



DATE: May 28, 2021
TO: Cheshire Rail Trail South Planning Project Working Group
FROM: SWRPC Staff
RE: Stakeholder Interviews

In order to better understand past, current and planned work along Cheshire Rail Trail South, SWRPC staff conducted several interviews with state agency staff, municipal staff and officials, as well as other organizations with an interest in trail development and management. Interviews also served as an opportunity to gather stakeholder perspective on trail-related challenges and opportunities for improvements.

Interviews summarized in this memo represent one tool among several used to collect stakeholder input over the course of the study. Interviewees represent a limited sampling of stakeholder groups, which was contingent their availability. In preparing for the interviews, SWRPC staff developed a set of questions to guide interviews, although specific discussion topics varied from group to group, depending on particular areas of interviewee interest. Those questions are attached to this memo.

This memo summarizes input gathered from the following groups.

1. New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Bureau of Rail and Transit.
2. Monadnock Sno-Moles.
3. Monadnock Regional Rail Trail Collaborative (MRRTC). The interviewee is also a member of the Swanzy Rail Trail Advisory Committee.
4. The Town of Fitzwilliam. Interviewees included municipal staff as well as members of the Conservation Commission and Recreation Commissions.
5. Monadnock Conservancy.
6. The Town of Winchendon, MA.
7. Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), whose service area includes Winchendon, MA.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom, with the exception of the NHDOT interview, which was conducted via e-mail. The interview with representatives of the Monadnock Sno-Moles was conducted via e-mail in addition to Zoom.

NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit

Since NHDOT owns the abandoned railroad corridor on which Cheshire Rail Trail is located, its input perhaps warrants special consideration. However, given that NHDOT's purview extends across the state, questions posed to NHDOT staff were applicable to the state's rail trails in general rather than Cheshire Rail Trail South specifically. Questions, along with paraphrased responses, were as follows.

- *Would NHDOT/Bureau of Trails approve the use of wildlife camera for monitoring unauthorized use of the trail for motorized vehicles, dumping, or other unpermitted activities? Has NHDOT/Bureau of Trails had any conversation w/trail stakeholders regarding enforcement of trail rules?*

To date, NHDOT hasn't considered this issue. To explore the question further, NHDOT would need to consult with the state Attorney General's office to verify that there aren't legal restrictions that would preclude deployment of cameras. In agreements that NHDOT has executed with municipalities elsewhere in the state to manage sections of rail trail, the municipality is charged with enforcing rules governing trail use.

- *If a group of trail user groups/municipalities wanted to install branded signage along a segment of trail, is there a particular process that they're required to follow?*

NHDOT has used the following language in agreements executed with municipalities to maintain and development sections of rail trail:

The Permittee shall obtain and install, at its expense, all signage along the Rail-Trail as shown on a Signage Plan to be developed by the Permittee. The initial Signage Plan and any subsequent revisions to the Plan shall be submitted by the Permittee to the Bureau for approval prior to installation. Any revenue generated through sponsorship of mile marker signage along the Rail-Trail shall be paid to the Department and shall be appropriately apportioned to communities along the Rail-Trail.

The NH Bureau of Trails—which administers much of the state's rail trail system through a Cooperative Agreement with NHDOT—may approach this issue differently.

- *Would NHDOT/Bureau of Trails be open to providing gate keys to trail users other than the snowmobile clubs? (The question has been raised by equestrian groups.)*

Most or all of the rail trail corridors with gates are administered by NH Bureau of Trails, so this decision would likely rest with them.

- *Who determines whether motorized vehicles are allowed on the rail trails and how is that determination made? (It's my understanding that for segments of RR corridor acquired w/federal transportation enhancement funds, restrictions are placed on use by motorized vehicles. Are there other factors that come into play?)*

Beyond the federal funding source used to acquire the railroad corridor, it is unlikely that further restrictions would be placed on motorized use by NHDOT, who would not be well-positioned to enforce such restrictions. NH Bureau of Trails is unlikely to place restrictions on motorized use, since motorized users contribute Bureau of Trails operations and trail maintenance activities.

- *Would it be possible, even if unlikely, for RR corridor purchased w/federal transportation-enhancement funds to revert to active railroad use? What about RR corridor purchase w/other funding sources?*

All railroad corridors, regardless of the funding sources, are acquired with the intent that the corridor may be used for future rail restoration. Rail trail use is only permitted as an interim use. Rail Trail Agreements are clear in their interim intent and include language relative to this.

- *There are numerous instances where rail trails cross state highways, many of which are quite dangerous for trail users to negotiate. If a trail group is interested in improving safety at a state highway crossing, what's the best way for them to advocate for enhancements? Are there examples of NHDOT improving safety at crossings? If so, what measures were implemented?*

It is recommended that questions on this matter are directed to NHDOT Bureau of Highway Design. Sally Gunn may be an appropriate point of contact at the current time.

- *Does NHDOT's relationship with Bureau of Trails regarding rail trail management cover all NHDOT-owned RR corridors, or just some? (In other words, are there any cases where a trail maintenance group would establish a direct relationship w/NHDOT rather than working through Bureau of Trails).*

NHDOT either enters into an agreement with Bureau of Trails or a municipality; not all NHDOT-owned rail corridors are subject to a Cooperative Agreement, some are covered by NHDOT-Municipality Rail Trail Agreements. NHDOT does not have any agreements, and does not plan to, with individual trail maintenance groups. For municipal rail trail agreements that NHDOT enters into, it is the municipality's responsibility to maintain and if they subcontract out maintenance, it is incumbent upon them to enter into such agreements and address insurance requirements, among other issues.

Monadnock Sno-Moles

The Monadnock Sno-Moles is a snowmobile club that has been in existence since the 1970's and currently consists of over 300 members that utilize the Cheshire Rail Trail year round. This rail trail, however, makes-up a minority of the club's approximately 100 miles of trails within their jurisdiction. During the summer and fall activities include scheduled work parties. During the winter, the group leads large outings and conducts grooming activities. Other work includes patrols and a variety of maintenance duties related to: trail surface, drainage, bridges, parking areas, and directional signage. The groups maintenance responsibilities on the Cheshire Rail Trail extend from approximately the Keene/Swanzey line south to Route 12 in Fitzwilliam near the Massachusetts state line. For wintertime use, the group maintains a trail across a variety of public and private properties to the Monadnock Recreational Trail in Rindge.

SWRPC staff learned during the interview that with the exception of a recent Monadnock Conservancy project, the snowmobile club has not been asked to participate in other improvements and essentially operates independently. At the same time there is a strong interest in collaborating on improvements aligned with the needs of their members.

The club is almost entirely reliant on volunteers to donate building materials, equipment and time for repairs and improvements. At times, local contractors are hired to do certain work that is cost-prohibitive (such as work requiring heavy equipment like dump trucks, excavators and brush hogs). This history has earned the club relationships and knowledge about many companies and individuals to meet these needs. This is partly out of necessity - the club is required to maintain and at times replace grooming equipment for wintertime use and is the only activity they are compensated directly for by the State of New Hampshire. However, this varies depending on the equipment used as well as the weather. Funding to the club is provided in part by membership dues as well as through the State's competitive Grant-In-Aid and Recreational Trails Program – both of which require a local match.

The Sno-Moles don't work with municipalities regularly other than permitting related to bridge construction. Although they have a positive working relationship, interviewees felt maintenance of the trail has not been a priority for municipalities. For example, they do not contribute to club activities directly with funding or "in-kind" through maintenance like brush hogging.

The club has extensive experience meeting with adjacent landowners, especially in the areas of Fitzwilliam and Rindge that make the connection between the Cheshire Rail Trail to the Monadnock Recreational Trail for wintertime use. There is a strong interest to establish similar relationships and rights to connect to the Ashuelot Rail Trail at the northern extent of the corridor. However, route possibilities have not been fully explored. The process to obtain permissions through agreements for use of public property is also subject

to change over time (such as when a parcel of land is sold). For that reason, it is desirable that trails follow a public road or trail right of way.

The group also provided the following written responses:

- *What Trail maintenance/development is club involved in/with?*

The Monadnock Sno-Moles club developed and made usable the entire rail bed after rails were removed from (Cheshire branch) Fitzwilliam state line to Stone Arch Bridge Marlborough/Swanzey and from Jaffrey to MA state line including connections between the two rail beds. Work included three bridges Monadnock branch and six bridges including an abutment on Cheshire branch; filling and ditching for flooded areas and low-lying bed areas thru rock ledges; bypasses where tunnels and bridges had been removed or filled-in. The club performs annual maintenance consisting of trimming, cutting, grading, upgrading, and repair. The club also opens and closes annually for winter use 60 gates on the corridor; 36 from Keene to Mass. state line with the balance on the Monadnock branch and Annett State Forest.

- *What equipment does club currently use too maintain trail? Benefit from additional equipment?*

The club owns and operates three commercial tracked grooming machines and two wide track snowmobiles along with the appropriate drags and accessories. It has brush cutting equipment and numerous hand tools limbers and saws. It utilizes volunteered and donated equipment from club members in the form of excavators, tractors, mowers, trucks for hauling, etc. to perform maintenance or repairs. Additional dedicated equipment would be beneficial removing reliance on donated and volunteer equipment.

- *Are there opportunities for other trail users to support club efforts? From of?*

There are opportunities for other trail users to support snowmobile club efforts. Historically, involvement in the majority of this trail has been very limited with a notable recent exception being work done by the Monadnock Conservancy in Fitzwilliam, all efforts have been limited to the Monadnock Sno-Moles. For that reason, support in the form of volunteering, materials and coordination is needed.

Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative (MRRTC)

MRRTC is a volunteer group spearheaded by Swanzey Rail Trail Advisory Committee member Mike Kowalczyk. Formed in 2020, MRRTC's core members include representatives from the City of Keene and Town of Swanzey. The group's mission focuses on rehabilitating rail trails in Cheshire County: the Ashuelot Rail Trail, the Cheshire Rail Trail, and the Fort Hill Recreational Trail. Over the past year, Mike Kowalczyk has been conducting outreach to municipalities and trail user groups to share MRRTC's vision of an improved rail trail network in Cheshire County that connects with adjacent regions in Vermont and Massachusetts.

MRRTC has helped organize smaller work groups or "legs" of MRRTC that focus on particular sections of the rail trail network. One group is focusing on the Ashuelot Rail Trail, particularly in Winchester and Hinsdale, as well as the Fort Hill Recreational Trail. Another group is concentrating on the northern section Cheshire Rail Trail in points north of Keene, as well as possible connections across the Connecticut River to Bellows Falls, VT. A similar group has yet to coalesce along the southern section of the Cheshire Rail

Trail. The Cheshire Rail Trail South Planning Project was identified as a good opportunity to establish such group.

One priority of the MRRTC is to create a comprehensive cost estimate for needed rail trail improvements across the network. Cost estimates could include items like trail surface improvements, bridge renovations, wayfinding signage, trailhead and parking improvements, as well as permanent trail counters. At the time of interview, a methodology for developing cost estimates was still a work in progress. Preliminary figures, however, for trail surface improvements had been developed. Surface improvements were assumed to include establishment of a packed stone dust surface as well as drainage enhancements. A figure of \$25/linear foot was assumed for trail segments that required “simple” upgrades, i.e. segments that did not require extensive vegetation clearing or terrain alterations. “Complex” upgrades were estimated to cost \$40/linear foot. Estimates were based on past rail trail projects in Swanzeey as well as an assumed increase in labor/materials costs.

The cost estimates will be useful for project planning, but they are also critical for communicating with potential supporters and funders. MRRTC intends to solicit project funding from both granting entities as well as private organizations, such as major employers. Having specific figures in hand will help potential supporters understand in concrete terms what is needed and how their contribution would fit into the overall vision for a connected rail trail network in Cheshire County and beyond.

In regard to trail management, MRRTC sees snowmobile clubs as organizations well-positioned to own and oversee the use of equipment needed for trail mowing, ditching, and other maintenance activities. Since snowmobile clubs maintain segments of trail across municipal boundaries, it may make more sense for them to acquire trail maintenance equipment than it would for each municipality to do so. Members of other trail user groups could then join the snowmobile clubs in order to address trail maintenance activities that might not be high priority for snowmobile users. For example, for snowmobile use, mowing and vegetation clearing is only necessary once a year, prior to the start of the winter season.

Town of Fitzwilliam

Comments from Town of Fitzwilliam staff as well as members of the Conservation Committee and Recreation Committee focused on how the quality of the trail surface discourages its use as a recreational resource. The trail’s rough, uneven, and sandy surface is difficult to run or jog on in many places. Kids as well as adults can find it challenging to bicycle on the trail. Poor drainage was also cited as a concern. It was noted that the Town of Fitzwilliam does not have a recreation center, making outdoor recreational resources like the Cheshire Rail Trail all the more important for meeting the needs of residents.

The importance of considering trail connections was another theme that emerged over the course of conversation. Connecting with trails in Winchendon, MA was generally appealing, in part because such a connection could provide an alternative to running on the road network. Although the Cheshire Rail Trail and Monadnock-Metacomet Trail intersect in Troy, that connection was also seen as important to interviewees. It was also noted how both the Cheshire Rail Trail and the Monadnock-Metacomet trail function as segments of the Wantastiquet-Monadnock Trail. Connecting ATV trails in Fitzwilliam have led to unauthorized motorized use of the Cheshire Rail Trail.

Relative to parking, interviewees noted how no parking signs had been posted at the Fitzwilliam Fire Station to discourage use of a nearby quarry as a swimming hole.

Overall, interviewees expressed interest and support for trail improvements and were interested in participating in the planning process moving forward.

Monadnock Conservancy

The Monadnock Conservancy owns and manages the Chamberlain Conservation Area, an approximately 77-acre tract of protected land that borders on the Cheshire Rail Trail south of Sip Pond in Fitzwilliam. A spur trail on the property connects the Cheshire Rail Trail to a small peninsula on the edge of Sip Pond. In order to improve access to the property, the Conservancy recently made improvements to a parking area off of Old Turnpike Road. While planning for that project, coordination with the Monadnock Sno-Moles (the local snowmobile club) shifted thinking on parking lot design and the scope of the project. Supported in part by a NH Bureau of Trails Recreation Trails Program (RTP) Grant, the project focused on creating a horseshoe-type parking lot that would accommodate both snowmobile and equestrian trailers. The project also included creation of an access trail from the parking area to the rail trail, replacing one bridge on the Cheshire Rail Trail and re-decking another, making improvements to the spur trail, clearing some vegetation on the trail corridor, installing three culverts to fix drainage issues, and making trail surface improvements.

The Mondadnock Conservancy was awarded another round of RTP funding to support additional improvements on the Cheshire Rail Trail, which are slated for implementation in 2021. Planned improvements include replacement of a bridge over Scott Brook (just east of Templeton Turnpike), installation of several culverts to fix drainage issues, and trail surface enhancements, which will involve bringing crushed gravel to re-crown the trail and firm up sandy locations. The segment targeted for surface improvements is approximately two miles in length. In certain sections only a skim coat of a few inches of gravel will be needed, while in other 6-12 inches may be necessary.

Somewhat complicating trail surface improvements, there is a historic, dry-masonry railroad bridge to the east of the bridge slated for replacement. Also spanning Scott Brook, the historic bridge is not designed to support the heavy hauling equipment that may be required to bring in gravel. Consequently, either smaller vehicles will need to be used, or equipment will need to access the trail from the southeast via the lot on Old Turnpike Road.

The spur trail on Chamberlain Conservancy Area land is also of historical interest. The peninsula where the northern end of the trail terminates is the former site of an ice cutter's cabin or lodge. A railroad spur at one point served as an access point to load ice harvested from the pond.

Regarding trail management, ongoing maintenance of the Cheshire Rail Trail in the area is led by the Monadnock Sno-Moles. The Monadnock Conservancy does work with a limited set of volunteer trail stewards to maintain trails on its properties, but it doesn't have a standing network of trail volunteers that it can mobilize at any given time. Currently, volunteer activities are limited to those that don't involve power tools. During recent years, the Conservancy has been working towards establishing a risk management policy that may allow volunteers to take on expanded responsibilities in the future.

Town of Winchendon, MA and Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

The Town of Winchendon, MA is located just south of Fitzwilliam, across the Massachusetts-New Hampshire state line. MRPC is the regional planning agency, similar to SWRPC, whose service area includes the Town of Winchendon. Discussion with Winchendon planning department staff and MRPC transportation staff focused on possible strategies for connecting the Cheshire Rail Trail with the trail network in Winchendon.

The Cheshire Rail Trail ends where it intersects NH 12 in Fitzwilliam, but the abandoned railroad corridor continues southeast into Winchendon, passing briefly first through Rindge. Once the railroad corridor crosses the MA-NH state line, it transitions from public to private ownership, with the owning entity listed as Pan Am Southern LLC. Town of Winchendon planning staff noted that the Town hasn't had any recent

communications with that entity but would be willing to reach out to inquire about any plans that might exist for the corridor and whether there's potential for converting it to trail use.

Generally, Town of Winchendon staff expressed enthusiasm for exploring potential connections between the Cheshire Rail Trail and the North Central Pathway in Winchendon, whose northern terminus is located on the southeastern edge of downtown Winchendon and on the shore of Whitney pond. The Ware River Trail intersects with the North Central pathway just after it passes over Whitney pond. The North Central Pathway is a paved facility while the Ware River Trail remains in largely an unimproved state. If the Cheshire Rail Trail were to connect with both of these trails, users would be able to continue on for miles, either towards Gardner, MA via the North Central Pathway or in the direction of Templeton, MA and points southward via the Ware River Trail.

MRPC staff noted how the state funding environment in Massachusetts may be somewhat different than in New Hampshire. For example, in awarding state funding, MassDOT often requires that trail improvements include paved facilities, which can significantly raise the costs of trail projects.

Recommendations

Consider the above information in the development of goals and objectives and any future outreach or project development activities.

1) Previous trail planning

- a) Please describe any municipal plans or policies that directly or indirectly address maintenance, development, or use of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail.
- b) Has your municipality coordinated with or consulted other groups, organizations, agencies, consultants, etc. on trail-related planning or development? Examples could include a local school, trail-focused group like a snowmobile club, State or federal agency, outside municipality or body, etc. If so, please describe.
- c) Has your municipality identified opportunities for integrating use or development of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail with community or economic development goals (e.g. public health, housing, recreation, tourism?). If so, please describe.

2) Previous improvements

- a) Please describe any capital improvements your municipality has made on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail. If possible, include information about project dates, costs, funding sources, and outcomes.
- b) Would you be willing to share with SWRPC and/or other municipalities documents from past capital projects (e.g. budgets, site plans)?
- c) What funding mechanisms (e.g. government programs, private foundations, tax revenue) has the municipality pursued to support trail development or maintenance? Please describe.

3) Trail programming

- a) Does your municipality use the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail for public programming or activities? If so, please describe, including lead department, program frequency, and participation rates.

4) Trail promotion

- a) How do you promote or publicize the trail?

5) Land use

- a) What nearby land uses are **currently** or **could be** enhanced by the presence of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? Please describe specific locations/examples for the following categories:
 - i) Parks
 - ii) Rivers/ponds/lakes
 - iii) Natural/conservation land
 - iv) Housing
 - v) Community facilities (e.g. library, schools)
 - vi) Businesses/commercial development
 - vii) Other
- b) What nearby land uses that *conflict with* the presence of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? Please describe specific locations as well as any potential mitigation measures that your community has considered.
- c) What development or redevelopment opportunities exist along or near the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail?

6) Encroachment

- a) Are you aware of any encroachment onto the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail right of way? If so, please describe, including locations, severity, and any countermeasures taken (e.g. signs, education).
- b) To what degree has trespassing from the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail onto adjacent private property been an issue? Please describe problematic locations and any countermeasures taken.

7) Trail-town Connections

- a) How easy or difficult is it for visitors to find and access downtown, town centers or village areas from the trail? Please address the following:
 - i) Can people use sidewalks to travel from the trail to downtown/town centers/village areas?
 - ii) Can people biking use other trails, on-road bike lanes, or sharrow-marked roadway to travel from the trail to downtown/town centers/village areas?
 - iii) Is there wayfinding signage that directs trail users towards downtown/town centers/village areas?
- b) How easy or difficult is it for trail users to access the trail from:
 - i) Residential areas
 - ii) Schools
 - iii) Key businesses outside of downtown or central business districts
 - iv) Parks and natural areas
 - v) Waterfront recreational areas
 - vi) Lodging facilities, e.g. bed and breakfasts and hotels
- c) Where do snowmobiles connect to the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail from other trails? How about destinations such as gas stations, convenience stores or restaurants?
- d) Does the municipality have plans to improve connections between the trail and key town destinations? Please explain:

8) Trailheads and parking

- a) What locations are used as “trailheads?” Please describe each location.
- b) Is there a need for additional parking or other improvements at trailheads? What are specific improvements that have been proposed?
- c) Do trailhead parking areas accommodate larger vehicle or vehicle/trailer combinations such as those carrying horses or snowmobiles?

9) Maintenance

- a) Does your municipality perform any of the following maintenance activities on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? For each task, please indicate “yes” or “no” as well as frequency. To the extent you are aware of unit costs (time and money), please share.
 - i) Mowing
 - ii) Grading
 - iii) Filling washed out or wet areas

- iv) Repaving
 - v) Snow removal
 - vi) Clearing fallen boughs or downed trees
 - vii) Replacing/fixing signage
 - viii) Repainting crosswalks
 - ix) Repairing Bridges
 - x) Other
- b) Does your municipality coordinate with volunteer groups who perform maintenance on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? If so, please describe formal or informal processes for coordinating on-trail maintenance.
- c) Is there anything else that you would like to add about trail maintenance?

10) Enforcement

- a) Describe concerns and experiences related to safety and law enforcement (including violations of trail rules).

11) Future trail development

- a) Is your municipality planning on making future improvements to the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? If so please describe planned activities, funding source(s), and timeframe.

12) What did we miss?

- a) Feel free to share anything else you would like to highlight about the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail

- **Trainings/support**
 - Does your agency/office provide groups with training related to trail maintenance, improvement, funding? What is the timing, audience, and general content?
- **Previous trail planning**
 - Not including the State Trails Plan, please describe any plans or policies that directly or indirectly address maintenance, development, or use of the Ashuelot Rail Trail.
 - How do you coordinate with or consult with other groups, organizations, agencies, consultants, etc. on trail-related planning or development? Examples could include a local school, trail-focused group like a snowmobile club, State or federal agency, municipal entity, etc.
- **Previous improvements**
 - Please describe any capital improvements your agency has made on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail. If possible, include information about project dates, costs, funding sources, and outcomes.
 - Would you be willing to share with SWRPC documents from past capital projects (e.g. budgets, site plans)?
 - What funding mechanisms, if any, has your agency pursued to support Southern Cheshire Rail Trail development or maintenance? Please describe. Examples might include federal sources, state-appropriated monies, agreements with municipal entities, or public-private partnerships. Feel free to discuss any notable funding mechanisms employed on other State-owned rail trails.
- **Trail programming**
 - Does your agency use the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail for public programming or activities? If so, please describe, including lead department, program frequency, and participation rates.
- **Trail promotion**
 - How does your agency promote or publicize the trail?
- **Land use**
 - Are you aware of nearby land uses are **currently** or **could be** enhanced by the presence of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? Please describe specific locations/examples for the following categories:
 - Parks
 - Rivers/ponds/lakes
 - Natural/conservation land
 - Housing
 - Community facilities (e.g. library, schools)
 - Businesses/commercial development
 - Other
 - Are you aware of land uses that *conflict with* the presence of the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? Please describe specific locations as well as any potential mitigation measures that you have considered.
 - Are you aware of other particular development or redevelopment opportunities that exist along or near the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail?

- **Encroachment**
 - Are you aware of any encroachment onto the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail right of way? If so, please describe, including locations, severity, and any countermeasures taken (e.g. signs, education).
 - To what degree has trespassing from the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail onto adjacent private property been an issue? Please describe problematic locations and any countermeasures taken.
- **Trail-town Connections**
 - Are you aware of particular areas where better access to the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail has been requested or is needed? If so, please describe.
 - Where do snowmobiles connect to the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail from other trails? How about destinations such as gas stations, convenience stores or restaurants?
 - Have you considered ways to improve connections between the Trail and any key destinations? Please explain:
- **Trailheads and parking**
 - What locations along the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail are used as “trailheads?” Please describe each location.
 - Is there a need for additional parking or other improvements at trailheads? What are specific improvements that have been proposed, if any?
 - Do trailhead parking areas accommodate larger vehicle or vehicle/trailer combinations such as those carrying horses or snowmobiles?
- **Maintenance**
 - Does your agency directly perform any of the following maintenance activities on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? For each task, please indicate “yes” or “no” as well as frequency. To the extent you are aware of unit costs (time and money), please share.
 - Mowing
 - Grading
 - Filling washed out or wet areas
 - Repaving
 - Snow removal
 - Clearing fallen boughs or downed trees
 - Replacing/fixing signage
 - Repainting crosswalks
 - Repairing Bridges
 - Other
 - Does your municipality coordinate with volunteer groups who perform maintenance on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? If so, please describe formal or informal processes for coordinating on-trail maintenance.
 - Is there anything else that you would like to add about trail maintenance?
- **Enforcement**

- Describe concerns and experiences related to safety and law enforcement on the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail (including violations of trail rules).
- **Future trail development**
 - What future improvements are planned for the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail? If so please describe planned activities, funding source(s), and timeframe.
- **What did we miss?**
 - Feel free to share anything else you would like to highlight about the Southern Cheshire Rail Trail.

- **Respondent Information**
 - What is your name? If more than one person is contributing to this survey response, please indicate the name of each respondent.
 - For which group/organization are you responding?
 - What is/are your position(s) within the group/organization (e.g. volunteer, member, president)?
- **Group Information**
 - In what year was your organization founded?
 - How frequently does your group/organization meet? (Please include both off-trail and on-trail gatherings.)
 - How many individuals are members of your group/organization?
- **Trail User Survey**
 - To your knowledge, how many members of your group/organization have taken the Plan for [Cheshire Rail Trail online Trail User Survey](#)?
 - If you haven't done so already, would you be willing to promote the online survey to your group/organization's membership?
- **Trail Use**
 - What do members of your group do on the Cheshire Rail Trail? Please select all that apply.
 - Walk
 - Hike
 - Jog/Run
 - Bike
 - Cross-country ski
 - Snowshoe
 - Snowmobile
 - Dogsled
 - Other (please describe)
 - Which sections of the trail does your group use the most? If possible, use specific landmarks or cross streets to describe trail sections. If needed, please reference the online map [here](#).
 - Which trail access points do members of your group/organization generally use when visiting the trail? Please describe access points referencing landmarks and/or cross streets. If needed, please reference the online map [here](#).
- **Trail Conditions/Facilities**
 - There are many ways to improve the trail. Please rank the following trail improvement, with number one represent your top priority. If you *oppose* a listed improvement, select "Opposed" from the drop-down menu.
 - Wider path
 - Benches

- Lighting
- Directional signs and maps
- Trail etiquette signs
- New or improved trailheads/parking areas
- Better road crossings
- Access to shops, etc.
- Improving trail surface condition with packed gravel
- Trail “branding” and promotion
- Trail patrols/enforcement
- Restrooms
- Drinking fountains
- Signs about places history, nature, etc.
- Pet waste stations
- If you would like to describe in more detail your priorities listed above, please do so here. Also feel free to describe trail priorities *not* listed above. If possible, please identify specific locations for potential improvement by referencing landmarks and cross streets. An online map of the trail is available [here](#).
- **Trail Stewardship**
 - Does your group/organization volunteer time to help with any of the following management tasks on the Cheshire Rail Trail? If so, please describe location, frequency, and equipment used.
 - Mowing
 - Cutting back trailside brush
 - Removing downed trees
 - Maintaining trail surface (grading, maintaining drainage features)
 - Repairing bridges
 - Picking up trash
 - Snow grooming
 - Other (please specify)
 - If given the opportunity, would members of your group/organization volunteer time help with any of the following activities on the Cheshire Rail trail? (Choices: Yes, No, Maybe, Already Doing)
 - Mowing
 - Cutting back trailside brush
 - Removing downed trees
 - Maintaining trail surface (grading, maintaining drainage features)
 - Repairing bridges
 - Picking up trash

- Grooming
- Other (please specify)
- Would members of your group/organization consider paying an annual fee to help maintain the trail? (If members of your group already pay a fee, e.g. through snowmobile registrations, please describe whether group members would be willing to contribute additional dollars, if it meant funding additional trail improvements.)
- **Coordination**
 - Has your group/organization coordinated with other groups/organizations on trail maintenance or development? Hypothetical examples include a snowmobile club working with a town parks and recreation department to trim brush or an equestrian club working with a cycling club to raise money for trail improvements. Please describe any coordinated efforts in which your group/organization has participated.
 - Would your group/organization be interested in establishing a trail user group focused on improving the trail for all permitted users?
 - Would members of your group/organization be interested in organizing fundraisers with other trail user groups to support improving the trail?
- **Balancing the Needs of Multiple Groups**
 - Please describe how use of the Cheshire Rail Trail by members of your group/organization are compatible or incompatible with the following groups (Choice: Compatible, Incompatible - Why?):
 - Walkers/hikers/joggers
 - Bicyclists
 - Cross-country skiers
 - Snowshoers
 - Snowmobilers
 - Equestrians
 - Mushers (dogsledders)
 - OHRV users: ATV riders and trail bike riders
 - Other (please specify)
 - What on-trail changes might improve compatibility between your group/organization and other trail users?
- **Connectivity**
 - Does your group use the Cheshire Rail Trail to connect to other trails? If so, please provide the name and location of any trails that you access from the Cheshire Rail Trail.
- **Education**
 - Would members of your organization be interested in participating in any of the following trainings, should they be offered?
 - How to coordinate with state agencies and local government on volunteer-led trail maintenance and development

Attachment – Volunteer and Non-Profit Questions

- Developing a trail maintenance plan
 - Trail maintenance techniques
 - Recruiting volunteers for rail trail maintenance
 - Leading on-trail volunteer events
 - Fundraising for rail trail projects
- **Anything else?**
 - If you have additional thoughts or opinions related to the Cheshire Rail Trail, please feel free to share them here.
 - **Contact Information**
 - What is your email address? (If available, please provide an organizational e-mail address?)
 - If applicable, what is the web address of your organization's website?