

The PRISM

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

No. 55

July, 2016

SNETT / Greenway Progress

The contractors working for DCR on the paved bikeway between Route 146A in south Uxbridge and St. Paul Street in Blackstone are continuing to make progress on the combined Southern New England Trunkline Trail / Blackstone River Greenway.

At Central St. in Millville, the rails and ties that used to be buried in the street, have been removed and the street repaved. Much curbing and landscaping has been installed along with new paving bringing the bikeway closer to Central St. Bike racks and some granite marking have also been installed.

At the Triad Bridge, concrete curbing has been installed on the west side, ready for guard rails. All the bridge steel has been painted and about 80% of the bridge deck support timbers are in place.

At Old Mendon Street, bike racks are also in place and concrete pads have been poured. It is expected that similar work has been done at the Blackstone Depot site.



View east across the Triad Bridge on 7/10/16 showing new decking being installed



View looking westward along bikeway at side trail to Millville Lock on 7/10/16. Note the stairs on the right and the hoop bike racks. Pavers will probably be installed within the curbing.



View looking east towards Triad Bridge on 7/10/16 from end of existing pavement



New marker for the Blackstone River Greenway on the west side of Central St., Millville on 7/10/16.

Blackstone Viaduct Work

In a surprise development, contractors have been working on the middle arch of the seven arch section of the Blackstone Viaduct. The black netting and all spalled concrete have been removed and much new concrete installed. Formwork shows that more concrete has been or will soon be placed. There are additional sections on the north face where bad concrete has been removed, but forms have not yet been installed.



The south face of the middle arch of the Blackstone Viaduct on 7/10/16



**Formwork and new concrete in the Blackstone Viaduct
SNETT Rte. 126 Tunnel Progress**

Dramatic progress has been made on the Route 126 replacement of the bridge over the SNETT with a tunnel (culvert in highway engineer speak). The new tunnel had been constructed under the existing bridge. On the weekend of June 25 -26 plus a day before and after, the road was closed and the old bridge was removed and the space backfilled over the culvert. The road was then reopened with a gravel surface. The contractor is now proceeding with further work including buried utilities, paving, sidewalks, guard rails, and landscaping. Major work is expected to be completed by early September with final work in the fall.



The new tunnel under Rte. 126 in Bellingham after removal of the old bridge. The gray steel beam supported a water line during the change and has since been removed.

SNETT Half Mile Markers

In the prior issue, we reported on the installation of half mile markers by an Eagle Scout project in November. Unfortunately, some folks can't leave things be. Markers 0.5 and 5.0 have gone missing. Markers 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.5, and 4.0 were pulled from the ground and cast down the embankment or found leaning against trees. They have been reset. Marker 0.5 has been replaced. Marker 5.0 will be

replaced. The other three markers are still in place. Progress on park projects is difficult enough. Vandalism doesn't help.



Reset marker 1.5

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

FBRTC Cleanups

On June 18th, the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee held a work day / cleanup of the eastern two miles of the SNETT between Grove Street in Franklin and Lake Street in Bellingham. About a dozen people showed up to help. Work included the usual liter pick up plus cutting up several downed trees across the trail. All downed trees were cleared. Also noted were three half mile markers that have been removed from their prior locations. Two of these have since been reinstalled and one replaced.

A fall clean-up has been scheduled on November 12th at 8 AM. Meeting point is the parking on Fox Run Road. Work will include the removal of overgrowth west of this point.

West of Douglas

In our discussion of the improvements along the SNETT and the Blackstone Greenway, it is important to remember that they are part of the larger Rail Trails effort. The SNETT runs for 22 miles from Grove Street in Franklin to the Massachusetts / Connecticut state line. There, the route passes into Thompson, Connecticut and becomes the Air Line State Park Trail. The Air Line extends for another 53 miles to East Hampden, CT. The combined route is therefore 75 miles long.

From the state line, the Thompson Section of the Air Line runs southwest for 7.2 miles to Route 12 at Mechanicsville. This section has been cleared and graded and drainage issues have been corrected. In 2016, a stone dust surface is being applied to the entire length. There is parking at five locations along the length. At several locations, the trail passes under or over various highways. At one location just northeast of the Route 12 to I-395 ramps, there is a missing bridge. It is planned to install a Town Lattice Truss, covered bridge here. Ithiel Town was a Thompson native who patented the design and made good money on licensing it.

At Mechanicsville, the rail line that the SNETT follows merged with the line between Worcester, MA and Norwich, CT and the two entered Putnam together. Just south of the Putnam station, the two split, with the Norwich line curving to the left and the Air Line going straight across a bridge over the Quinebaug River and on to Willimantic and points west. The loss of the Quinebaug River bridge in 1955's Hurricane Diane severed the through route.

The combination of the two railroads through Putnam complicates the bikeway. However, a parallel route along the river parallels most of the gap and is known as the Putnam River Trail. This extends from Providence Street on the north side of Putnam to a new YMCA south of town. Along Kennedy Drive, a footbridge has been built across the river on the piers of the lost railroad bridge.

West of the railroad bridge, the grade is intact, but overgrown until Wrights Crossing Road in Pomfret. Beyond Wrights Crossing Road, good trail exists all the remainder of the way to East Hampton. This includes a new connector trail in Willimantic, opened this spring.

For the piece east of Wrights Crossing Road, a new sewer line is to be installed being this fall and finishing in 2017. On conclusion of that project, a stone dust surface will be installed all the way to the river. So, by the end of 2017, the only gap in the Air Line will be 1.4 miles between Providence Street in Putnam and Mechanicsville in Thompson.

Also west of Douglas, the SNETT is intended to be part of the Titanic Trail extending to Palmer, MA. Currently, several pieces of this trail exist in Brimfield, Sturbridge, Southbridge, and Dudley. But, other sections are still being planned.



The Air Line at Pomfret Station looking west 5/4/16



A former cattle bridge over the Air Line looking west on 6-4-16 just west of the state line



Looking east across the Quinebaug River bridge towards the Putnam River Trail 7/2/16



The new stone dust trail surface looking east at Mechanicsville, CT 7/17/16



Quinebaug River Valley Trail looking west at Mill Road, Dudley, MA 4/30/16



The new Corridor offices at the Linwood Mill, Northbridge, MA



Quinebaug River Valley Trail, Southbridge, MA 6-11-13

Blackstone Canal Conservancy
16 Ballou Road
Hopedale, MA 01747

New Corridor Offices

In April, the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor moved their offices from the Woonsocket depot to the Linwood Mill in Northbridge, MA. The new offices are more central to the corridor. A celebration was held at the new offices on May 19th.

