

The PRISM

the newsletter of the Blackstone Canal Conservancy
<http://www.blackstonecc.org>

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Blackstone Clean-Up

In Blackstone, Canal Street crosses the river at Monument Square and then proceeds south along the berm side of a little noticed watered section of the canal to St. Paul St. At St. Paul St., Canal Street jogs left and then right across an 1851 two arch bridge on St. Paul St. and then continues south along the towpath of the canal to enter Rhode Island just after passing under the "Norfolk County Railroad Bridge". In Rhode Island, the road continues as Canal St. through a small corner of North Smithfield with watered canal and then enters Woonsocket changing name to River St.

This section of canal is overgrown and littered. On Saturday, May 9th, the Blackstone Historical Commission, the town of Blackstone, and the Blackstone Canal Conservancy sponsored a clean-up and brush removal from 8 AM to Noon. Afterwards, there was a barbeque for all workers. The hope is that this will begin to improve the appearance of the area in preparation for the coming of the bikeway and other events.

SNETT Progress

With the coming of spring, there are signs of construction work along the SNETT. In Blackstone, a viewing on March 4th showed newly installed scaffolding on both abutments of the future Main Street bridge. This is the first time that work was been observed at the south abutment. Also, Old Mendon Road has now been fenced off at the SNETT crossing improving the work access to the Church St. Tunnel site.

In Bellingham, all of the water pipe that was stacked at Center St. has now been welded together and buried in the SNETT right of way to the east.

In April, further visits were made. In Blackstone at Main St., phone lines were relocated under the planned bridge on the south abutment and new concrete has been poured at both abutments. On April 10th, at Church St., a large crane was in use, apparently to place concrete.

Also, in Bellingham, utility line work was in progress along the east side of Route 126 at the bridge replacement project. Also all of the water pipe has been buried and small equipment was present at Center St. to do the trail work.

On May 1st, a drive by inspection showed the Triad Bridge in Millville enclosed in tarps for sandblasting. Work was also proceeding at the Church St. Tunnel and Main St. Bridge in Blackstone. At Route 126 in Bellingham, the utility relocation work was well advanced. At Center St., all construction equipment had disappeared and the trail was

somewhat smooth. Installation of the final surface is planned for July and August. A bicycle rider reported the surface was good.

A further inspection on May 3rd showed fill completely across the tunnel in Blackstone at its center and wing walls being cast at each end. At Lake Street in Bellingham, there was no sign of trail work or work on the bollards that are to be installed. But, with all the work done and no equipment in the way, you can see from the top of the Lake Street west up-ramp to traffic on Center St. Barriers have been installed at both ends to keep out four wheeled vehicles.

In June, the future Main Street Bridge was being assembled and the east face of the Church St. Tunnel was complete. Driving by on June 17th showed that the Main Street Bridge had been moved into place across the street. June 20th showed that the triad bridge appeared to have sandblasting and painting completed and the Main St. Bridge was ready for concrete placement for the deck. The deck was poured on June 30th.



Main St. Bridge, Blackstone being assembled on 6/7/15

Membership

Membership in the Conservancy is open to all that are interested in the Blackstone Canal, its history and its preservation. Annual dues are:

Student: \$7	Adults: \$10
Family: \$15	Organizations: \$25

Applications and dues (payable to the Blackstone Canal Conservancy) should be sent to the Membership Secretary; Blackstone Canal Conservancy, 16 Ballou Road, Hopedale, MA 01747-1833



East face of Church St. Tunnel, Blackstone 6/7/15



East face of the Main St. bridge 6/20/15



Under side of the new Main St. Bridge, Blackstone ready for deck pour 6/20/15



Looking south over the new Main St. bridge, Blackstone 6/20/15



Eastward view of new Main St. Bridge, Blackstone. 6/20/15

Future Work Days

The next work days are along the canal in the Blackstone River and Canal State Park. Dates are at Saturdays, August 9th, September 19th, & October 17th. Meet at 9 AM at the Plummers Landing parking area, Church St. Northbridge on the appointed day. Dress appropriately for the weather and ground conditions. Expect to get muddy.

Please volunteer to help on any work day you can make time available. **You** can help make a noticeable difference! The more people present, the more that we can do to improve the canal and adjacent trails.



“Groundbreaking” for Worcester Visitors’ Center

On July 7th, a gathering was held at the planned site for the Worcester Visitors’ Center for the upper end of the Blackstone Valley to mark the beginning of construction for the new visitors’ center. A large crowd was on hand to mark the event. The center will be located just north of McKeon Road at Exit 12 of Route 146. Originally, the center was to be located slightly north in a former mill building, but that was destroyed by fire a few years ago. The new center is probably better located closer to the interchange. It will serve as a visitors center, meeting space, and the local offices of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. It is expected to open in 2017.



Location map of the Worcester Visitors’ Center



The crowd at the “Groundbreaking”



Architect's view of the planned visitors' center

Blackstone Greenway / Bikeway

The Blackstone Greenway / Bikeway is planned to run through the Blackstone Valley between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA. In Rhode Island, the bikeway is complete from Mill St. at Valley Falls in the southern edge of Cumberland to Rivers Edge Parking area at Davidson St. in Woonsocket a distance of about 11 miles. Design work is nearly complete from Davidson St. to the state line. There are also several side trails connecting to parking. With the longest connecting to the rest area on the eastbound side of I-295.

In Massachusetts, the only section open is about three miles long, from Main St. in Millbury to McKeon Road in Worcester. In addition, a four mile section that coincides with the SNETT, is under construction between St. Paul St. in Blackstone and Route 146A in Uxbridge. This section is scheduled to be open in 2016.

The bikeway is called a bikeway in Rhode Island and a Greenway in Massachusetts for bureaucratic reasons. All open sections are paved. All open sections are well used.



Valley Falls Park at the current southern end of the off road sections of the Blackstone Bikeway 7/10/15



Arches on the power canals in Valley Falls Park 7/10/15



The SNETT in Douglas on 7/4/15



The current south end of the Worcester – Millbury segment of the Blackstone Greenway bike path at Route 146, Exit 9, Millbury, MA



The current south end of the Blackstone Bikeway in Cumberland, RI, looking northward on 7/10/15

Wanted

- 1) The volunteer services of an experienced surveyor with the needed equipment to determine the close location of the sites of Milestones 26, 27, and 29 along the towpath from the known location of Milestone 28 despite the current watered gaps in the towpath. Also, determine the elevation of the top of the breast wall at Goat Hill Lock and where that elevation lies at Church Street Lock.
- 2) The help of someone with a winch equipped jeep or truck to pull trees out of the canal on work days to allow for their cutting up and disposal.

Canal Calendar

Members knowing of canal related events are requested to submit them to the editor so that they may be included.

August 9th: Blackstone Canal Conservancy work day, 9 AM, Plummers Landing west parking area, Church St. Northbridge, MA

September (all month): Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor events.

September 12th: Blackstone Canal Fest, 11 AM – 5 PM, Harding St. Worcester, MA

September 19th: Blackstone Canal Conservancy work day, 9 AM, Plummers Landing west parking area, Church St. Northbridge, MA

September 26th: Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge

October 17th: Blackstone Canal Conservancy work day, 9 AM, Plummers Landing west parking area, Church St. Northbridge, MA



July 4th view of the SNETT, west of West Street, Uxbridge, looking east through rock cut.

Further SNETT Progress

Inspection of the Southern New England Trunkline Trail on Saturday, July 18th showed much further progress as follows:

- 1) In Uxbridge / Millville, the ramp between the trail embankment and the Adams Street parking lot has been paved and the trail has been paved all the way to just short of Central Street in Millville.
- 2) In Millville, base material is being placed on the right of way between the Triad Bridge and Central Street for about half of the distance from the bridge towards Central Street. Much preparation work has also been done on the Central St. parking lot.
- 3) In Millville at the Triad Bridge, sandblasting of the bridge steel is complete and the steel work is being painted. No work has begun on the decking.
- 4) In Blackstone on Saturday, Main St. under the new bridge was closed with traffic detoured down canal street and over the new Church St. tunnel. Work was underway to remove the wooden forms for the concrete bridge deck from the underside of the bridge.
- 5) Also in Blackstone, pavement had been removed from the junction of Church St and School St in preparation for paving over the new tunnel.
- 6) In Bellingham, contractor trailers are in place off of Elm Street and trees have now been cut on both sides of the Route 126 Bridge as the start of work to replace the bridge with a tunnel.



The newly paved ramp from the Adams Street parking lot, Uxbridge up to the SNETT looking east on 7/18/15. Note the stabilized embankment on the left.

Val Stegemoen retires

Longtime Massachusetts State Park supervisor and interpreter Val Stegemoen retired at the end of June. We thank him for his many years of work and support.



View looking eastward on the now paved SNETT at the top of the ramp at Adams Street, Uxbridge on 7/18/15. The pavement is not yet open for public use, but now extends to Central St. in Millville, MA.



View looking eastward at the side trail to Millville Lock on 7/18/15 showing the newly installed base material



View looking westward on 7/18/15 at Central St., Millville showing the end of the newly paved trail. Note the lines of rails in the street pavement.



View eastward across the SNETT Bridge at the Triad Bridges on 7/18/15 showing the new paint work. On the left edge is the P&W Bridge (rusted steel). Between that bridge and the yellow steel of the SNETT Bridge is a concrete pier for the never completed Southern New England Railroad Bridge which would have crossed over the SNETT Bridge. Looking through the middle of the yellow SNETT Bridge, the Route 122 highway bridge is visible in the distance. Shortly, a wooden deck will be installed on top of the steel.



View on 7/18/15 looking eastward at Central St., Millville showing base work.



**The layers of scaffolding on the SNETT Triad Bridge on
7/18/15.**

GO!

In September, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc. will be hosting GO! A month long series of events throughout the valley. These events will be cosponsored by many groups. GO! For a walk...GO! For a hike...GO! For a paddle, or pedal, or tour. More details will be forthcoming soon.

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