

Rail trail on the right path

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Topsfield -

For several years, communities across the region have been praised by state officials for the reuse and renovations of old structures. By adapting old mill buildings, for example, communities are saving resources as well as preserving important parts of their history. While an abandoned railroad bed isn't exactly an important part of a community's history, the principle remains true. Reclaiming previously ignored land and transforming it into a recreational resource that generations can enjoy is a worthwhile endeavor.

The Topsfield's Rail-to-Trail Committee, formed in 2005, is leading the way to build a 4.5 mile rail trail from the Wenham town line to the Boxford town line near Pye Brook Park. The project would be developed in chunks, the first being a half-mile stretch connecting Main and Washington streets. The ultimate goal is to create a bike path that stretches from Boston to New Hampshire and even farther north.

With a project as encompassing as the rail trail, there are many valid issues that need to be addressed before the revitalized trail becomes reality: who will maintain it, what about the privacy of those whose back yards are closest to it and so on. And to have a group of concerned residents who call themselves the Coalition for Children's Safety and Serious Concerns Regarding the Proposed Topsfield Rail Trail Project serving as watchdog is a good thing.

While we support the project, there are concerns that need to be taken seriously. To that effect, we hope the Rail-to-Trail Committee opens a dialog with the coalition and genuinely listens to what they have to say. We also hope that at least one coalition member joins the Rail-to-Trail Committee. Just by working together, both groups will develop a greater understanding for what the project means to Topsfield, and it should make the final product something even more special for years to come.