

MASSACHUSETTS RECREATIONAL TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD

June 12, 2018

Mendon, MA

Site Visit

Time: 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Location: East Trail at Inman Hill Wildlife Conservation Area
53 Quisset Road
Mendon, MA 01756

There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the improvements to the East Trail at Inman Hill Wildlife Conservation Area in Mendon at 2:30pm. Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA) received a Recreational Trails Program Grant to improve East Trail, in partnership with the Town of Mendon and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The trail project involved leveling out the trail with the removal of some stones, the addition of processed gravel, stones placed to establish a ford crossing on two intermittent streams and mitigating a 10- foot long mud section of the trail. This project received \$29,565 in RTP funding, while providing \$17,316 of match in the form of cash, donations of gravel, and volunteer labor.

There is limited parking at the “trailhead” and visitors are asked to park on the side of the road leading up to it. Visitors can also park on Robinson Road, a side road located just before before the last house on the street (#52).

MARTAB Meeting

Time: 4-6 pm

Location: Mendon Senior Center
62 Providence Street
Mendon, MA 01756

Meeting Minutes:

MARTAB Membership and Leadership

Welcome to new attendees and partners from FHWA and EEA. As these and other potential agency representatives who would like to participate on MARTAB and in the grant review process attend, the question of whether they should be liaisons or members was discussed. A liaison attends meetings and participates in the grant review process, but does not have a vote on board. It was determined by the group that agency representatives should be liaisons rather than members as they do not represent a recreational trail user group as outlined in the RTP legislation and should be working to encourage and advocate for the development of recreational trails (which is not in the mission of some state agencies). MARTAB welcomes agency representatives to have a

seat at the table and looks forward to their input and expertise in their work to improve and develop the trail network in Massachusetts and in determining recommendations for RTP grant awards each year, keeping in mind that liaisons will not participate in the ultimate vote and approval of grant award recommendations.

MARTAB determined that board members with expired terms will need to submit a new nomination for themselves, in consultation with their statewide user group organization (if one exists) and after carefully considering another five years of MARTAB duties.

Ben Phelps nominated Tom Chamberland for Vice Chair of MARTAB and Larry Tucker as Chair for one more year, motion was seconded and unanimous vote was recorded.

New member nominations:

Marianne Iarossi and Tim Craig have submitted a nomination form to join the board. Dick W. commented that Marianne has done an excellent job working with partners within and outside of Framingham in efforts of trail development and made a motion to approve her membership. The motion was seconded and MARTAB voted unanimously to approve Marianne Iarossi as the “Municipal Planner” representative on the board. Dick O. supported Tim Craig for membership noting his expertise in natural-surface trail construction and maintenance and managing a youth corps and made a motion to approve his membership. The motion was seconded MARTAB voted unanimously to approve Tim Craig as the “Youth Corps” representative on the board.

**At the next MARTAB meeting, a Secretary will be appointed from the MARTAB membership to take meeting minutes and submit to DCR for posting.*

Recreational Trails Program/MassTrails Updates

Amanda updated the board on the status of the 2018 RTP grant recommendations. The list has been approved by the DCR, the Secretary and the Governor’s Office. They are currently under review with FHWA for Section 106 and NEPA compliance. Once this is complete, the grant awards will be announced, most likely in late August/early September.

Paul briefed the board with an update on MassTrails. An inter-agency trail committee, with representatives from the Governor’s Office, MassDOT and DCR has been meeting for over a year to discuss how agencies can better coordinate and communicate regarding trail development across the state, with a primary focus on priority transportation corridors and recreational multi-use pathways. The committee meets once every two weeks to discuss issues that have prevented or stalled projects and to come up with directives and solutions, communicating often with sister agencies such as DEP to better accomplish this goal. One outcome of this group is the MassTrails line in the proposed Environmental Bond Bill and the allocation of \$2 million in capital funding to better provide funding for trail projects, particularly those in need of funding for 25% design in order to access MassDOT funding for final design and construction. Funding will be

appropriated through a competitive grant review process similar to and in conjunction with RTP.

MARTAB members made the following comments:

Is the gap in funding for local communities also being addressed?

Are other trails being discussed?

Has updating Commonwealth Connections been discussed?

Paul discussed that, since Amanda and Paul are at the table and the Lieutenant Governor is working closely with Massachusetts communities to enhance economic stability and improved quality of life, there is awareness of the importance of community trails projects. Should there be additional funding for big design projects, then projects which had applied for RTP funds in the past can be diverted to MassTrails, allowing for more community-based, diverse-use projects to be funded through RTP. Commonwealth Connections updates has not been discussed at the trails team meeting. Paul/Amanda will share these questions and comments to the committee at the next meeting.

Evaluation and Discussion of RTP Grant Review Process

See Attachment – “Grant Review and Criteria Discussion”

The obligation amount for RTP funding has more than doubled since 2015, which was at \$950,000 federal share, jumping up to \$2.5 million this year. Although the process for reviewing grants has worked well in the past and garnered trust and confidence by MARTAB in the process, this year’s round saw a marked increase in the number and quality of the projects being submitted. This made it particularly difficult to make tough choices during the review process because, although there was more money, there were even more quality, high-scoring projects than could be funded but didn’t score in the top tier. Essentially, projects scored in the range of 3-3.5, which have typically been funded or discussed for funding in the years past, did not reach consideration in this round. With this in mind, the board agrees that it is time to update and more formally document the grant review and scoring process, beginning with an update to the grant criteria.

MARTAB discussed the document created by Amanda which outlined a proposed process for amending the current grant review process, including four steps:

1. Updating the RTP grant criteria.
2. Updating the RTP grant application to reflect the new criteria and guide applicants in addressing it.
3. Formalizing the individual grant review process in a more detailed manner and communicating this formally in a set meeting each year before the reviews begin.
4. Formalizing the grant review meeting agenda to, for example, better address questions and scoring diversions up front before the review begins.

Discussion over best way to make updates to criteria, scoring and grant review process resulted in Paul volunteering to head the sub-committee on updating grant criteria.

Amanda will work on developing a grant review process document and both will report back on progress at the next MARTAB meeting.

Other Business

Amanda will follow up via online poll to establish the next four MARTAB meetings.