access from private land.
- The 350 foot wet section east of Spring Street needs side ditching and surfacing material.
- The gate at Spring Street does prohibit vehicles, but not ATV/dirtbikes.



Beginning of the SNETT on Grove Street in Franklin.







Looking west into the Franklin cut, west of Spring Street.