



**DATE:** December 10, 2020  
**TO:** Cheshire Rail Trail South Planning Project Working Group  
**FROM:** SWRPC Staff  
**RE:** Existing Conditions Assessment – Literature Review

To help assess the existing conditions for the Cheshire Rail Trail South, SWRPC staff reviewed and compiled a series of planning documents and policies relevant to the trail. Materials reviewed include *The New Hampshire State Trails Plan*, *Southwest Connects: Southwest Region Transportation Plan*, municipal master plans, safe routes to school plans, complete streets policies, trail maintenance guides, relevant State statutes, and use agreements relating to the trail. Materials were also compiled from local, regional and state sources relating to the Cheshire Branch rail bed in Massachusetts. A full list of reviewed materials can be found attached to this memo.

### **Findings**

- Every community along the Cheshire Rail Trail South has identified the trail as a major recreational and transportation amenity in their formal planning documents. Some communities, such as Keene, Swanzey and Marlborough, recognize the benefits of having the regional multi-modal corridor as well as the necessity of improving the trail.
- Investment in the trail is active and ongoing, particularly in the section of trail extending from Eastern Avenue to NH 101 in Keene and sections of the trail in Swanzey. Both of these projects are included in NH's FY 2021-2030 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan, and are also projects that were selected for grant funding under the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The Monadnock Conservancy has also successfully applied for funds from the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources' (DNCR) Recreational Trails Fund for trail improvements from Old Turnpike Road to Templeton Turnpike in Fitzwilliam.
- The City of Keene plans to carry out a \$2.5 million dollar project entitled *The Industrial Heritage Trail*, which will involve erecting preconstructed bridges over NH 101 and Swanzey Factory Road as well as rehabilitating the Stone Arch Bridge. The project is slated for completion in fiscal year 2025, and represents a major improvement for trail connectivity.
- In 1998, NHDOT entered into a cooperative agreement with the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) that granted DRED the authority to use and maintain the state's rail trail system. In 2017, DRED merged with the NH Department of Cultural Resources to become the DNCR, which continues to manage the majority of the state's rail trails, including the Cheshire Branch Rail Trail outside of Keene.
- The *New Hampshire State Trails Plan* was adopted in 2005 and is currently in the process of being updated by NHDOT. Although the Plan notes that NHDOT acquired rail corridors

to preserve future opportunities to develop railroad transportation, it states that future rail use is not likely on the Cheshire Branch for the foreseeable future. The Plan recommends that trail improvements focus on segments within downtown areas, that link municipalities, and that connect with other trail segments - strategies that could apply to the Cheshire Rail Trail South.

- New Hampshire state law provides legal protection to both owners of property that grant public access for recreational purposes, as well as to groups or individuals that maintain trails for public recreation (as long as a fee is not charged).<sup>1</sup> This should mitigate liability-related concerns of having volunteer trail maintenance or improvement groups working on the trail.
- Previous regional planning efforts for the NH 12 Corridor have identified that the improvement of trail conditions along the Cheshire Rail Trail South is a priority for communities along the corridor.
- While no connection currently exists between the Cheshire Rail Trail South in New Hampshire and any developed trail system in Massachusetts, a section of the Cheshire Branch rail bed further south is in the process of being developed into a multi-use trail connecting Winchendon and Gardner, MA. This trail is listed as part of the Commonwealth's "high comfort" bicycle network. Improving and expanding the "high comfort" bicycle network is a high priority for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Winchendon, MA's master plan currently has a goal to connect the rail trail with the Cheshire Rail Trail.

### **Recommendations**

- Consider developing an online collection of trail-related plans and documents. Such a collection could serve as a valuable resource for grant proposals and project planning, especially for potential projects that span municipal borders.
- Encourage that municipalities in which the trail is located to share any relevant grant application materials, cost estimates and project plans. Such materials could be included in an online collection of trail-related materials and prove a valuable resource to municipalities who have yet to make significant trail improvements.
- Consult relevant literature review items during the development of goals, objectives and an implementation plan.
- Research prior grant applications for improvements along the trails (whether they were successful or not) to gain an understanding on funding challenges for the Cheshire Rail Trail South.

---

<sup>1</sup> NH RSA 508:14

Title and Date	Description
<p data-bbox="100 272 310 297">State Documents</p> <p data-bbox="100 305 772 370"><a href="#">NH Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan</a>, Adopted 2019</p>	<p data-bbox="953 305 2003 768">The <i>NH Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan</i> (SCORP) was developed by the NH Department of Natural &amp; Cultural Resources and officially adopted in 2019. The purpose of the SCORP is to identify New Hampshire’s outdoor recreation needs, as well as serve as the guiding planning document for the state of New Hampshire on matters of outdoor recreation. Adoption of the SCORP is also a prerequisite for U.S. National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant funding, which has funded \$40 million in New Hampshire outdoor recreation projects over the course of its half-century history. Priorities identified in the document include Connecting People to the Outdoors, Consistent Stewardship and Conservation, Economic Vitality, and Education, Ethics, and Benefits. Of these goals, many apply indirectly to rail trails such as Cheshire Rail Trail South, but goal 4 under “Economic Vitality,” which is to “Leverage the benefits of trails and other connectivity projects as they relate to social and economic vitality,” speaks directly to the development of trails to maximize local economic impact.</p> <p data-bbox="953 808 2003 1036">As part of the development of the SCORP, municipal officials across the state were surveyed on their perception of the availability and adequacy of outdoor recreation amenities. Of those surveyed, 46% indicated that multi-purpose trails were unavailable or inadequate, and 65% indicated that bike lanes and paths were unavailable and inadequate. Municipal officials surveyed also valued both the maintenance of existing parks and recreation areas (97% found important) and the building of more greenways and trails (78% found important).</p>
<p data-bbox="100 1044 420 1109"><a href="#">NH State Rail Trails Plan</a>, Adopted May 2005</p>	<p data-bbox="953 1044 2003 1438">The <i>NH Statewide Rail Trails Plan</i> was developed by NHDOT in collaboration with NH DRED, now known as the NH DNCR. Chapter One includes an inventory of abandoned rail corridors and includes maps and a summary of existing conditions for each of the 23 abandoned rail corridors owned by the State of New Hampshire. Chapter Two pertains to trails other than State-owned rail trails, e.g. rail trails owned by other entities, other multi-use trails and pathways adjacent to roadways. Chapter Three provides information on state, regional and local plans that relate to trails. Chapter Four includes a set of guidelines for future trail development, maintenance and management. It also includes a summary of public comments received during the public outreach process, including a high volume of comments from the Southwest Region regarding the Ashuelot and Cheshire Rail Trails. Additional detail on the existing conditions of the Cheshire Rail Trail is found on page A-22 of the document. The Plan notes that both</p>

	<p>the NHDOT and the City of Keene are owners of different parts of the trail. A contentious issue noted in this plan is the potential conflict between non-motorized, ATV and snowmobile users of State-owned rail trails.</p>
<p><a href="#">Final SB 80 Trail Report</a>, Published 2015</p>	<p>Published in 2015, this report represents the final recommendations of a committee established in the NH State Senate to study the use of abandoned railroad beds for recreational purposes (i.e. rail trails). The committee worked over a year and a half to identify specific recommendations relative to the NH State Rail Trail Plan as well as on financing and maintenance of rail trails. In general, it was strongly recommended that the NH State Rail Trail plan be updated every decade. Other specific recommendations in the committee report included the establishment of a tier system for proposed projects as well as close collaboration with regional planning commissions in the development of project proposals and the tier system. Proposed elements suggested by the committee for a Rail Trail Plan update included design standards, GIS trail mapping, mapping for trail access and parking, and standards for trail crossings. A highlight of the committee report was the recommendation to conduct an economic impact analysis of the value of trail usage, which has since been created and is included in this literature review.</p>
<p>NH State Rail Trails Plan Update, Adoption Pending</p>	<p>As of writing, the NH Department of Transportation is in the process of updating the original <i>NH State Rail Trails Plan</i> adopted in 2005. NHDOT has published a project website, which can be found at <a href="http://www.nhrailtrailsplan.com">www.nhrailtrailsplan.com</a>.</p>
<p><a href="#">NH 2021-2030 Ten Year Plan</a>, Adopted July 2020</p>	<p>Adopted in 2020 as a result of NHDOT’s two-year planning process, the <i>FY 2021-2030 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan</i> has several projects that directly or indirectly impact the Cheshire Rail Trail South. The document begins with a summary of the New Hampshire House of Representatives bill which adopted the Plan, as well as an overview of the Ten-Year plan budget and a high-level breakdown of funding priorities. The majority of the document after these high-level summaries is a list of projects alphabetically by town name, listing the municipality, project number, route/road, category, and finally the project phases and funding years.</p> <p>Keene has two projects that will affect the Cheshire Rail Trail listed in the plan. The first project is the reconstruction of NH 101 from Swanzey Factory Road to Branch Road. The Cheshire Rail Trail crosses NH 101 slightly west of the proposed reconstruction project. Preliminary engineering for the project is listed to begin in 2022, with construction beginning in 2029. The second project that will directly affect the Cheshire Rail Trail in Keene is the construction of a trail between Marlborough Street and the Cheshire Rail Trail, including improvements to Marlborough Street. Construction is scheduled for 2024-2025 and the total project cost is estimated at \$681,132.</p> <p>Swanzey also has a project listed on the Plan for the construction of a multi-use path on abandoned rail corridors on the Ashuelot Trail and improvements to the Cheshire Rail</p>

	Trail. Preliminary engineering is programmed for 2021, with construction in 2024. The total project budget for the Swanzey project is estimated at \$829,446.
<p><a href="#">New Hampshire DOT Statewide Pedestrian &amp; Bicycle Transportation Plan and Economic Impact Study, Technical Memorandum #4,</a> Adopted January 10, 2020</p>	<p>This memorandum was developed by NHDOT as an update to the Statewide Pedestrian &amp; Bicycle Transportation Plan, originally published by NHDOT in May of 2000. The document focuses on the economic impacts of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the State of New Hampshire. The memorandum used the IMPLAN economic model to estimate induced or “multiplier” impacts, as well as direct spending impacts by local consumers and/or the state and subsequent indirect impacts. After establishing the methodology, the memorandum provides detailed results on the economic impacts of capital investment, expenditures of bicycle and pedestrian-oriented businesses, economic impacts of bicycle tourism, benefits of non-motorized travel, and property values. Ultimately, direct capital investment in pedestrian and bicycle impacts leads to \$20.7 million in economic impact. Bicycle and pedestrian oriented businesses create \$35.4 million in annual sales, and indirect spending effects from supplier purchases and employee spending leads to an estimated \$78.9 million in annual economic impact. Bicycle tourism across the state leads to \$28.1 million in total spending, 85% of which was from two-night stays.</p>
<p><a href="#">NH Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan,</a> Adopted May 2000</p>	<p>Developed by NHDOT in cooperation with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, the <i>NH Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan</i> serves as an element of the state’s overall transportation plan. The overarching goal stated in the document is to recognize, support and encourage bicycling and walking as a form of transportation. NHDOT also outlines a number of goals specific to bicycle infrastructure in the State, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHDOT “will provide a safe and efficient means of bicycle travel throughout the State”;</li> <li>• “NHDOT will actively provide for the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in all highway projects where possible,” and;</li> <li>• “The NHDOT will consider bicycle/pedestrian concerns in all projects.”</li> </ul> <p>To reach the goal of providing safe and efficient bicycle travel throughout the State, NHDOT proposes the development of a statewide bicycle route system in this document. This system would be derived from public participation, and be comprised of a primary system of routes for inter-regional travel, and a secondary system of bicycle routes for intra-regional travel. The primary system would be the responsibility of NHDOT, and secondary systems would be developed by each regional planning commission. Implementation steps and funding sources, as well as clear guidelines for the facilitation of public input are provided in the plan. While much of the information in the plan is currently outdated, what the plan does establish is a clear process for NHDOT to include bicycle and pedestrian considerations in their work, as well as an established process for regional planning commissions to utilize in the establishment of inter-regional bicycle networks.</p>

<p>New Hampshire Statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan, Adoption Pending</p>	<p>Starting in 2019, NHDOT began to draft the <i>NH Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan</i>. While a Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was adopted in 1995 and updated in 2000 as part of the State’s Long-Range Transportation Plan, this effort represents the first stand-alone planning effort for a statewide bicycle and pedestrian plan. The focus of the new plan is to develop a network of bike facilities on state roadways and to address gaps in the sidewalk network. In addition, the update plans to articulate new policies, programs and infrastructure projects intended to increase walking and bicycling in all regions of New Hampshire.</p>
<p><a href="#">NH ATV Trail System Plan</a>, Adopted 2003</p>	<p>Adopted by the NH DRED, this plan calls for providing designated seasonal trails for ATVs and trail bikes, identifies major issues related to developing and managing these trails for use by wheeled OHRV during the snow-free months, and offers suggestions for addressing these issues. There are two trail systems designated for OHRV use in Cheshire County: Pisgah State Park (20 miles) and Troy Trails (60 miles). The plan recommends connecting these trail systems using existing infrastructure whenever possible, such as class VI roads and utility ROW. Troy Trails was operated by Little Monadnock Family Trails and spans Troy, Fitzwilliam and Richmond, NH, but currently the trail system is not in operation.</p>
<p><a href="#">RSA 215-C: Snowmobiles</a>, Last modified in 2017</p>	<p>Located under Title XVIII (Fish and Game) of the New Hampshire Revised Statutes, Chapter 215-C governs snowmobile licensing, operation and state highway crossings. Perhaps most notably, Section 215-C:8 specifies that the speed limit on approved snowmobile trails is 45 mph, where no speed limit is specified.</p>
<p><a href="#">RSA 508:14, Landowner Liability Limited</a>, Last modified in 2006</p>	<p>Under state law, landowners, including governmental entities, who permit users to use trails free of charge are not liable for personal injury suffered from trail use, unless the harm was caused intentionally. Individuals or organizations that perform maintenance on trails for public recreation are not liable for personal injury, in the absence of “gross negligence or willful or wanton misconduct.”</p>
<p><a href="#">RSA 212:34, Duty of Care</a>, Last modified in 2011</p>	<p>This statute provides both public and private landowners with additional protections when they grant free-of-charge recreational access.</p>
<p><a href="#">New Hampshire Bureau of Trail Best Management Practices</a>, Revised in 2017</p>	<p>A useful publication for citizen groups interested in performing trail maintenance. Topics covered include but are not limited to permitting, grading, trail surfacing, flagging, and brush clearing.</p>
<p><a href="#">NHDOT Cooperative Agreement</a>, Executed in 1998 between NH DOT and NH DRED</p>	<p>NHDOT owns title to the land underlying the entire extent of the Cheshire Branch Rail Trail. For most of the trail, NHDOT entered into a cooperative agreement with the NH DRED, a defunct agency whose trail-related responsibilities now fall under the purview of NH DNCR. The cooperative agreement specifies trail maintenance responsibilities.</p>
<p>Regional Documents</p>	
<p><a href="#">Southwest Connects: Southwest Region Transportation Plan 2014 - 2035</a>, Adopted January, 2015</p>	<p><i>Southwest Connects</i> represents the pre-eminent transportation planning document for the Monadnock Region, and as such presents a regional transportation vision, as well as supporting goals and objectives aimed to achieve that vision. Much of the vision presented in the Plan relies on the statement that “in the future, the Southwest Region’s</p>

	<p>network of major highways, rail right-of-way, airports and other transportation features will look much the same as they do today” (p.4). This is particularly relevant to rail trails who use existing right-of-way, and the vision statement explicitly mentions that “new modes of transport will utilize the regional transportation network and public right-of-way to make room for... safe bike routes” (p. 4). Other goals and objectives relevant to rail trails include the goals of the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (Objective 2.B), improvement of mode of transportation choices (Objective 3.C), preservation of rail right-of-ways (Objective 2.E), encouraging bicycle and pedestrian connectivity (Objective 3.D), and the promotion of complete streets (Objective 4.C). After the vision statement, the rest of <i>Southwest Connects</i> is structured around 8 major corridors in the region, of which the Cheshire Rail Trail South is considered part of the NH 12 South corridor. The plan identifies the Cheshire Rail Trail South as being in fair to good condition, with some major crossings posing a barrier, and states that “spot trail improvements, regional cooperation and marketing could improve recreation and economic development opportunities for area towns” (p. 91).</p>
<p><a href="#">Monadnock Region Future: A Plan for Southwest New Hampshire</a>, Adopted 2015</p>	<p><i>Monadnock Region Future</i> is the primary planning document for the Monadnock Region, and is structured around four primary themes: Community Vitality, Economic Prosperity, Stewardship, and Preparedness. Each theme area presents specific goals and objectives, as well as data and specific trends related to the subject. The theme areas and their goals and objectives all are connected to, and are in support of the vision for the region outlined in the plan, which comprises a “Southwest Region where thriving communities rich in culture, educational opportunities and natural resources, work together to support a resilient and robust regional economy, which offers residents freedom of choice and embraces our heritage and distinct sense of place” (p. 13). Under Community Vitality, a specific goal related to rail trails include increasing non-motorized transportation options and creating additional multi-use trails are specific goals recommended to support the goal of enhancing access to goods, services, and other destinations. Other goals that relate to rail trails in the Plan include maintaining adequate infrastructure under Economic Prosperity, with the specific objective of improving transportation infrastructure to support the development of a diversified transportation system and improving the condition and availability of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.</p>
<p><a href="#">Monadnock Region Rail Trails Collaborative</a></p>	<p>Self-described as “an informal group made up of representatives of local municipalities, non-profits and volunteers that recognize the value in collaborating on shared goals and interests for improving the regional rail trails,” the Monadnock Region Rail Trails Collaborative (MRRTC) is an advocacy group with the mission “to restore and maintain the Cheshire, Ashuelot, and Fort Hill rail trails throughout the Monadnock Region and to connect southwest New Hampshire, via the rail trails to Bellows Falls, VT, Brattleboro, VT and Winchendon, MA”. On its website, the MRRTC maintains a series</p>

	<p>of general implementation plans for rail trails throughout the region, including one for the entirety of the Cheshire Rail Trail. For Cheshire Rail Trail South, the MRRTC highlights the rehabilitation of a section of the trail spanning from Swanzev Factory Road in Keene to Webb Depot Road in Marlborough. The rehabilitation for this section is funded by a TAP Grant to be constructed in 2025. The MRRTC also highlights the City of Keene’s rehabilitation/construction of the trail from Marlboro Street to Swanzev Factory Road, with an expected timeline of 2023-2027. The final section highlighted for improvement is the section from Old Turnpike Road to approximately Sips Pond in Fitzwilliam, which is the subject of a Recreational Trails Program grant application and will start construction in 2021 if the grant application is approved.</p>
<p><a href="#">Greater Monadnock Region Community Health Improvement Plan</a>, Published 2015</p>	<p>A product of the Greater Monadnock Public Health Network, the <i>Greater Monadnock Region Community Health Improvement Plan</i> (CHIP) is an offshoot of the <i>New Hampshire State Health Improvement Plan</i>, and aims to provide a written framework to focus and solidify the activities in the Greater Monadnock region to improve the health of the community. The plan centers around eleven community health improvement priority areas, and identifies specific goals within each priority area, such as reducing obesity, decreasing prescription drug misuse and reducing tobacco use. Some specific goals and strategic objectives speak directly to the importance of recreational facilities such as rail trails, and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal: Foster an accepting community that supports positive behavioral health. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategic Objective: Increase safe and convenient options for physical activity within communities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Goal: Reduce adult and childhood obesity in the Region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ implement programs, projects and policies that increase physical activity opportunities in early childhood settings, schools, workplaces, food pantries, neighborhoods, and public and private recreational facilities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><a href="#">Monadnock Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL)</a></p>	<p>A regional effort in collaboration with Healthy Monadnock and part of a statewide network, Monadnock HEAL represents a community initiative to address unhealthy habits and lifestyles for residents of Cheshire County. A critical goal of the group is the promotion of active living for both youth and adults.</p>
<p><a href="#">NH 12 South Corridor Study</a>, Published 2015</p>	<p>Prepared in 2015, the study focuses on the NH 12 South corridor which includes Cheshire Rail Trail South. In the executive summary of the study, drainage and surface condition improvements were recommended for Cheshire Rail Trail South to increase safety and add recreational opportunity for multiple users. Improved trailhead parking and signage was also identified as a need for the trail. A major component of the corridor study is a summary of findings for existing conditions of traffic and intersections, demographics, economics, community planning efforts and regulations, as well as summaries of environmental and historical resources along the corridor. An analysis of</p>

	<p>future conditions and recommendations is also provided for each community in the corridor. As part of the recommendations for the study, the corridor study advisory committee identified the unimproved nature of Cheshire Rail Trail South as an issue for every community along the NH 12 Corridor. The lack of improvement was noted to make the trail unsuitable for some users. The recommendation for every community relating to Cheshire Rail Trail South includes improving wayfinding, signage and roadway crossings and the preparation of applications to the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Recreational Trails Program, as well as coordination with the Monadnock Region Transportation Management Association (now called the <a href="#">Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation</a>) to initiate and promote a Cheshire Rail Trail Coalition. Specific recommendations include suggested improvements to the NH 101 crossing in Keene, the improvement and establishment of a parking area and trail head at the Marlborough/Troy town line, improving and designating the parking area and trailhead at the railway depot property in Troy, and collaborating with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and Massachusetts DOT to connect the trail across the state line in Rindge.</p>
<p>Local Documents</p>	
<p><a href="#">Keene Comprehensive Master Plan</a>, Adopted September 2010</p>	<p>Adopted in September of 2010, the <i>Keene Comprehensive Master Plan</i> is separated into four sections. The first section is an introduction to master planning and an overview of the planning process and its context in regional and state plans, followed by a community vision statement and six focus areas. The third section describes the existing conditions of the City. The final section represents the Plan itself, including twenty topic specific chapters. The importance of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is reiterated multiple times throughout the Plan, including in the vision statement where the Plan envisions “pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure... is present throughout our community and... places import on people rather than automobiles”. In the transportation chapter of the plan, former rail lines were identified in the very beginning of the chapter as having a major impact on the City and its built form, and the Plan calls for the increased monitoring of condition and use of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as an important part of the regional transportation network. Later in the Plan, a connection from Eastern Avenue towards NH 101 is a specific recommendation for the construction of a new pathway, as proposed by the Keene Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Committee.</p>
<p><a href="#">Keene Active and Passive Recreation Plan</a>, Adopted June 2012</p>	<p>Developed by the City of Keene Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cemeteries and an ad hoc committee in collaboration with GreenPlay, LLC, the plan is split into six distinct sections. The plan begins with an executive summary and moves into an introduction and planning context, focus areas and values, key findings, recommendations, and finally implementation. Two items identified as key issues for Keene’s passive and active recreation speak directly to Cheshire Rail Trail South in this document; coordinating active transportation and recreation and trail connectivity and monitoring levels of service for parks, trails, open spaces, and facilities. In the public</p>

	<p>outreach for the development of the plan, connectivity and alternative transportation was listed as one of the top five community issues for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries to focus on. While none of the recommendations specifically mention Cheshire Rail Trail South, the recommendations of “Convene a cross-sector Active Recreation/Transportation Working Group” and “Promote use of existing pathway and trails system through public information sources, utilizing trailhead signage, print, and web-based resources” both speak specifically to issues experienced along the Cheshire Rail Trail. (pp. 43).</p>
<p>Keene Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Adopted 1999 (update in process)</p>	<p>Enabled formally by resolution passed by the Keene City Council in 1996, the Bicycle and Pedestrian master plan is intended to be prepared by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee in collaboration with the Planning Department and Planning Board to be incorporated as a chapter in the City of Keene’s master plan. While an update is in progress as of writing, the most recent version of the Bicycle and Pedestrian master plan was completed in 1999. Below is a summary of several elements of the Plan as it relates to the Cheshire Rail Trail.</p> <p><b>Goals and Objectives related to rail trails:</b> Goal 5 of this plan is “To assure the integrity of the former railroad corridors are developed for transportation enhancement and recreational use” (p. 4). Objective 4 is “To incorporate existing paths, paths approved for construction and former railroad corridors into a city-wide network of bicycle/pedestrian paths,” and Objective 8 is “To link the City with neighboring towns, states and regional routes into a network of bicycle/pedestrian paths” (pp. 4).</p> <p><b>User Groups Described in this Plan:</b> User groups described in the Plan include bicyclists, pedestrians, in-lane skaters/skateboarders, cross-country skiers, snowmobiles, and equestrians. According to this Plan, the Keene Sno’Riders utilize the Cheshire Branch rail bed for the operation of snowmobile routes. A primary interest and concern of the Keene Sno’Riders is creating a safe connection between the Cheshire Branch and the Ashuelot rail beds. This is also a concern for the equestrian community. Uses identified for the Cheshire Branch rail bed include walking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, horseback riding, and snowmobiling.</p> <p><b>Pathway Design, Management &amp; Funding:</b> Section IV of the Plan includes recommended design considerations, pathway rules and regulations, and maintenance considerations. Page 18 of the document includes a “Path System Safety Checklist,” and this section also includes a description of trailside amenities which mentions the need for consistent signage of the trail system.</p> <p><b>The Pathway System:</b> This Plan is composed of two elements: (1) the Keene Bicycle/Pedestrian Path System consisting of bike paths, bike lanes and “Share the Road” signs; and, (2) the Statewide System of Bike Routes, Multi-Use Paths, and Rail-to-Trail Recreational Corridors. The Plan notes that these facilities must be interconnected to enable all non-motorized users to travel to various parts of Keene as well as to adjoining towns and other regional destinations. The Cheshire Branch rail</p>

	<p>bed from Main Street east to NH 101 and west to NH 9/10/12 is listed as a “Priority A Corridor”, or the highest priority of project and recommended to be given the highest priority for resources and construction in the plan. The Cheshire Branch Rail Trail northwest of NH 9/10/12 and Cheshire Branch Rail Trail south of the NH 101 crossing are also listed as “Priority B Corridor” projects, which are given secondary priority for project development, funding and construction.</p>
<p><a href="#">Keene Complete Streets Policy</a>, Adopted November 2015</p>	<p>Established in resolution R-2015-40 passed by the Keene City Council, the complete streets policy calls for all City-owned transportation facilities, transportation improvements and project phases to be utilized as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. Acquisition and construction are also included as strategies to incorporate complete streets guidelines where existing right-of-ways or infrastructure is insufficient. While not directly addressing rail trails, this policy represents a substantial change to the way the City maintains and develops the street network which connects to Cheshire Rail Trail South.</p>
<p><a href="#">Keene Complete Streets Design Guidelines</a>, Adopted 2015</p>	<p>Developed in collaboration with Southwest Region Planning Commission, Keene’s design guidelines outline a series of street design recommendations for consideration when working in the public right-of-way. While not a requirement of specific street designs, the guidelines provide flexible guidance for City staff to consider in transportation projects. The guidelines are organized by a street typology created for Keene which includes slow streets, gateway streets, bicycle streets, neighborhood streets, rural streets, and a transit street overlay. Each street type comes with a list of streets in Keene which match the description, a diagram of a possible configuration for that type of street, as well as specific bulleted considerations for the design of that street such as bicycle lane width, travel lane width, pavement markings, green buffers, and other suggestions.</p>
<p><a href="#">City of Keene 2020-2025 Capital Improvement Plan</a>, Adopted January 2019</p>	<p>The capital improvement plan outlines capital investments to be made by the City of Keene from fiscal year 2020 through fiscal year 2025, and includes a major capital improvement project for the Cheshire Rail Trail. The project, entitled the <i>Transportation Heritage Trail</i> project, is the next phase in the ongoing development of the City of Keene’s existing Cheshire Rail Trail System. The central feature of the project is the adaptive reuse of three historical bridges, including the use of the Robert J. Prowse Memorial Bridge formerly used in Londonderry as a trail crossing for NH 101. The project also anticipates using the current Island Street Bridge to provide a crossing over Swanzey Factory Road, and finally improvements will be made to the Stone Arch Bridge. The project is anticipated to span from fiscal year 2022 to 2025, and has a total project budget of \$2.5 million. Complete construction of the project is contingent upon the availability of grant funds and private donations.</p>
<p>Marlborough Master Plan, Land Use, Population &amp; Housing and Vision Chapters, Adopted July 2013</p>	<p>Adopted in 2013 as a partial update to the Town of Marlboro’s master plan, these chapters represent goals and objectives on the topics of Land Use and Population &amp; Housing, as well as a comprehensive vision statement reflecting the results of a public</p>

	<p>visioning session. During the visioning process for this update, the maintenance and creation of recreational trails was highlighted by Marlborough residents as an area of importance. In relation to the Cheshire Rail Trail South, there is a specific goal listed under the subject area of recreation and social opportunities in the land use chapter of the plan that states “existing trails in Town should be clearly identified in order to facilitate continued usage; in addition, other multi-purpose recreational trails should be developed and, where possible, connect to existing trails, as well as trails that go beyond Marlborough’s boundaries” (p. 12).</p>
<p><a href="#">National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Stone Arch Bridge.</a> Submitted June 2012</p>	<p>Submitted in June of 2012, this document is the registration form submitted to the National Register of Historic Places for the Cheshire Rail Trail’s Stone Arch Bridge. The document provides a detailed overview of the Stone Arch Bridge’s history, architectural details and significance as a historical resource. As outlined in the registration form, Stone Arch Bridge represents a significant recreational and cultural resource along the Cheshire Rail Trail South.</p>
<p><a href="#">Swanzy Master Plan Update.</a> Adopted 2003</p>	<p>Swanzy’s master plan contains thirteen chapters on topics ranging from demographics to recreation, resource conservation, and beyond. A focus of the plan is the explicit definition of “rural character” as it relates to the Town of Swanzy, and how that definition is a major base for the rest of the master plan. The recreation chapter of the plan is most relevant to the Cheshire Rail Trail South and includes a specific goal to “develop multi-use corridors toward Keene to enable... travel by alternative means than the automobile, as well as jogging, biking, etc.” (p. 48). The Route 12 corridor is highlighted as a potential multi-use corridor under this goal, which includes the Cheshire Rail Trail South through Swanzy. The transportation chapter of the master plan also includes targets relevant to the Cheshire Rail Trail South. Two targets that are relevant to the trail are to “Coordinate with adjacent towns to ensure inter-municipal pedestrian/trail system connections” and to “Convene a committee to assess the existing sidewalk and trail network for adequacy, determine future needs and identify appropriate ways of addressing these needs” (p. 27). An update is currently also in the process for Swanzy’s master plan but has not concluded at the time of writing.</p>
<p><a href="#">Swanzy Complete Streets Policy.</a> Adopted October 2015</p>	<p>Adopted by the Swanzy Board of Selectmen in Fall of 2015, Swanzy’s complete streets policy directs the Town of Swanzy to approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity for making the public right-of-way more accessible for all users. The policy also directs annual reporting from the Director of Public Works in the Town to include a summary of how each applicable project advanced the goals of the policy. While not a policy that directly impacts rail trails, the policy would impact the network of streets around the Cheshire Rail Trail South through Swanzy and would help improve the connectivity for bicycles and pedestrians from users of the trail to the Town of Swanzy’s transportation network.</p>
<p>Swanzy Complete Streets Design Guidelines, Adopted 2015</p>	<p>Similar to Keene’s Complete Streets Design Guidelines, the document begins with a general overview of the concept of complete streets, and then dives into a series of</p>

	<p>recommendations based on street typology. The guidelines outline four types of streets in the typology: collector, compact neighborhood, residential, and rural. Each type of street then has a suggested streetscape design with visual examples, followed by a detailed set of recommendations for design of the roadway zone including travel lane widths, vegetation, access management features and more. Each street under Town ownership is also classified under one of the street types within the street typology.</p>
<p><a href="#">Troy Master Plan Update</a>, Adopted March 2007</p>	<p>Troy’s most recent master plan update is organized into four major sections. The plan begins with an introduction outlining the need for a master plan and highlighting the major economic and social change within the Town since the last update. The next section represents the future land use plan, which is comprised of a vision statement and a series of goals and objectives for land use in the Town. There are three specific objectives listed under the future land use plan which directly reference or impact the rail trail. The first objective is under the umbrella of Community Facilities and is to “explore public access between the Depot property, rail trail and Sand Dam recreation area” (p. 28). Under the “Historic, Cultural, and Recreational Resources” section, the plan also identifies the objective to “Develop and implement the means by which to enforce speed limits for snowmobiles and OHRV’s using the rail trail through the Village and surrounding neighborhoods” (p. 56). Under the Economic Development and Transportation goals and objectives sections, the plan discusses the need to develop a pedestrian access plan for Troy Village and the surrounding neighborhood.</p>
<p><a href="#">Troy Complete Streets Policy</a>, Adopted 2016</p>	<p>Completed in collaboration with Southwest Region Planning Commission, Troy’s complete streets policy directs the Town to incorporate complete street principles into planning documents, policies and transportation projects. Troy’s policy specifically focuses on ensuring that the streets and roadways in the Village Center are “convenient, safe and accessible for all transportation users”. The policy also specifically directs the Town’s Road Agent to review the <i>Troy Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines</i> prior to any work within the Troy Village Center.</p>
<p><a href="#">Troy Complete Streets Planning and Design Guidelines</a>, Published 2016</p>	<p>The Town of Troy, in collaboration with Southwest Region Planning Commission, developed a series of design guidelines as part of their complete streets policy. The guidelines provide an overview of complete streets and their benefits as well as the components of complete streets. The guideline also provides an overview of which streets within the Village of Troy are within the scope of the Town’s complete streets Policy and design considerations for each component of the street. Unlike other complete street guidelines in the region, Troy’s guidelines suggest a suite of design considerations which apply to all roads covered by the Policy, as opposed to presenting a hierarchy of complete streets.</p>
<p><a href="#">Fitzwilliam Master Plan</a>, Adopted January 2012</p>	<p>Fitzwilliam’s master plan, last updated in 2012, is organized into five primary sections. The Plan begins with a community vision statement, and then transitions into a future land use plan followed by population and housing, community facilities, and historic and cultural resources. While the Cheshire Rail Trail South is identified as a major</p>

	recreational resource for the Town, there are no direct recommendations or goals as they relate to the trail in the Plan.
<b>Massachusetts Documents</b>	
<a href="#">Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan, 2019</a>	Prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the plan provides an overview of existing conditions in the State of Massachusetts and an action plan structured around six initiatives to address bicycling needs in the State. In the plan, the Cheshire Branch rail bed that extends into and connects Winchendon and Gardner, MA is listed as part of the “High Comfort Bike Network”, of which the expansion is a key priority in the plan. The rail bed north of Winchendon extending into New Hampshire is not listed as part of the network. While many of the initiatives and priorities in the plan speak to the importance of expanding the “High Comfort Bike Network” and expanding daily bicycle trips, no particular projects are identified in the plan.
<a href="#">Working Towards the Future: Montachusett Metropolitan 2020 Regional Transportation Plan, Adopted July 2017</a>	Prepared and adopted by the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization, the document represents the long-term transportation plan for the Montachusett MPO region from 2020 to 2040. It includes a number of chapters focusing on different aspects of the transportation system, including a chapter on bicycle & pedestrian travel which provides a review of existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian transportation options in the region. The bicycle and pedestrian chapter of the document describes the Massachusetts section of the Cheshire Branch rail bed as the “North Central Pathway.” The rail bed has been partially improved between the Towns of Winchendon and Gardner, MA, and the plan recommends a multi-phased project to connect the two communities. While in the mapping section of the plan, it is indicated that a northern expansion is a potential future trail project, development of the trail north of Winchendon is not explained in detail in the plan.
Winchendon Draft Master Plan, In progress	While not officially adopted, Winchendon’s update to their master plan includes a goal in their open space chapter: “Strategy OS 2.2: Identify areas for trail and open space linkages, including connecting routes to NH and other communities” . No such goal is present in the version of Winchendon’s master plan adopted in 2001.