

Notes on Possible "Rail Trail" Community Path

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History

Essex Railroad ran from Salem to downtown North Andover starting in 1848, operated by Eastern Railroad.

It was absorbed into B&M in 1884.

Current ownership of the former rail bed varies significantly throughout town.

The line between Danvers and Stevens Pond was abandoned in 1927 and the abandoned portion of the tracks was sold to Eastern Mass Electric Company, now National Grid.

In 1945, the electric company sold a 1.5 mile stretch to a developer, running from just before Granville Ln, all the way to the Middleton town line.

Other smaller portions were also sold to developers.

The stretch between the machine shop area and Steven Mill ran trains until the 1950s and the machine shop branch was finally abandoned in the 1980s.

The rail bed averages 82.5 feet wide, (5 rods) and National Grid uses the right of way run high voltage lines from downtown to just before Granville Lane.

The Trail

I have broken it down into 6 "phases", running from High St to Blue Ridge Rd. This comprises about 3.4 miles of community path, roughly half the length of North Andover.

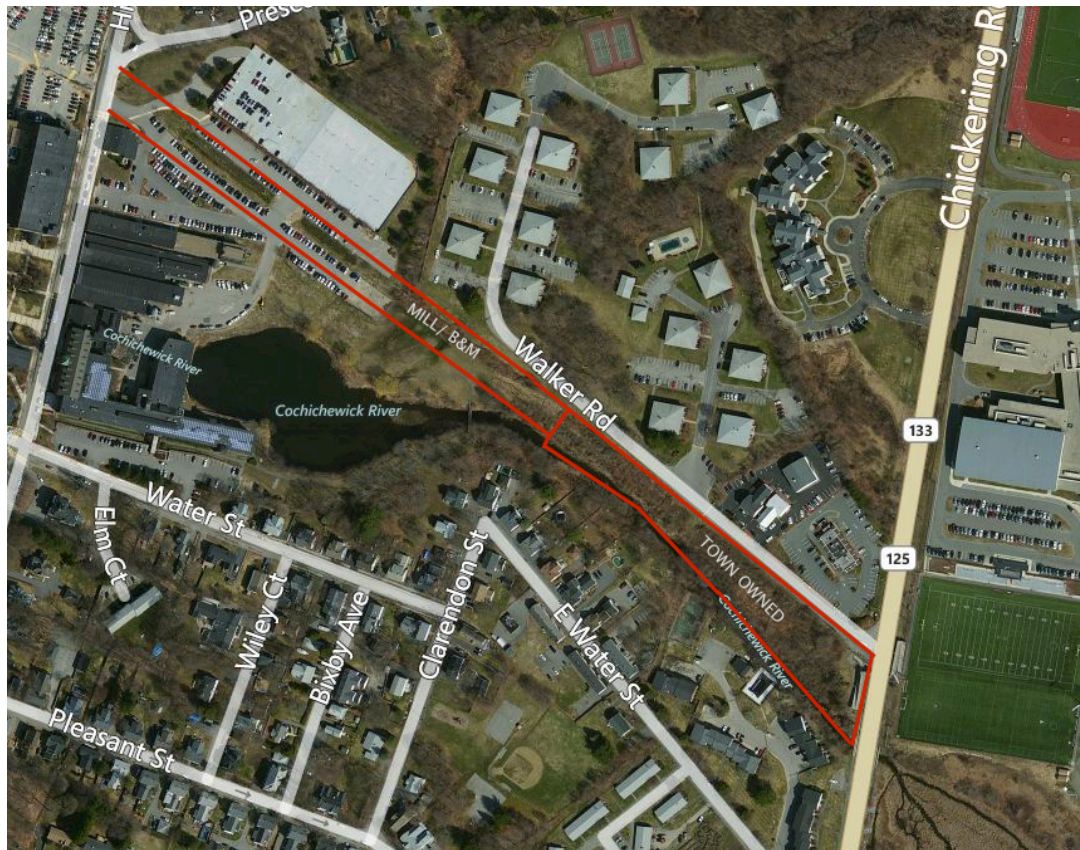
Nothing from Blue Ridge Rd to the Middleton line is addressed here, but as mentioned in the History section above, it is primarily privately owned residential property.

It is important to note that implementing even one of these phases would provide significant value to the town.

It's also important to note that individual phases or portions of phases could be tied together with sidewalks or other creative "detours".

National Grid holds an easement to run power lines throughout the entire extent of the former rail line regardless of ownership.

PHASE 1



High St to Rt 125

The path begins at the east mill parking lot. The mill company still owns this land, but deeded the use of the railroad tracks to Eastern Railroad in 1883.

B&M or its successors still holds this easement.

In 1985, B&M granted an easement to North Andover Mills to use the tracks as a parking lot area.

More research is necessary to determine the details. North Andover Mills would be the source of more info.

The rest of this section, the land in between Walker Road and the brook (where the rail line was) appears to be town-owned land. It was taken for non-payment of taxes in 1997. When the Brookside Condos were built along East Water St, the developer determined the property line was the Cochichewick Brook, so nobody ended up claiming the northern side of the brook.

Walker Rd is a private way. The brook runs in between the proposed path and the Brookside condos.

There is a preexisting town-owned overpass to cross Route 125.

PHASE 2

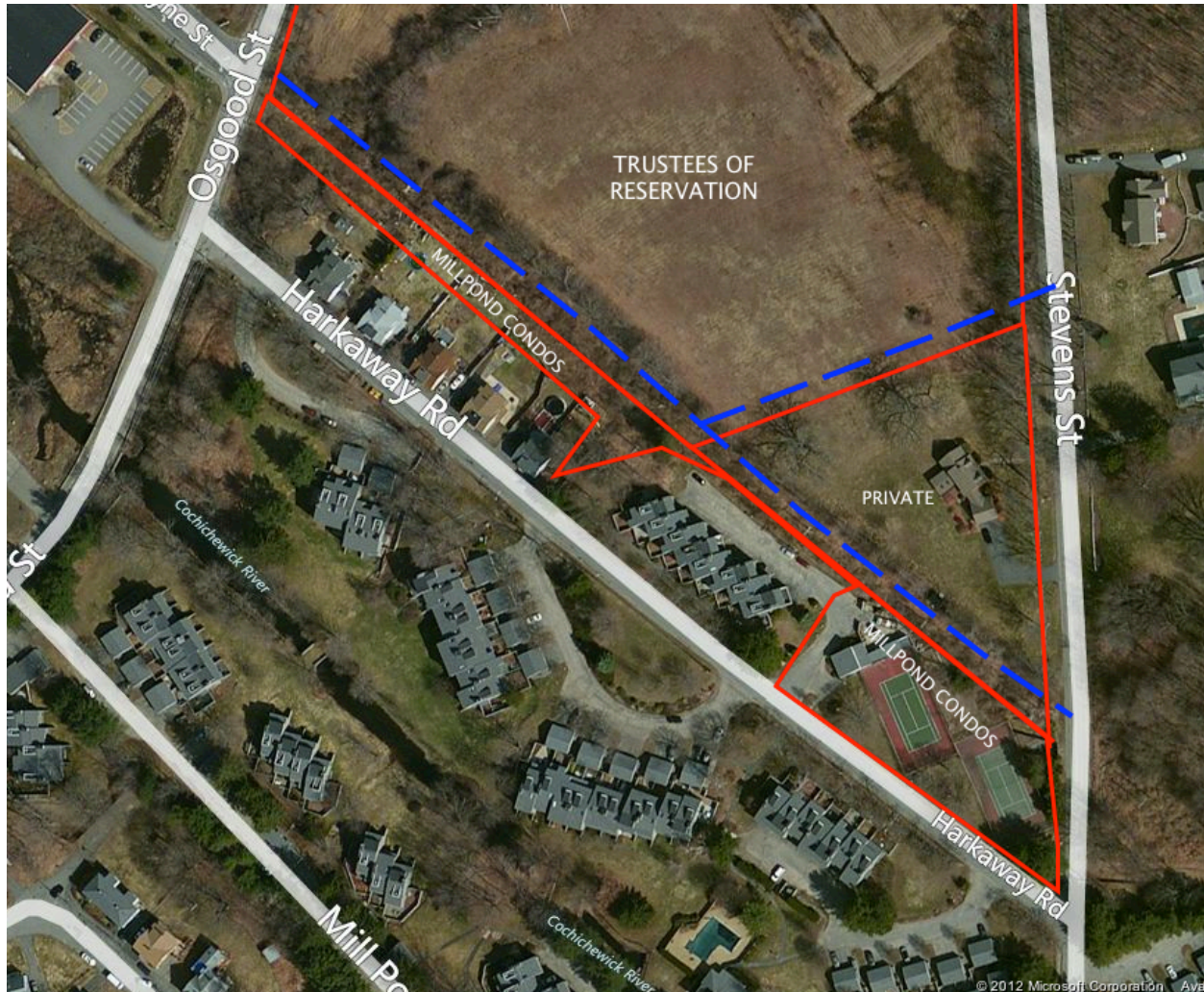


Route 125 to Osgood St

This runs exclusively through town land acquired for the high school. A portion of the original rail path is now submerged wetland.

I have marked one possible route in blue. The blue route is walkable at this time, skirting the school's ball fields and employing the school's main entrance sidewalk.

PHASE 3



Osgood St to Steven St

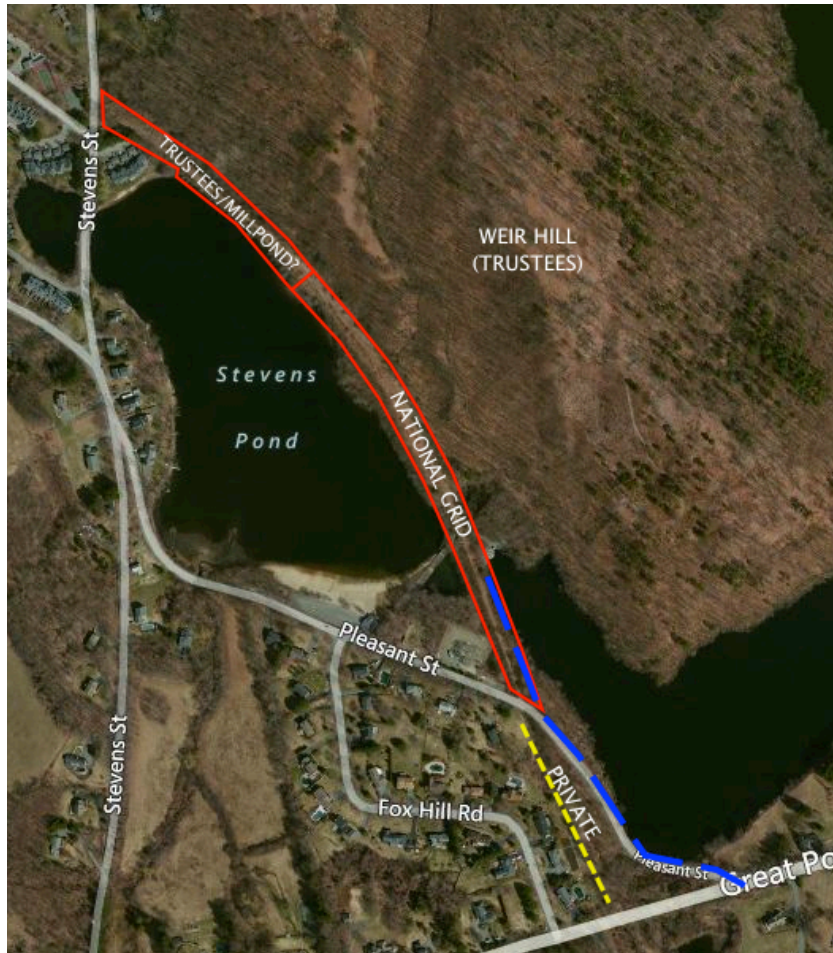
This is the former Stevens Mill property. The Stevens's owned both sides of the tracks, and the deeds include language that explains that they also owned the land under the tracks. When the property was sold and sub-divided in the 70s, the land was divided along the CENTER LINE of the old rail bed.

The northern half is on Trustees of Reservations land plus one private home in the triangle-shaped lot. The southern portion is owned by the Millpond Condo Association, with a few condo buildings and tennis courts overlapping the National Grid easement.

A potential path could use the edge of the meadow owned by Trustees of Reservations, and could either skirt the private residence or pass through it to reach Stevens Street. This is shown in blue.

Harkaway Rd could serve as a detour for this phase.

PHASE 4



Stevens St to Great Pond Rd

Perhaps the best-known portion of the rail bed, elevated along Stevens Pond at the foot of Weir Hill. This section was owned by the Stevens's and included the same language in the deed about owning the land under the tracks.

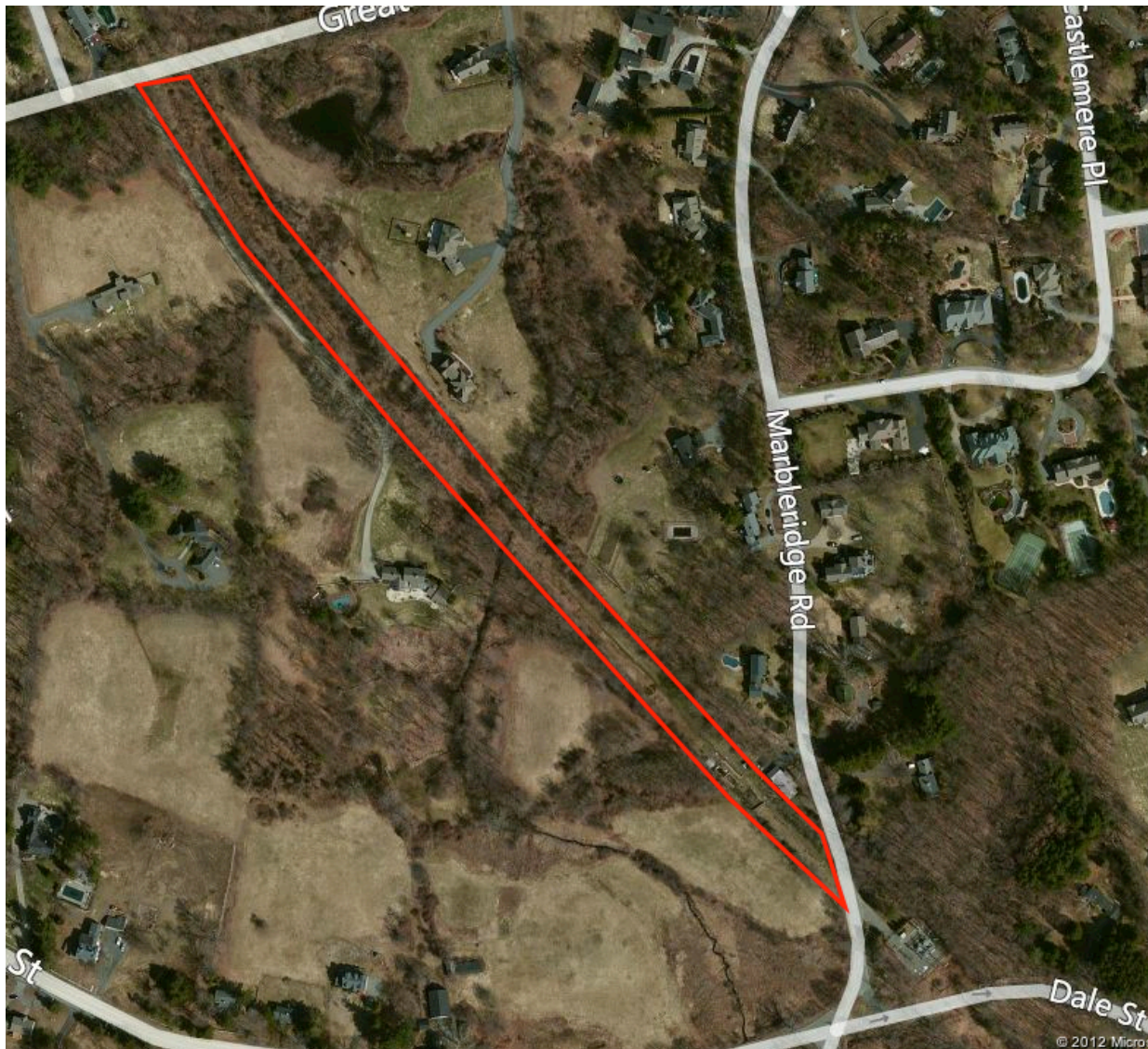
The first 900 feet was still in service until the 1950. Trains would pull along the pond and then reverse into the Stevens Mill loading area. It appears to be owned by Trustees of Reservations to the north and Millpond Condo Association to the south. More research is needed.

Part of this abuts the townhouses along the lake.

The remainder of the track bed is owned by National Grid, including an electrical substation, and it comes to Pleasant St.

The portion from Pleasant St to Great Pond Rd appears to be privately owned and goes through yards. The deeds and plans here are hard to follow, as there was a "land court" decision awarding ownership of these parcels. More research is needed, but regardless of ownership, I don't see a path going through here. The community path could divert to Pleasant Street.

PHASE 5



Great Pond Road to Marbleridge Rd

This portion is completed owned by National Grid.

However it presents two potential problems:

There are some properties on Great Pond Rd with really long driveways and yards running alongside the rail bed. Presumably, the setback affords them quite a bit of privacy.

Secondly, there's a house on Marbleridge Rd that is built literally inches from the rail bed right of way. It's actually the old Marbleridge Train Station. As seen in the aerial photo, the home owner also landscapes and plants in the National Grid parcel.

Possible detours include the privately-owned open field to the south of the former station house.

PHASE 6



Marbleridge Rd to Blue Ridge Rd

The next 1.2 miles is all owned by National Grid. It crosses Appleton St (which turns into Dale St) at a former railroad underpass, and then runs elevated through a wet area. It's mostly clear and passable on a seasonal basis.

About 50 properties back up to the rail bed, from Salem St and Appleton St, and the developments Bannan Dr, State Coach Rd and Keyes Way. Most are buffered by trees or a significantly swampy wetland areas. The wooded area in the bottom right corner of the map is the future site of a housing development extending Appleton Street.

Some portions of the path are well traveled and used for horseback riding via a small horse farm on Appleton St.

The section terminates at an old railroad bridge abutment. with a small path leading down to Blue Ridge Rd, near the intersection of Blue Ridge Rd and Salem St.