

ASHUWILTICOOK RAIL TRAIL ABUTTER SURVEY, AUTUMN 2014

BACKGROUND

The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is an 11-mile paved, accessible multi-use trail located in the towns of Lanesborough, Cheshire, and Adams in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Responsibility for maintenance of the Trail resides with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Trail's gentle grades of 5% or less offer users of all abilities the opportunity to travel a moderately long, yet universally accessible trail – unusual in the hilly terrain of the Berkshires. The public can access the Trail from several sites located along its length. Use of the Rail Trail has increased steadily since its opening in 2001, and although it is located in central Berkshire County, it is used by residents from all across the region. Since the its opening, residents across the county have increasingly voiced a desire to have similar trails within their own communities.

Although residents across the region have voiced a desire for additional accessible bicycle/pedestrian trails within or near their communities, a few newly proposed trails have met with opposition from nearby property owners. Most notable are the efforts to create a bike/ped trail along a utility right of way in Pittsfield, to construct a bike/ped lane along Housatonic Street in Lenox, and to locate a bike/ped trail through some sections of North Adams. Typical concerns cited by landowners are the potential for increased crime, noise, teen loitering and littering, coupled with a decrease in privacy and property values. While these concerns are valid and must be addressed to minimize landowner impacts, studies conducted on similar trails across the country indicate that these fears are unsupported by experience.

Studies from around the nation indicate that crime does not increase on the trail itself or on nearby properties. Likewise, economic and realtor studies from the across the nation demonstrate that properties abutting or in close proximity to recreational trails do not decrease in value; inversely, these properties tend to have higher resale value than comparable properties farther away or not located near such trails. Wayne Feiden, Planning Director in Northampton, reaffirms these statistics, noting that opponent's fears have not come to pass and that real estate agents use the Norwottuck Rail Trail as a tool to market properties on or near the trail. Berkshire County real estate agents currently list the Ashuwillticook as a selling point when promoting properties within walking distance of the Trail; some even use the Trail to promote most properties for sale within the towns of Lanesborough, Cheshire and Adams.

However, nuisance conditions such as noise, teen loitering and littering have been cited at various locations. In general, nuisance conditions are less noticeable where a bike/ped trail has been developed along an existing or abandoned rail corridor, as the corridor itself often already attracted some nuisance activity. Loss of privacy and nuisance activity is more noticeable by property owners who abut natural, previously undeveloped land where little or no human visitation previously occurred.

Where new bike/ped trails are proposed, studies from different parts of the country provide little comfort to ease the fears of local abutting landowners. Berkshire residents do not feel a similarity with studies conducted hundreds of miles away – or even those conducted a few

counties to the east. Documenting the experiences of landowners abutting the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail will resonate with fellow Berkshire County residents where others will not.

The resulting abutter survey was not developed to serve as an advocacy document for new bicycle/pedestrian trail development. It was purposely developed to serve as an objective study on the impacts of the Rail Trail on abutting and nearby property owners – both the positive and negative impacts. This survey will not only aid Trail managers and local officials in managing the existing trail and its users, but aid future planners in locating and designing trails that maximize benefits while reducing impacts.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission developed an abutters’ survey that was sent to all property owners whose land abutted the current Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in the towns of Lanesborough, Cheshire, and Adams. For the purpose of this survey the southern terminus of the Trail was the DCR parking lot at the Berkshire Mall and the northern terminus was the Adams Visitor Center on Hoosac Street. Surveys were also sent to property owners whose land was in close proximity to the Trail and who might experience impacts from users due to specific locations, such as being near road/trail intersections or vacant lots where users might park on or near their properties, or where trespassing private land to access the trail seemed likely. Addresses were procured from local town assessors’ files. A 1997 abutter survey of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in neighboring New York State, conducted by the Schenectady County Department of Planning, provided a basis for the current survey. As part of the study and in an effort to gain additional information from local officials, BRPC interviewed DCR staff responsible for maintenance of the Trail and the police chiefs of the three communities in which the Trail is located.

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY RESULTS

On October 16, 2014 a total of 160 paper surveys were sent to property owners via U.S. Post. A self-stamped envelope was provided for ease of completion and to increase responsiveness. Survey responses were anonymous, again in hopes of increasing responsiveness. A total of 69 responses were collected and tabulated through December 9, 2014, for a return rate of 43%. A summary of responses is provided here for easy reference. A more detailed analysis of response follows the overview. The majority of respondents (86%) owned their property prior to the Trail being built, so they provide a good perspective of pre- and post-trail conditions.

Summary of Results

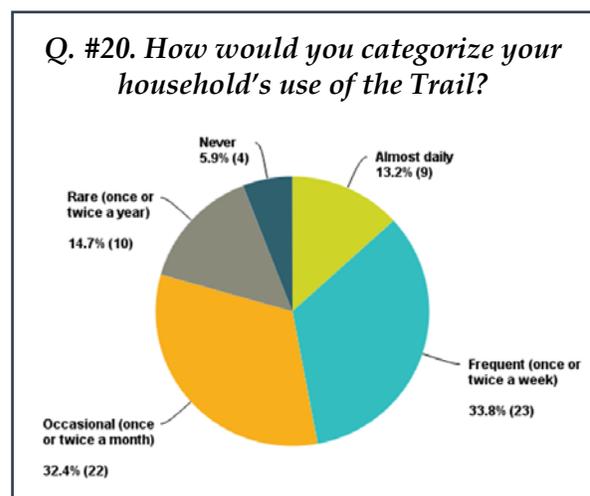
Question	Results listed in order of response (number of responses in parentheses)		
	Very satisfied or satisfied	Indifferent	Unsatisfied or Very unsatisfied
Satisfaction with the Trail as a neighbor - majority (80%) are satisfied	(54)	(8)	(5)
Is living near the Trail better or worse than you expected - 45% say better	(31)	(29)	(6)
Has the Trail changed the quality of the neighborhood - 50% say improved	(33)	(26)	(7)

Question	Results listed in order of response (number of responses in parentheses)		
	Major impacts –3 most often chosen out of a list of 12 options	Litter on/near my property (18)	Loitering on/near my property (16)
Remedies to reduce impact – 3 most often chosen out of a list of 6 options	Signs asking users to respect property (17)	Increase in police presence (15)	Fencing or shrubbery (12)
Do you feel trail users pose a risk to family safety – majority (74%) feel no risk	No risk (49)	Uncertain (11)	Yes risk (6)
Benefits of the Trail – 3 most often chosen out of a list of 9 options	Safe recreation opportunity (42)	View wildlife opportunity (35)	Environmental Education Opportunity (34)
Use of the Trail – vast majority walk (91%) and/or bike (73.5%)	Walk (62)	Bicycle (50)	Jog (14)
Frequency of use – almost half (47%) use the Trail once a week or more	Once/twice a week or more (32)	Once or twice a month (22)	Once or twice a year (10)

MAJOR FINDINGS

Two major objectives of the survey are to understand and learn from the experiences of people who believe that they have benefited from the development of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and by those who believe they been negatively impacted by the trail. Only by understanding these experiences can we begin to identify measures that could expand positive aspects and reduce negative aspects of future bike/ped trails through improved location and design.

Demographically the households of the respondents were predominantly populated with adults. Eighty nine percent of household members were 18 years of age or older, with a total of only 13 individuals 17 years your younger. According to 88% of respondents, the most important benefit of the Trail is that it provides a safe opportunity for recreation for those in their household. All except for a few respondents stated that household members had used the Trail within the past 12 months, with almost half stating that they used it once a week or more. These figures imply that the Trail offer some measure of health benefits to abutters’ households. Other most often cited benefits are viewing wildlife and environmental education opportunities. Sixty-three percent of respondents think it is important or very important to the region to extend the Trail northward and southward.



To analyze the survey results, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) staff reviewed for completeness each of the 69 responses. To better understand the benefits and negative experiences being expressed by specific respondents, BRPC filtered out and reviewed in more detail group responses according to answers given to specific questions.

As a first example, BRPC analyzed the responses of those who, as a group, stated in Question #6 that they were unsatisfied with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail as a neighbor. To achieve this, the answers and comments of the five individual respondents who stated their dissatisfaction with the Trail were analyzed to identify possible trends or commonalities. In general, the tone of responses from this group were negative throughout the survey, although some answers or comments were neutral in tone. Although unsatisfied with the Trail, three of the five respondents stated that they used the Trail, with one of the respondents walking, biking and snowshoeing the Trail once or twice a week or more. This last respondent commented that it is a beautiful trail, but that they were "not happy with all the traffic," noting parking issues, dog waste and litter, teen loitering after dark and discourteous users.

Question #10 of the survey asked Unsatisfied respondents to rate, on a sliding scale, the extent that they feel the Trail is impacting their property or household. Out of 12 listed impacts, the three most often chosen impacts listed as major impacts by four of the five respondents were cars parking on or near their property, dog manure on/near their property, and discourteous rude users. Open ended comments listed within their responses reinforced their dissatisfaction with loss of privacy and teen activity after dark. Question #12 offered a list of remedies to reduce the negative impacts they experienced and asked respondents to check the ones they believe might alleviate these impacts. Increasing police presence was chosen by four of the five respondents in the group, and signs asking [trail] users to respect property rights was chosen by three of the five. "No reason for teenagers to be on the trail after dark!" was the only open ended comment offered as part of Question 12 responses. When asked to rate potential benefits of the Trail in Question #14, again on a sliding scale, few in this unsatisfied group responded favorably to any of the benefit options offered. The responses of this group can be viewed in the Unsatisfied Respondent Summary, Appendix A.

BRPC also analyzed the responses of the vast majority of respondents who believed that the development of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail was a benefit to members of their household, their neighborhood and the region. Of the 54 respondents in this group, 35 respondents were Very Satisfied and 19 were Satisfied with the Trail as a neighbor. Responding to Question # 10, which lists the 12 impacts, the majority of responses indicated that few property owners experienced negative impacts. However, dog manure (9 responses), litter (8 responses) and loitering (6 responses) were cited as the three most often chosen major impacts listed. As with the Unsatisfied group, dogs, parking and discourteous users were listed in open ended comments. Whereas the Unsatisfied group of respondents heavily favored increasing the police presence, the Satisfied group first favored installation of signs asking users to respect property rights (12 responses) and secondly favored added police presence (9 responses).

Crime has often been cited by potential bike/ped trail abutters as a concern. In an effort to determine the level of crime occurring on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, BRPC contacted the police chiefs in the three communities through which the Trail travels. Not one of the chiefs noted any upsurge in crime; in fact all three police chiefs were pleased with a lack of problems associated with the Trail. Police Chief Bashara of Lanesborough stated that he was personally and professionally pleased with the Trail. He personally bicycles on it quite a bit before or after

work, and no one knows he is a policeman. Although he is observant by trade, he has never seen any real problems on the Trail, which he finds mostly populated by couples or families with children. To his recollection there has not been any assaults, rapes or robberies on the Trail itself, although there has been break-ins of vehicles at the Berkshire Mall parking area where purses and wallets were stolen. There has never been a break-in where nothing was taken, so he is led to believe that valuables were visible during each break-in occurrence. To combat this police make an attempt to cruise the parking areas more often, and this seems to have reduced the problem.

Police Chief Garner of Cheshire stated that there have been no increased crime associated with the Trail, "none whatsoever." The Chief is an abutter to the Trail and has had "no issues at all" with it, adding that he thinks it is a "great thing." He did hear that there were break-ins of cars at the mall parking lot, but notes that has not been any reported break-ins in Cheshire, not even at Farnum's Crossing, which is a popular parking area in Cheshire. Asked if he has had complaints about teens loitering on the Trail, he responded that "I don't even see that." He opined that perhaps the problems are in Adams, where the Trail is in the downtown area and where kids probably loiter anyway. He wouldn't see the Trail as creating more of an issue than already exists.

Police Chief Tarsa of Adams stated that "the call volume from the property owners or abutters along the Bike Trail is small if non-existent." He stated that problems that do occur "are minor in nature and are associated with any type of recreational trail or area." Complaints that do come are usually from those using the trail and involve children or teens, such as throwing rocks at the trail from the woods or the Elm Street Bridge, riding bikes aggressively or congregating at the road crossings. DCR workers report vulgar language, disrespectful kids, or kids not using bike helmets. "Overall, these are not constant or daily complaints by any means. They are most frequent during the summer months due to school summer vacation, but officers are detailed and handle the situation." Chief Tarsa did note that in Adams, outside of the downtown area where the Trail is located through a business district, the Trail travels largely through wooded areas and seldom near structures or residences.

Question #13 asked people if they felt that trail users pose a safety risk to them or their family. Of the 69 responses received, 74% did not feel that trail users posed a risk, 17% were uncertain and 9% (6 respondents) felt that users posed a risk. Three of the six were unsatisfied with the Trail as a neighbor, while one was Very Satisfied with it (2 respondents answered they were Indifferent). Disruptive noise from the trail was the most cited major negative impact from this group (5 responses), while Loss of privacy and Discourteous rude users were also cited (4 responses each).

One of the 12 impacts listed in Question #10 was Burglary of property. This activity was cited by seven respondents as a negative activity that impacted their property or household. Burglary is the most serious criminal activity listed (others include illegal motor use, trespassing, and vandalism), yet only three people mention this crime in any of the open ended question opportunities. In one instance, the respondent stated that the burglary of the property was never resolved by the police and a second stated that their neighbors who live right on the path has had things stolen. The third respondent mentioned that they had heard of people breaking into cars to get at pocketbooks, but that they had not experienced this personally.

Another common fear of abutting land owners is that the development of a bike/ pedestrian trail will reduce the valuation of their properties. As discussed previously, these fears are not supported by trends in the national and local real estate markets. When respondents were asked if the Trail has affected the resale value of their property, the results were very mixed and inconclusive. Thirty-six percent of respondents think that the Trail has no effect on the resale value of their property, 31% were unsure and 28% think the Trail has increased their resale value.

Finally, BRPC filtered out and analyzed the responses of those property owners whose buildings were located less than 100 feet from the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. The purpose of this analysis was to determine if close proximity to the trail was a correlating factor in the amount of negative impacts experienced by property owners. Of the 69 responses, 19 stated that their building were less than 100 feet from the Trail. Of the 19, only one respondent indicated that they were unsatisfied with the Trail as a neighbor, and none indicated that living near the trail was worse than they had expected it would be. This indicates that proximity is not a determinant in the overall satisfaction level with the Trail.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Six of the 21 questions in the survey asked respondents to offer additional personal comments about their experiences with the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. These comments are particularly informative, as it allows respondents to describe in more detail both the positive and negative impacts they experienced, while it also allows them to provide constructive recommendations to make improvements. All personal comments are found on the Survey Summary in Attachment B.

Several respondents expressed their satisfaction with the Trail and being able to access it. Some stated that the Trail was the best thing that has happened to their neighborhood, others find it an enjoyable place to bring their children and grandchildren, while others noted that visitors have said it is the best trail that they've traveled on. One respondent noted that "people enjoying the trail say 'Hi' to each other, offer a smile. You don't see that on a regular sidewalk when people pass by each other." Another respondent stated that the Trail was part of the reason that they bought their home in Cheshire.

However, even those respondents who praised the Trail had comments and recommendations about how to make the Trail experience better. Overall, the vast majority of complaints involve discourteous trail users on and off the Trail, such as bicycling aggressively or dangerously, littering and swearing. This lack of courtesy may be a reflection of the behavior of the general public. Several opinion polls conducted 2005-14 have shown that the majority of Americans believe that the country is more discourteous and less civil than it was in recent decades. Sixty-nine percent of respondents to a 2005 Associated Press poll thought people were more rude they were 20-30 years before (Ipsos Public Affairs, 2005). A more recent nationwide poll indicates that 95% of respondents believe we have a civility problem in America (Weber Shandwick et al, 2013). Collectively respondents of the Weber-Shandwick poll indicate that they experience an average of 17 encounters of incivility in a 7-day week, and that the majority believe incivility will continue to get worse in the next few years.

On the trail itself, the two most commonly referenced complaints about fellow trail users were 1) bicyclists traveling too fast or aggressively without regard for other users and 2) dog waste

not being picked up or dogs off leash. A few respondents stated that some bicyclists think they “own” the Trail or that they feel they don’t have to abide by stop signs. As one respondent summed it up simply: “It is a privilege to have this trail,” but “I just wish people would respect and take better care.”

Off the trail, abutters share a frustration with trail users who believe they are “above the law.” The most commonly cited abutter complaints are about users who park on or near their property (even when asked not to), for dog owners who leave feces on abutters’ property, trespassing, loitering and possible burglary. As one respondent noted that “as much as I think the trail is an asset to our community – there are always a few who ruin a good thing.”

CONCLUSIONS

The vast majority of people who responded to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Abutter Survey are satisfied with the Trail as a neighbor and view it as a positive addition to their neighborhood and the region. A similar majority of respondents indicate that they or household members use the trail, even some who are not satisfied with it as a neighbor. The typical fears associated with bike/pedestrian trails, such as crime, are not supported by abutter or local police responses, although nuisance conditions do impact some abutters. Proximity to the Trail does not seem to be a factor in determining whether property owners are satisfied or unsatisfied with the Trail as a neighbor.

The survey did not ask respondents for their names or addresses, so it is difficult to determine if there are specific areas of the Trail where negative impacts are most acute. DCR staff indicated that impacts are generally concentrated in areas where the Trail experiences the most use – at the southern end near the Berkshire Mall parking lot and the northern end from the Visitor Center to Russell Field in Adams.

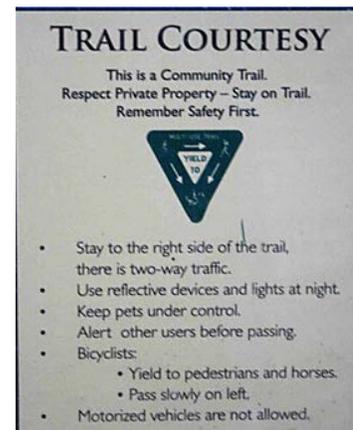
FUTURE TRAIL DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

Taking together survey respondents’ checked off answers and personal comments, we can begin to lay out strategies for improving the experience of using and living along the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. In general, personal comments comprised of positive, neutral and negative comments about the Trail’s impacts, and many offered recommendations for improvement. Recommendations are also taken from DCR staff, whose experiences during the Trail’s 14 years of operation offer valuable “lessons learned.”

Signage - Gentle Reminders

Trail Etiquette. Signage is installed at all main parking areas and trailheads to the Ashuwillticook that list the rules and behavior expected to be adhered to by all trail users. Similar signs should be installed at future trails to remind trail users about common courtesy, trail etiquette and rules. Example rules could include:

- No motorized vehicles.
- Stay on the trail and do not trespass on private property.
- Respect trail neighbors - speak quietly when near homes.
- Leave no trace – carry in / carry out trash.



- Dogs must be under control at all times.
- Clean up any mess your dog makes or face a fine.
- Use caution at road and driveway crossings.
- Stay to the right of the trail. Bicyclists slow down in crowded areas.
- Bicyclists alert other users with bell or voice before passing. Overtake on left cautiously.
- Each individual is responsible for his/her own safety and the safety of others.
- Direct questions or comments to _____.
- In an emergency, dial 911.

Single Issue Signs. In sections of the Trail where specific problems are especially acute, signs addressing the problem could be erected. For instance, in areas where dog feces is particularly concentrated, consider erecting signs to remind dog owners of their responsibility. The signs could be strict, citing public laws and fines, or it could be humorous. Combining signs and offering plastic bags and receptacles, could help to reduce this particular issue. The latter option of adding bags and receptacles comes of course with additional cost to trail managers. Where trespassing on private property is acute, signs stating no trespassing or respect private property could be installed; where the trail is particularly close to homes, signs asking users to speak softly could be considered.



Parking Signs. Several respondents reported trail users parking on their properties. No parking signs are a simple solution. Placing directions to the nearest parking area would be helpful and alleviate the possibility of moving the parking problem down the road or to the next block of property owners.



Police Presence

Twenty-two percent of respondents felt that an increased police presence would reduce the negative impacts of the Trail. All six of the respondents who felt that trail users posed a risk to their own or family's safety felt that an increase in police presence would reduce this impact. Adams, Cheshire and Lanesborough could consider jointly applying for grant funds to cover the cost of patrols along the length of the Trail. Police presence will not only increase the sense of security of abutting property owners, but could instill better behavior and adherence to trail etiquette and rules by those using the Trail. Posting non-emergency police department phone numbers in select areas along the Trail could increase response times of local police and eventually reduce the number of nuisance incidents in certain areas.



Pinpoint Existing Nuisance Impacts

The abutter survey did not ask respondents for their names or contact information. This was done intentionally in hopes that total anonymity would increase response rates. In retrospect, it may have been prudent to provide a space for respondents to provide contact information on an optional basis if they were willing to do so. This may have helped survey analysts to determine areas with higher incidents of abutter impacts, as well as provide more detailed information to DCR (as the Trail manager) and local officials, who may be able to address concerns or complaints in particular areas.

Although survey respondents did not indicate specific areas where impacts are most acute, DCR staff indicated that the first half mile from main parking areas experience an increase in litter and dog feces. Additional outreach to abutters to identify specific and more detailed impacts could be conducted.

Spread Use More Evenly

A few respondents commented that the Trail should be expanded so that people would be more evenly spread out along the Trail, presumably to reduce traffic near their properties. The southern end of the Trail near the Berkshire Mall up to Cheshire, and the northern end of the Trail in Adams experience more traffic, partly due to population densities of these areas and partly due to ample and publicly visible parking. The close proximity of the Trail along Cheshire Reservoir, offering lake access and scenic views, also contributes to higher densities in the southern section of the Trail. Farnum's Crossing is also heavily used, especially during special events. Promoting the assets along the more remote Cheshire section of the Trail north of Church Street could draw more users here and away from the busier sections to relieve congestion, but a new designated parking area should be constructed to avoid on-street parking conflicts with residents in this area.

Future Trail Design

The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail abutter survey highlighted issues commonly experienced along other bike/ped trails across the country. Where the Ashuwillticook was developed from an old rail corridor, most of the bicycle/pedestrian trails being considered in other parts of Berkshire County will be carved from a variety of existing land uses, including wooded areas, municipal lands and on-road bike lanes. Unlike the Ashuwillticook, future trails throughout the county will likely be owned and managed by the municipalities in which they are located. Bike/ped trails act like public parks (offering recreation) but have the physical characteristics of a small local roadway (pavement or hard surface areas, bridges, shoulders) so local governments will need to add future trails into their inventory of municipal park lands or public works infrastructure. Taking into consideration the issues experienced along the Ashuwillticook, future trail designers should consider these priorities:

- Clearly state and post trail etiquette and rules; and consider promoting etiquette and rules in local schools and neighborhood groups. Respect for abutting private property should be clearly stated; and consider establishing fines for offenses of most concern.
- Adopt etiquette similar to that promoted on nature trails, including courtesy and quiet zones where appropriate.
- Clearly assign ownership, budgeting and maintenance responsibilities within municipal departments, so that monitoring, maintenance and capital improvements do not fall between the cracks of government. List possible scenarios and assign exactly who will be responsible to take the lead in fixing damages due to accidents, weather, floods or vandalism. Identify department budgets that will be made available for repairs and/or routine maintenance. One partial washout of the Ashuwillticook in Cheshire caused by a severe storm cost the DCR \$130,000 to repair.
- Commit to permanent, seasonal staff time to monitor and maintain the condition of the trail, considering it a new linear municipal park. At a minimum staff will be required three seasons, with limited time during snow cover. Monitoring would involve routine

inspection of the trail surface to note eroding conditions or detect tree root intrusion, and inspection of bridges and other infrastructure. Maintenance would involve trimming of vegetation, litter pickup and upkeep of infrastructure.

- Commit to a permanent police presence, anticipating that nuisance conditions such as loitering, graffiti and noise will likely occur in some areas. If resources are scarce dispatch patrols during high nuisance periods such as dusk and dark. As part of trail design, identify sites where installation of surveillance cameras would be desirable, as they may alleviate abutter concerns and proactively reduce nuisance activity.
- Identify areas and property owners where fencing, shrubbery or other barriers will help to alleviate privacy, noise, trespass and other issues. Have a contingency plan to add privacy measures where unpredicted nuisance conditions occur after the trail has become established.
- Identify and develop parking areas near designated access areas and trailheads. Locate and promote parking areas along all sections of the trail to reduce the potential for congestion in some sections. Proactively erect parking prohibition signs where parking is anticipated to be an issue for neighbors, including directions to sanctioned trail parking areas.
- Identify committed neighborhood groups or other sponsors who could adopt sections of trail and conduct periodic cleanups.

References

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APPENEDIX A
Unsatisfied Respondent Summary

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

Q1 1. Which of the following most accurately describes how you use your property near the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail? (Please check the one that best described your property)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
It is my primary residence	100.0%	5
I rent to a tenant, and do not occupy the residence	0.0%	0
It is my second home	0.0%	0
It is a commercial property where my business is located	0.0%	0
It is a commercial property that I rent to a tenant	0.0%	0
It is unoccupied	0.0%	0
It is vacant land	0.0%	0
Total		5

#	Other (please specify)	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q2 Where is the Trail in relation to your property line?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
The Trail runs through my property	0.0%	0
The Trail runs along the edge of my property	40.0%	2
The Trail is near my property but not touching it	60.0%	3
Don't know	0.0%	0
Total		5

Q3 Approximately how far (in feet) is the Trail from your building?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 100 feet	20.0%	1
100 feet to 200 feet	40.0%	2

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

200 feet to 500 feet	20.0%	1
Greater than 500 feet	20.0%	1
Total		5

Q4 How would you describe your property near the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail? (Please check one)

Answered: 4 Skipped: 1

Answer Choices	Responses	
Urban	0.0%	0
Suburban	25.0%	1
Rural	75.0%	3
Total		4

Q5 When did you start occupying your property?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
After the Trail was built.	0.0%	0
Before the Trail was built.	100.0%	5
Total		5

Q6 Overall, how satisfied are you with having the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail as neighbor? (Please check the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses	
1: Very Satisfied	0.0%	0
2: Satisfied	0.0%	0
3: Indifferent	0.0%	0
4: Unsatisfied	80.0%	4
5: Very Unsatisfied	20.0%	1
Total		5

Q7 Compare your initial reaction to the idea

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

of living near the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail to how you feel about living near the Trail today. Would you say that living near the Trail is better or worse than you expected it to be? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
1: Much better than I expected	0.0% 0
2: Better	0.0% 0
3: Same	0.0% 0
4: Worse	80.0% 4
5: Much worse than I expected	20.0% 1
Total	5

Q8 How do you feel the Trail has affected the quality of your neighborhood? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
1: Much improved quality of neighborhood	0.0% 0
2: Improved	0.0% 0
3: No impact	20.0% 1
4: Worsened	80.0% 4
5: Much worsened quality of neighborhood	0.0% 0
Total	5

Q9 If you were to try and sell your property, do you think being near the Trail would make it harder or easier to sell? (Please select the numebr that best indicates you feel.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
1: Much easier to sell	0.0% 0

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

2: Easier	0.0%	0
3: Same	40.0%	2
4: Harder	20.0%	1
5: Much harder to sell	20.0%	1
6: Uncertain	20.0%	1
Total		5

Q10 On a sliding scale, to what extent do you feel the following items impact your property or household as a result of users of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

	1 Does not impact my property or household	2	3 Somewhat impacts my property, household (NOT ORIGINAL WORDING)	4	5 Major impact to my property or household	9 No opinion	Total
a. Illegal motor vehicle use	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
b. litter on/or near my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	60.0% 3	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
c. loitering on/near my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	60.0% 3	0.0% 0	5
d. trespassing onto my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
e. vandalism of my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
f. Cars parking on/near my property	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	80.0% 4	0.0% 0	5
g. Dog manure on/near my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	80.0% 4	0.0% 0	5
h. Unleashed and roaming pets	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
i. Discourteous, rude users	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	80.0% 4	0.0% 0	5
j. Burglary of my property	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	60.0% 3	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
k. Disruptive noise from trail	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	25.0% 1	75.0% 3	0.0% 0	4
l. Loss of privacy	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	60.0% 3	0.0% 0	5

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Small children would be exposed to druggies and be exposed to very vulgar language	12/11/2014 1:53 PM
2	Don't like all the people around, no privacy, noisy, smoking dope.	12/4/2014 2:42 PM
3	People don't always use parking lots, they park on road.	12/4/2014 2:00 PM

Q11 If trail users have impacted your property or household, has the issue been resolved?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 1

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	25.0% 1
No	75.0% 3
Total	4

#	If No, please explain:	Date
1	Noise - pollution - Loss of privacy - vulgar language	12/11/2014 1:53 PM
2	Burglary of property never resolved by police.	12/4/2014 3:31 PM
3	Unauthorized motor vehicles. Police can never catch offenders.	12/4/2014 2:51 PM

Q12 If your property or household experienced impacts due to trail users, do you believe that any of the following remedies would reduce those impacts?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
Fencing or shrubbery	40.0% 2
Neighborhood Watch Signs	20.0% 1
Signs asking users to respect property rights	60.0% 3
Increase in police presence	80.0% 4
Increase in the number of people and families using the trail	0.0% 0
None of the above	20.0% 1
Total Respondents: 5	

#	Other Suggestion:	Date
1	No reason for teenagers to be on trail after dark!	12/4/2014 2:00 PM

Q13 Do you feel the Trail poses a risk to your own or your family's safety due to the

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

activities of trail users?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	60.0% 3
No	20.0% 1
Uncertain	20.0% 1
Total	5

Q14 To what extent do you feel that the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail is important in providing the following benefits to you or members of your household? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel about each item.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

	1 Extremely Important	2	3 Somewhat Important	4	5 Not at All Important	9 No Opinion	Total
a. Safe opportunity for recreation	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	20.0% 1	5
b. Opportunity to view wildlife	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	5
c. Tourism and related economic benefits	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	0.0% 0	5
d. Lake or river access	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	40.0% 2	20.0% 1	5
e. Open space conservation	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	5
f. Environmental education opportunities	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	20.0% 1	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	5
g. Transportation alternatives	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	60.0% 3	20.0% 1	5
h. Location for special events	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	20.0% 1	40.0% 2	40.0% 2	5
i. Other (please specify below)	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	25.0% 1	25.0% 1	50.0% 2	4

#	Other (please specify)	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q15 How important do you think it is to Berkshire County residents to extend the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail northward to Williamstown and southward to Sheffield?

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

(Circle one)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
1: Very Important	40.0% 2
2: Important	0.0% 0
3: Somewhat Important	0.0% 0
4: Not Important	0.0% 0
5: Not at All Important	40.0% 2
9: No Opinion	20.0% 1
Total	5

Q16 How do you think being located near the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail has affected the resale value of this property? (Please check one)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
The Trail has lowered the resale value of this property	40.0% 2
The trail has increased the resale value of this property	0.0% 0
The Trail has no effect on the resale value of this property	0.0% 0
I am not sure	60.0% 3
Total	5

Q17 How do members of your household use the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail? (Please include yourself and check as many as applicable).

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
Walk	60.0% 3
Jog	0.0% 0
Bicycle	40.0% 2
Roller blade	0.0% 0
Snowshoe	20.0% 1

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

Cross-country ski	0.0%	0
Other (please list below)	0.0%	0
We do not use the Trail at all.	40.0%	2
Total Respondents: 5		

#	Other	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q18 How many people from each of the following age categories live in your household? (Please include yourself and write numbers in the spaces provided.)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
12 years old and under	20.0% 1
13 to 17 years old	0.0% 0
18 to 61 years old	60.0% 3
62 years and over	40.0% 2

#	12 years old and under	Date
1	1	12/4/2014 2:42 PM
#	13 to 17 years old	Date
	There are no responses.	
#	18 to 61 years old	Date
1	2	12/4/2014 2:51 PM
2	3	12/4/2014 2:42 PM
3	3	12/4/2014 2:00 PM
#	62 years and over	Date
1	2	12/11/2014 1:53 PM
2	1	12/4/2014 3:31 PM

Q19 How many members of your household from each of the following age categories have used the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail during the past twelve months? (Please include yourself and write the numbers in the spaces provided.)

Answered: 2 Skipped: 3

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

Answer Choices	Responses
12 years old and under	0.0% 0
13 to 17 years old	0.0% 0
18 to 61 years old	50.0% 1
62 years and over	50.0% 1

#	12 years old and under	Date
	There are no responses.	
#	13 to 17 years old	Date
	There are no responses.	
#	18 to 61 years old	Date
1	2	12/4/2014 2:00 PM
#	62 years and over	Date
1	1	12/4/2014 3:31 PM

Q20 How would you categorize your household's use of the Trail? (Please check one)

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0

Answer Choices	Responses
Almost daily	0.0% 0
Frequent (once or twice a week)	20.0% 1
Occasional (once or twice a month)	0.0% 0
Rare (once or twice a year)	40.0% 2
Never	40.0% 2
Total	5

Q21 Is there anything else you would like to say about the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail? Please use this space for any comments you would like to provide.

Answered: 3 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	The noise at all hours prevent use of the connected yards. Privacy does not exist. One would not permit small children in the connected yards due to language and potential path users intentions or worse.	12/11/2014 1:53 PM
2	Patrolling by local police on bicycles was established through a grant when the trail opened. Now there is a no vehicle policy so patrolling seems non existent. Yes problems concerning police is still necessary, during and year round and after dark as posted closed.	12/4/2014 3:31 PM

Ashuwillticook Bike Trail Extension Addendum

3	It is a beautiful trail. I however am not happy with all the traffic. The people who don't clean up after their dogs and litter with trash. Also, people will run you over with their bikes. They need to be more conscientious of kids and dogs. Keep people (teens) off after dark. No reason for them to be on the trail causing trouble.	12/4/2014 2:00 PM
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**APPENDIX B
Personal Comments**

**ASHUWILLTICOOK RAIL TRAIL ABUTTER SURVEY, AUTUMN 2014
Additional comments of respondents
Database of 69 responses**

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
The trail has been a good thing for this area and should be extended through Pittsfield.	We have had no problems with the trail.	Racer bikes at high speed can be a problem especially for young mothers and children.		Take great grandchildren for walks etc.	
		No impact.			
					We believe the trail is an asset to the town of Adams where we live and are glad it is here. The section by our house is a very beautiful part - we've seen a lot of deer, foxes, turtles, geese, blue heron, bear and raccoon.
					It's better, nicer and quieter than the railroad in the 1970's.
				Fishing access to river	

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
	No impact.		Geocaching	Geocaching	The Rail Trail, like all our other state parks is an important asset for bringing tourism to the Berkshires. As a Geocacher I use the trail often. As a member of Berkshire Geobash I use the trail to bring tourists to the Berkshires. Extending the trail would be very helpful to us.
			You could do all of these things without the trail it's not Boston.		I am not opposed to the trail, I just think it is a huge waste of resources. It doesn't bring in much revenues but cost millions of dollars to build and maintain. While all other DCR projects suffer, there is no money for motorcycle/atv trails, no money for primitive camping such as Windsor Jams, but we can pay people to leaf blow the entire trail with 2 guys in a golf cart. I do use the trail and see mostly local people so I don't see where it really helps our economy.
					I wish that you would mow the grass on both sides of the fence by my property so it would like nicer.
And swearing can sometimes be heard.					

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
<p>Unleashed dogs and people not picking up after waste a big problem to walkers as well as bike riders should have a heavy penalty as well for littering.</p>		<p>I have not had personal experience but have heard of people opening trunks of cars to get at pocketbooks.</p>	<p>The trail has brought a tremendous opportunity to people of all ages to use and enjoy our own area. There is a peacefulness here that is much needed in the troubled world today. I just wish people would respect and take better care. It is definitely a four season recreation area.</p>	<p>Wish there was more picnic facilities so larger families could get together.</p>	<p>Animals should be banned. We have talked to people who use the trail from different states who travel with bikes, etc. It is definitely a plus just alone from the economy perspective. It is a privilege to have this trail and the further it can extend in either direction is an even, even situation. We are glad that this has not had an impact on our own property, but do feel every consideration should be given to property owners that are. If there is anything that would help alleviate their lack of privacy. Anyone who loves the outdoors, the mountains and lakes would love to hear more about this area. There are people who still do not know how many trails are available, we try to take friends, etc. that visit to see all of this beauty. We were please to take part in this Survey. Thank you,</p>
<p>Small children would be exposed to druggies and be exposed to very vulgar language</p>	<p>Noise - pollution - Loss of privacy - vulgar language</p>				<p>The noise at all hours prevent use of the connected yards. Privacy does not exist. One would not permit small children in the connected yards due to language and potential path users intentions or worse.</p>

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
		Never had any problems.			Personally, I think the trail is great to be by. When I'm working in the yard a lot of people stop by and chat and it's a great way to socialize with all different types of people from young to older and everyone in between.
Parking is a real ISSUE! People parking on the road across from our house wrecking the property. When you tell them not to people are very rude.	Because people don't like to be told they can't park and ignore you when spoken to!	Make more parking areas!		Used to in the past! Running into Bears is not on my agenda! Also people are very unfriendly and rude at the bike crossing. There are signs saying for them to stop, they expect everyone else to stop.	I think path should be patrolled for safety! Animals and People! Also, please extend the path: traffic here will slow down. My neighbors who live right on the path have had things stolen. The people walking scope area out and come back for the goods! I wish the train still went through!
					Has been an enormous benefit to Berkshire County population.
Bike riders need to signal to pass walkers.					My grandchildren and great grandchildren enjoy walking on "The Trail" when they come to visit.

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
<p>Owners let dog on retractable leashes come into our yard to go on the grass. Then shorten leashes when we see it happen and make them clean it up!!!!</p>	<p>When snowmobiles tried to use trail - trail was blocked from them using it. No we still have problems with dogs.</p>	<p>Solid fence. Split rail fencing helps nothing - kids and animals go under it.</p>			<p>We like using the rail trail, it would be helpful to extend it so that the number of users would be spread out over a larger area. We are near the lake so we know people like this section, but I am sure they would use areas closer to them more often making it less congested here by the lake. The most frustrating things are the geese, that do not get cleaned up after and the dogs that people seem to think should use your yard. I don't think signs or police would make any difference at all. Thanks for asking!</p>
			<p>Place to walk my dog other than the road.</p>		
					<p>I have lived on the trail for 40 years. It was the railroad tracks and not as useful as it is today. My 3 boys grew up here and find when they return with their children that it is a wonderful rescue for outdoor fun. We walk, run, bike, roller blade, snow shoe and ski as well as enjoy many encounters with wildlife. One summer season, we enjoyed a rollerblader who sang as he passed by! He came by on a daily basis! What a treat!</p>

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
	We are a restaurant and welcome the trail users. We even put up a bike rack.	We welcome the users to our restaurant!			
					Racing bicycles should be banned. They go too fast when there are other people on the trail. Children don't always look or pay attention. There is going to be an accident. I've counted up to 9 bikers and they were going fast. Other than that - I love the trail.
	For the most part yes, but still get those people who feel they are above the law and trespass onto our property.				<p>The rail trail is great for the community, for tourists, and the young and the elderly. I do however wish they would groom the trail for cross country skiing in the winter so people could continue to use it year round. As much as I think the trail is an asset to our community - there are always a few who ruin a good thing.</p> <p>For example, the other day I was riding my bike on the trail and saw hanging from a tree a small plastic bag with dog poop in it. I cannot believe someone actually did this and expected someone else to pick it up for them. I see trash on my property and along the trail. This is unfortunate. Thanks for listening.</p>

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
	Burglary of property never resolved by police.				Patrolling by local police on bicycles was established through a grant when the trail opened. Now there is a no vehicle policy so patrolling seems nonexistent. Yes problems concerning police is still necessary, during and year round and after dark as posted closed.
				Once snowmobilers were not allowed on the trail, very few people use the trail in the winter. The state should think about a "trail groomer" and the cross country skiers would return.	The state of Mass should take over the contaminated junkyard located on the trail and clean it up. The space could then be used for additional parking. More people every year seem to use the trail but i know parking, especially during special functions, becomes limited.
	How could it be? Some bikers think they own the trail. They don't. It is for everyone. I've been harassed, threatened and called names and then their gone.				

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
	N/A	N/A	Keeps snowmobiles off the old rail bed.		We find the trail to be a positive. Visitors to the trail that we talked to think the trail is great. Many say it is one of the best trails they have used. Having tried many other rail trails, we agree it is one of the best.
	Unauthorized motor vehicles. Police can never catch offenders.				
Don't like all the people around, no privacy, noisy, smoking dope.					
	Litter and dogs always a problem.	Patrol and fines for loose dog owners.			The trail is much better than when the railroad trains were running. Use of the trail daily led me to quit smoking and start biking daily. Fences at residences are a must. The trail is the very best use of public funding - EVER!
					We are thrilled that the trail came to fruition. This was part of the reason we bought our home here in Cheshire.
					Advanced bikers tend to think they own the trail and their manure doesn't stink.
		Please pick up dog feces.			

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
People don't always use parking lots, they park on road.		No reason for teenagers to be on trail after dark!			It is a beautiful trail. I however am not happy with all the traffic. The people who don't clean up after their dogs and litter with trash. Also, people will run you over with their bikes. They need to be more conscientious of kids and dogs. Keep people (teens) off after dark. No reason for them to be on the trail causing trouble.
					This trail is a nice addition to all communities. It has increased public access to our property which at times can be disturbing. It is however nice to see both children and adults utilizing this trail for recreational purposes. The only main issue is the lack of drainage on the road that was paved as a part of the trail. Water is definitely an issue for my property. Thank you!
	N/A				It is the best thing that could have happened to the neighborhood! It has so many healthy benefits to the families here. People enjoying the trail say "Hi" to each other, offer a smile. You don't see that on a regular sidewalk when people pass by each other. It attracts health conscientious and friendly people; people who respect others and the environment!

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
More signage needed for illegal parking.	Cars park on my lawn daily to use the trail.	Post signs and directions to proper parking locations.			
		Cars parking on Railroad Street in parking lot late at night (10:30 and later).			
					Littering is one problem on the trail especially in Adams from Mullen's warehouse north to the center of town. This is because the teenagers hang out along there especially under the bridges. You are not going to stop that and I understand, we were teens once too! We as neighbors to the trail, pick up the litter in the spring - bags and bags of it, and try to during the summer, but there is so much of it. There used to be volunteer groups to clean up the trail but I haven't seen them come down this far. I would work with them if I knew about it. The other problem is people who do not respect or possibly do not realize that you need to keep right. Perhaps signs would be helpful.

<i>Q10 - Impacts, Other (please specify):</i>	<i>Q11 - Issue Resolved? If No, please explain:</i>	<i>Q12 - Possible remedies, Other Suggestion:</i>	<i>Q14 - Benefits, Other (please specify)</i>	<i>Q17 - Uses, Other</i>	<i>Q21 - Anything else to say?</i>
	Better fencing.	Better lighting.			In Adams the lighting should be extended to the South as originally planned.
		No impact.			