



New Hampshire

State Trails Plan

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4. GUIDELINES FOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

New Hampshire has a considerable network of multi-use trails, community paths, and corridors with the potential for use as recreational and transportation systems throughout the state. The previous chapters describe the status of many of these corridors, with a particular focus on state-owned abandoned rail corridors. The condition and use of these corridors vary widely in terms of level of improvement, surface material, drainage and soil conditions, maintenance, and types of users, including what types of uses are permitted, feasible, and actually present in the corridor.

The data and findings from the previous chapters have been reviewed by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT), Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), and the Advisory Committee. It was also presented to the general public at a series of five public meetings conducted throughout the state, and was available through the study website.

This chapter includes a set of guidelines for future trail development, maintenance, and management. The guidelines are based on the current status of the trails and potential trail corridors, as well as input from NHDOT, DRED, the study Advisory Committee, and the general public, through comments made at public meetings and written comment forms. The following are the key issues that were reviewed in establishing the trail development guidelines:

- Facility use and user type
- Facility design
- Corridor ownership, management and maintenance
- Future needs

The following is a brief discussion of the public participation process and a summary of the comments received. This is followed by a discussion of each of the facility development topics, the study's findings and recommended guidelines for facility development, and related considerations.

Public Participation and Comments

The information on the state-owned abandoned railroad corridors and other off-street trails was assembled and presented to the general public at five meetings, held at various locations throughout the state:

- Keene – May 3, 2004 (attendance = 100+)
- Bethlehem – May 5, 2004 (attendance = 31)
- Lebanon – May 6, 2004 (attendance = 17)
- Portsmouth – May 11, 2004 (attendance = 27)
- Concord – May 13, 2004 (attendance = 47)

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At these meetings, members of the public were encouraged to provide information regarding condition and usage of the trails and potential trail corridors with which they are familiar. In addition, members of the public were invited to make comments at these meetings, and to submit written comments either in person at the meetings, by mail, or by e-mail.

A total of 257 written comment forms or letters were received. The written comments are fairly representative of the issues that were raised and the comments that were made at the public meetings. A wide variety of user groups were represented at the meetings, and among the written responses. The following are some of the key findings from reviewing the public comments.

- Most respondents expressed an opinion on the general type of vehicle that should be allowed on multi-use trails
 - Non-Motorized Vehicles, Snowmobiles, and ATVs (49 respondents). These respondents support leaving the facilities open to a broad range of users, including motorized users. Many of these respondents were ATV owners who feel that they should also be able to use a public resource such as a multi-use facility.
 - Non-Motorized Users and Snowmobiles, NO ATVs (38 respondents). These respondents supported allowing snowmobiles on multi-use facilities during the winter months, but reserving the facilities for non-motorized users during non-winter months. Many of these respondents stated that ATVs tear up the trail surfaces, while snowmobiles do not. In addition, due to the seasonal use patterns, snowmobiles do not interfere with most non-motorized users. Some snowmobile riders who responded opposed ATV use because the snowmobile clubs do trail maintenance, and ATV use makes maintenance more difficult.
 - Non-Motorized Users ONLY (168). These respondents oppose any motorized use of the facilities at any time. The principal reasons cited for opposing motorized use of the trails are that motorized vehicles make too much noise; generate pollution; cause physical damage to the trails (creating ruts, “tearing up” the trail surface); and create conflicts and safety problems due to high vehicle speeds. Many of these respondents supported creating separate trails for motorized users (perhaps adjacent to highways and major roads), to be maintained by the motorized users.
- All respondents expressed support for developing and improving trails, as would be expected from people who take the time to attend meetings of the State Trails Plan and submit comments on the plan. Most respondents (163) favor improving corridors throughout the state. Other respondents cited specific trails where they favor improvements. The following trails were identified specifically by the following number of respondents:
 - Cheshire and Ashuelot (27) – commonly cited together; high number of respondents reflects high attendance at Keene meeting
 - Seacoast Area Trails (14)
 - Northern Rail Trail (11)
 - President Rail Trail (10)
 - Manchester to Seacoast (6)
 - Pondicherry Rail Trail (5)
 - Lebanon to Concord (4)
 - Concord Area Trails (3)
 - Keene Area Trails (3)
 - Conway Branch (2)
 - Profile Railroad (2)
 - Gorham to Whitefield (2)