



LIVE VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

MONDAY, JUNE 7, 2021 @ 7:00 PM

FOR THE PROPOSED

**PITTSFIELD_ Ashuwilliticook Rail-to-Trail (Phase II)
Project No. 609289
Project Management**

IN THE CITY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION**

**JONATHAN GULLIVER
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR**

**PATRICIA A. LEAVENWORTH, P.E.
CHIEF ENGINEER**

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION
NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
Project File No. 609289

A Virtual Design Public Hearing will be published on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Phase II project in **Pittsfield, MA**.

WHEN: Monday, June 7 @ 7:00 PM

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Rail to Trail project. All views and comments submitted in response to the hearing will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project is an approximately 2,200 ft. (.4 mile) extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail-to-Trail from Crane Avenue parking lot to Merrill Road and consists of bicycle/pedestrian accommodation that would connect the existing sidewalk/bikeway network on Dalton Avenue to the existing Rail Trail as well as commercial areas; to enhance business and recreational opportunities.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The City of Pittsfield **is** responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT's policy concerning land acquisitions will be presented in the hearing.

Project inquiries, written statements and other exhibits regarding the proposed undertaking may be submitted to Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer, via e-mail to MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us or via US Mail to Suite 6340, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: **Project Management**, Project File No. **609289**. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the hearing is posted to the MassDOT website listed below.

This hearing is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (e.g. interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, live captioning, videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT's Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), TTD/TTY at (857) 266-0603, fax (857) 368-0602 or by email (MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us). Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting, and for more difficult to arrange services including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten business days before the hearing.

This Live Virtual Design Public Hearing, or a cancellation announcement, will be hosted on the internet at www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-design-public-hearings.

JONATHAN GULLIVER
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

PATRICIA A. LEAVENWORTH, P.E.
CHIEF ENGINEER



Dear Concerned Citizen:

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is committed to building and maintaining a transportation infrastructure that is both safe and efficient for all who use our roadways, bridges, bicycle facilities and pedestrian paths, while maintaining the integrity of the environment.

As part of the design process for this project, we are conducting this public hearing to explain the proposed improvements, listen to your comments and answer any questions you may have. At the conclusion of the hearing, MassDOT will review all of your comments and, where feasible, incorporate them into the design of the project.

We recognize that road and bridge construction can create inconveniences for the public. MassDOT places a great deal of emphasis on minimizing the temporary disruptive effects of construction.

MassDOT encourages input from local communities and values your opinions. Please be assured that we will undertake no project without addressing the concerns of the community.

Sincerely,

Patricia A Leavenworth, P. E.
Chief Engineer

WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEARING?

WHY A PUBLIC HEARING?

To provide an assured method whereby the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can furnish to the public information concerning the State's highway construction proposals, and to afford every interested resident of the area an opportunity to be heard on any proposed project. At the same time, the hearings afford the Commonwealth an additional opportunity to receive information from local sources which would be of value to the State in making its final decisions to what design should be advanced for development.

WHY NOT A VOTE ON HIGHWAY PLANS?

The hearings are not intended to be a popular referendum for the purpose of determining the nature of a proposed improvement by a majority of those present. They do not relieve the duly constituted officials of a State highway department of the necessity for making decisions in State highway matters for which they are charged with full responsibility.

WHAT DOES A PUBLIC HEARING ACCOMPLISH?

It is designed to ensure the opportunity for, or the availability of, a forum to provide factual information which is pertinent to the determination of the final alternative considered by the state to best serve the public interest, and on which improvement projects are proposed to be undertaken.

It is important that the people of the area express their views in regard to the proposal being presented, so that views can be properly recorded in the minutes of the meeting. These minutes will be carefully studied and taken into consideration in the determination of the final design.

RIGHT OF WAY CONCERNS

Your Municipality is responsible for securing the right of way for this project. If your property, or a portion of it, must be acquired by the Municipality for highway purposes in the interest of all people of the Commonwealth, your rights are fully protected under the law. Briefly, here are some of the answers to questions you might ask.

1. REASON FOR PROJECT?

The construction of this project will serve the needs of local users as well as those of the greater surrounding communities. The proposed enhancement has been designed to service and provide for the public good.

2. WHO CONTACTS ME?

Representatives of the municipality have already contacted, or will contact you. They will explain the process and procedures used in acquiring any necessary rights required for the proposed project.

3. APPRAISALS, DONATIONS, RIGHTS OF ENTRY?

Impacted Property owners are entitled to an appraisal and Just Compensation, however, municipalities will often seek donations of parcels as this procedure will minimize the acquisition cost for your community.

A Right of Entry is a document that is signed by the owner. It allows the Contractor to perform certain types of temporary work on the owner's land. The work is usually minor in nature and frequently consists of loaming/seeding behind sidewalks, new driveway apron work, grading/sloping, etc.

4. WHAT IS A FAIR PRICE FOR THE ACQUIRED PARCELS?

When donations or Rights of Entry are not considered, or completed, every effort will be made to ensure that an equitable value is awarded. Municipal and/or outside appraisers will complete an appraisal and review appraisal. Consideration is given to the type of rights needed, whether in fee, permanent or temporary easements. The appraisal will be the basis for arriving at a fair price (Just compensation), for the rights to be acquired.

5. MUST I ACCEPT THE MUNICIPALITY OFFER?

No, if the owner feels that the offer is not fair the owner may petition the courts. This action does not stop or delay the acquisition. The action must occur within 3 years from the date of the recording of the acquired parcel(s). The owner(s) may be paid pro tanto (for the time being). The pro tanto payment will not prejudice the court's final decision.



PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

PROJECT LOCATION AND LIMITS

Project includes an approximate 2,200 ft. (.4 miles) extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, beginning at the Phase 1 terminus Crane Ave parking lot, continuing southerly, ending on the south side of Merrill Road (Route 9).

PROJECT PURPOSE

The primary project goal is to extend the current Ashuwillticook Rail Trail (Phase I) from the Crane Avenue parking lot through the Merrill Road (Route 9) corridor. This approximately 2,200 ft. (.4 mile) extension would provide bicycle/pedestrian accommodation that would connect the existing sidewalk/bikeway network on Dalton Avenue to the existing Rail Trail as well as commercial areas; to enhance business and recreational opportunities.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

existing project area conditions consist of the inactive Housatonic Railroad Line. Abandoned railroad tracks, weeded areas, and forestation inhabit the proposed alignment. There are no visual surface defects present at this time that would hinder redevelopment of the line into a paved path, as the project area is primarily flat and will only require clearing work.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

This Phase II includes providing a 10' wide paved path for pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users. Improvements associated with this off-road facility include spur connections to Dalton Ave sidewalk, the "Shops at Unkamet Brook", and Merrill Road sidewalk. A signal will be provided at Route 9 to safely move users across Merrill Road. ADA ramping and railings will be included at the Dalton Avenue connection. A trailhead is proposed at Merrill Road with a limited number of "convenient spaces" handicap accessible spaces designated for those with disabilities as well as maintenance vehicles. Wayfinding signage will be included to support connections to local businesses. Improvements to Dalton Ave are limited to short segment of sidewalk, guardrail repair and trail signage. Merrill Road will have traffic signage and markings replaced as well as a short segment of milling to provide a smooth surface for users crossing.

UTILITIES

Existing utilities consist of two underground gas lines, overhead electric lines, and abandoned railroad cabinets. The first gas line runs adjacent to the northern side of Merrill Road (Route 9). The second gas line runs along the southwest corner of the Tractor supply parking lot, crossing the abandoned railroad line, and continues along Unilock property. The overhead electric poles run parallel to the second gas line. The two abandoned railroad cabinets are located along the north side of Merrill Road at the existing railroad line. Utility work to consist of removing and discarding the old railroad gate boxes at the Merrill Road corridor and installing pedestrian walk signal across Merrill Road (Route 9).

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS (CONT.)

RIGHT-OF-WAY

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Temporary and permanent easements will be required for the construction of this project.

PROJECT COST

The estimated cost of construction for this project is estimated to be \$1.4 million dollars. This project is funded under the Federal Aid Program whereby 80% of the construction cost will be funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and 20% of the construction cost will be funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PROJECT STATUS

The design plans displayed at this live Virtual Design Public Hearing are at the 25% design stage. Comments made at this hearing will be incorporated to the maximum extent feasible. The project is expected to be advertised for construction in the Spring 2024 subject to obtaining all environmental permits. The construction is expected to start in Summer 2024.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HIGHWAY DIVISION

FEDERAL AID PROJECT

Pittsfield, MA
Ashuwilliticook Rail-to-Trail (Phase II)
Project File No. 609289

This sheet is provided for your comments. Your input is solicited and appreciated. You may e-mail comments directly to MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us or you may mail this sheet with any additional comments to:

Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer
MassDOT – Highway Division
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973
Attn: Project Management

Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the hearing.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY.

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Please Fold and Tape



Please Place
Appropriate
Postage Here

Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E.
Chief Engineer
MassDOT – Highway Division
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116-3973

RE: Virtual Design Public Hearing
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