



PLAN FOR ASHUELOT RAIL TRAIL: A PILOT PROJECT

Let's create a more accessible and useful rail trail in your community!

Rail trails have long been recognized as a way to improve local and regional opportunities related to transportation, recreation, economic development, and health throughout Southwest New Hampshire. A variety of individuals and groups take on maintenance of rail trails, and they are enjoyed routinely by residents and visitors alike. Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) sees value in developing a plan which addresses the future of our rail trails.

WHAT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Plan for Ashuelot Rail Trail is a planning effort aimed to address challenges and opportunities along the approximately 21.5-mile stretch of trail between the Massachusetts state line and Keene, New Hampshire. The project will collect data on existing trail use, conditions, and amenities and conduct meetings among municipalities and other stakeholders to both share information and consider maintenance, connectivity, safety, and coordinated improvement to the trail. The project will result in a common vision for Ashuelot Rail Trail to better inform volunteer groups, local government, and regional and statewide transportation planning.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Over time, the need to coordinate on improvements to the rail trail has risen for local, regional, and statewide groups. Because of the importance of rail trails to the transportation network of our region, a collaborative approach is needed. SWRPC is working with communities along the rail trail corridor to review and prioritize solutions to issues and needs through an 18-month planning process.

The Ashuelot Rail Trail is an enormous transportation, recreation, and health asset to a wide variety of users throughout the year.



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

Over the years, statewide initiatives have successfully addressed “big picture” needs. In 2005, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation published the *State Trails Plan*, which identified corridors throughout the State and provided guidelines for their development by taking into consideration trail users, design, management, and future needs.

In 2014, SWRPC published an update to the Region’s long range transportation plan, *Southwest Connects*, which documents the need for regional rail trail planning, recognizes the importance of railroad rights-of-way for current and future use, and identifies rail trails as assets to each of the eight transportation corridors described in the Plan.

Today, a project is underway to assess the current condition of the Ashuelot Rail Trail, its users, and plan for the future.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

SWRPC will announce the availability of a project website shortly. A variety of outreach methods are planned, including surveys for the general public and municipalities, interviews, a project open house, and rail trail tours. For more information, please contact:

Henry Underwood, Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) at hunderwood@swrpc.org or (603) 357-0557.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In addition to SWRPC, a project advisory committee will oversee the development of a rail trail plan.

TIMELINE

The project will formally start in March of this year and be completed by the end of June 2019.