SWAMPSCOTT TIDES

Swampscott to Improve Notice to Abutters After Rail Trail Survey Work

Monica Sager, August 27, 20263 mins

The Rail Trail underwent survey work this week, but the surveyors and the town did not notify abutters — something Town Administrator Nick Connors said Swampscott will work to improve in the future.

“It is a bare minimum of contractors working on our behalf that they do that notification as they are required for survey work,” Connors said. “We will work with them to make sure that is improved, but we will also going to make sure that we are doing better in making sure that is communicated out.”

Connors said he and Community and Economic Development Director Marzie Galazka will hold a public meeting on the Rail Trail in the fall. He said it will be an open forum, similar to a meeting where residents were invited to ask questions of him, Department of Public Works Director Gino Cresta and a representative from Republic Services about the new trash system.



The Rail Trail is now set to be completed in 2029 || Courtesy Photo

The Swampscott Rail Trail, which is set to be completed in 2029, is designed to connect neighborhoods and provide off-road transportation across town. Once complete, the trail will span two miles as an off-road, shared-use path running from Bradlee Avenue to Stetson Avenue. The trail will pass through neighborhoods and wooded areas, as well as alongside ponds and other town-owned conservation land.

The trail is also meant to connect to the Swampscott Elementary School, Swampscott Middle School and the Clarke School, where the Recreation Department is currently housed.

In 2017, Town Meeting Members voted to allocate $850,000 to build the Rail Trail in a vote of 210 to 56. The article was also unanimously sponsored by the Select Board and supported by the Finance Committee, Capital Improvement Committee, School Committee, Planning Board, Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, and Conservation Commission.

Swampscott voters later affirmed the Town Meeting’s approval by a margin of 12%.

In 2020-21, the first two segments of the Swampscott Rail Trail were constructed between the Marblehead town line and Bradlee Avenue. In 2022, construction of a completed trail was programmed as a MassDOT project for $8.9 million.

The Friends of the Swampscott Rail Trail raised over $150,000 from local residents and businesses, which was presented to the town in 2023. The friends also spent over $1,000 in native plantings, and the group also installed the first trailhead kiosk.

At the same time, a 99-year ground lease with National Grid was signed by Swampscott to use the utility corridor for the Rail Trail. This settled a lawsuit around the taking of easements.

“Our cross country team runs on it. A lot of our kids bike ride to school through it,” Select Board Vice Chair Danielle Leonard said, requesting that the stretch between Salem and Humphrey Street is maintained better by National Grid. “It’s absolutely a mess. It’s overgrown. It’s not safe.”

Select Board Member Mary Ellen Fletcher expressed her concern for chemicals that may be used to destroy the weeds. Since 2022, the town’s Department of Community Development has worked with MassDOT and National Grid on design and engineering work.

Following a meeting in March, the project’s completion is set for 2029.