

To the Editor,

Over three years ago I created the Friends of the Dedham Heritage Rail Trail Facebook page. It had one “like” at that time – mine. Little by little the Likes grew to 1,400+. Over the years, other volunteers and I gathered over 800 signatures from Dedham residents who were excited about the prospect of Dedham joining the 70+ other towns in Massachusetts that have rail trails and greenways and are loving them!

In those hundreds of conversations - with both proponents and opponents of the rail trail project, I heard a repeated wish from both parties - and especially from opponents - for our town leaders to step in and take charge.

Our town leaders did step in and they proposed what seemed to be a pretty common sense plan – to get a traffic study around the schools that was needed anyway, and to get some assistance in helping Dedham sort this out – not on Facebook, not with signs, but in an organized, thoughtful way that allowed all voices to be heard. So it was disappointing that this motion presented to Town Meeting - that came out of a direct call from many who oppose the project – was pilloried and shot down on Tuesday evening.

Since then, quite a number of people have said to me how sorry they are and gave condolences of sorts – knowing how strongly I and others feel about the benefits of this potential project. I’ve also heard people say how it has “divided” the town. To be honest though, while I admit I was disappointed, I have to say the sight of all the young families and people of all ages and from all precincts who came out to support the project by holding green signs made me feel quite the opposite. None of us would ever likely have met if not for this journey, and as much as I sometimes rue ever having opened this door, I wouldn’t trade that 45 minutes of seeing all those happy and hopeful people standing together and having a great time, for anything. It was a blast! The positive energy was palpable and invigorating.

As they say, the journey is the destination – and the journey will continue.

If you’ve never been to a rail trail or greenway, consider taking some time this summer to visit one of the many throughout our state and in nearby states. See how nice it is to walk with a friend, or loved one, or just by yourself, and not have to think about dodging a car or hearing a honking horn. Or, join us on a walk of Dedham’s rail corridor – you may even bump into a neighbor or two walking along the path. Or, join one of Sarah Santos’s wonderful bike rides on the nearby Neponset Greenway! The vision for a safe biking and walking path, one day connecting from Readville to Dedham Square, didn’t magically vanish once that vote was done; in fact, quite the opposite.

We’re energized by all the support and momentum, and excited about moving things forward.

Sincerely,

Georganna Woods

One of the Many Friends of the Dedham Heritage Rail Trail