

# The PRISM

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

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## SNETT Workday

On Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee held a workday in conjunction with Department of Conservation and Recreation employees on the Southern New England Trunkline Trail between the eastern end at Grove Street and Spring Street in Franklin. DCR also did some prework and some post work cutting trees and chipping up the cuttings. The result is a now very open trail in that location.



View looking westward along the SNETT just west of Grove St. in Franklin 12/26/15

## SNETT Contractor Work

In early December, a contractor working in conjunction with the Bay State Trail Riders Association cleared and graded the SNETT from West Street, Uxbridge to Monroe St. in Douglas. The results show below.



SNETT view westward at West St., Uxbridge 12/18/15



SNETT view eastward across West St., Uxbridge 12/18/15. In railroad days, there was a bridge over the road here.

## SNETT / Greenway Progress at Triad Bridges

Contractors working for DCR have continued work on the paved bikeway between Rte. 146A in Uxbridge and St. Paul St. in Blackstone. Additional landscaping has been done along the paved path. The most noticeable progress recently was the addition of steel to the top of the bridge over the river at the Triad Bridges. This added steel is necessary to deal with the difference in elevation between the river span and the span over the Providence & Worcester Railroad. The over the railroad span had been raised in elevation years ago to clear higher railcars. It is expected that work will be dormant over the winter. Remaining work on the bridge appears to be finish painting of the upper and new steel, installation of decking and railings, and completion of the immediate approaches.

Despite the unfinished situation, the public is investigating and using the new trail.





View eastward across the SNETT bridge at the Triad Bridges showing the new steel on 12/15/15.

## SNETT Eagle Scout Project

In recent years, the SNETT has benefited from several Eagle Scout projects. The latest project, installed in November, is half mile markers extending from 0.0 at Grove St., Franklin to 5.0, just east of Woonsocket Junction by Joshua Rich. This involves the unbroken section of the SNETT owned by the Commonwealth.



Mile marker 1.0 as viewed 1/6/16



Mile marker 2.0 just west of the ramp up from Lake St., Bellingham. The view along the straight, stone dust trail is all the way to Center St., about ¾ miles away.



Mile marker 3.0 just west of Fox Run Road, Bellingham.



Mile marker 5.0 looking west to Woonsocket Junction with the fence around the landfill just before Farm St. in the background.

## Blackstone Viaduct

Robert Lowell, the acting chief engineer for DCR, made an update report to the Blackstone Selectmen on January 12<sup>th</sup> at which he reported the following:

- 1) The survey of the Blackstone Viaduct by Gill Engineering has found the masonry to be in good condition. It is now the preferred route for the bikeway. Detailed planning and estimating is to follow.
- 2) Work on the 3-1/2 miles between the Blackstone Depot and Rte. 146A is nearing completion. Work will resume in the spring. A ribbon cutting is expected in June.



- 3) DCR is continuing discussions with Mass DOT about closing the Rte. 146A – 146 gap. All are optimistic about a good solution.
- 4) Little planning has occurred on Segment 2 of the Greenway north of the current project.
- 5) Little planning has occurred on the SNETT in Blackstone east of Main St.

### 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



Looking the other way on 1/17/16, the SNETT grade rises gradually to the east. On the left edge (north side) is a drainage ditch that carries all water on the grade here to the west.



The new tunnel under Rte. 126 in Bellingham viewed 1/17/16.

The highway engineer

rs call this a “culvert”. The old bridge above will be removed in mid-April. Note the pipe culvert on the right that carries the drainage through the new fill.

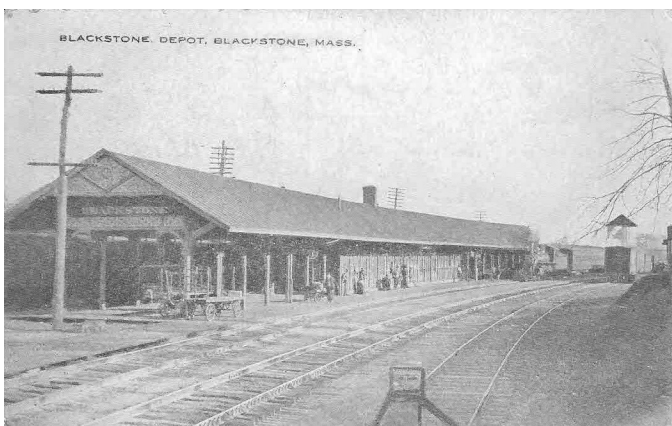
## Blackstone Depot

One of the spots along the SNETT / Blackstone Greenway that will become busy again with the completion of the current project is the site of the Blackstone Depot. This location is the southern end of the current project. The planned parking lot at this site is already paved, but gated off. Before 1969, this was the site of the depot that served two rail lines. They were the Providence and Worcester Railroad that ran (and still does) along the west side of the platforms and station and the New Haven's Midland Division that ran along the east side. There were also sidings and a connection between the two lines. A turntable was reportedly located along the P&W tracks, just south of St. Paul St. Both lines were controlled by the New Haven. At the south end of the station, a stairway led down to the St. Paul St. sidewalk between the two sets of railroad bridges. This stairway survives, but is boarded off. The depot site is just west of a watered section of the Blackstone Canal.

Two post cards views are below. Both are looking south along the P&W alignment from near the Blackstone River Bridge that is just north of the site.



This photo is taken between the two P&W tracks and shows boxcars on sidings along both rail lines.





## Planned Cleanup

The Town of North Smithfield, RI and the Blackstone Heritage Corridor are planning a cleanup of the town to include the watered canal section along Canal Street in North Smithfield on Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup>. Sign in is between 8:30 and 9 AM at the Polish American Citizens Club next to the Blackstone Viaduct on Mill Street in Blackstone. Work is from 9 AM to Noon with hot dogs following provided by the PACC.

Recently, on March 12<sup>th</sup>, a small group of volunteers pulled some heavy stuff out of this section of the canal. There is much more.



Bonnie Combs photo

On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 4 volunteers collected- FROM THE WATER of the Blackstone Canal in North Smithfield, RI - 4 plastic mini bikes, 1 large tool box, 1 large plastic toy, metal basket, 6 tires, 2 large Styrofoam boxes, 2 plastic totes, 1 bucket of oil cans and 25 bags of trash



A view of the SNETT drainage ditch about 1,200 feet east of Rte. 126 on 1/17/16 showing the ditch silted from runoff from the property to the left. The silt forces water flowing westward to spread out over the grade, creating what some regard a “wetland”. This is really a maintenance issue.

## 2016 SNETT Construction

With the mild winter and early spring, work is beginning again along the SNETT corridor. Work at the Route 126 tunnel project in Bellingham is discussed separately. It also appears that efforts are beginning at the Triad Bridge in Millville, although no big changes have yet occurred. A recent drive by on March 29<sup>th</sup> showed new granite curbing at the Depot parking lot in Blackstone and granite curbing being installed at the Central St. parking lot in Millville.

### SNETT Rte. 126 Tunnel Progress

Work on the Rte. 126 tunnel replacement was suspended for the winter. Driving over the current bridge, which remains, reveals little of what has occurred below. However, if you observe it from the railway, you find the tunnel is complete and ready for roadway work.

In late March, the contractor returned and began work on the north side of the roadway. An article on the front page of the April 1<sup>st</sup>, Milford Daily News reports that at 10 PM on Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, the state will close the road to allow the contractor to remove the old bridge and install the new roadway over the tunnel. Detours will then be in effect. It is planned that the roadway will reopen at 5 AM on Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. During the work, the elevation of the highway over the SNETT will be reduced to improve sight lines. While the article doesn't say so, it is expected that the highway will probably be repaved when it reopens. At that point, probably only sidewalk, landscaping and other finishing type work will remain.



New SNETT tunnel under Rte. 126, Bellingham on 12/15/15 looking eastward. The bridge will be removed in mid-April.

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