

# NH STATE RAIL TRAILS PLAN

SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE PLANNING COMMISSION

DECEMBER 20, 2022



*New Hampshire*  
**DOT**  
*Department of Transportation*

# Project Team



**New Hampshire DOT Bureau of Rail & Transit**  
Lead Agency

**Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.**  
Lead Consultant for Preparation of the Master Plan

**University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension**  
Project Consultant on the Economic Impact of Rail Trails

**Rail Trail Advisory Stakeholders Committee**  
Plan Development Guidance



# Advisory Stakeholder Committee



**NH Department of Transportation**

**NH Department of Natural & Cultural Resources**

**NH Department of Business & Economic Affairs**

**NH Regional Planning Commissions -- J. B. Mack, Southwest RPC**

**Business & Industry Association of NH**

**Non-Motorized Users**

**Motorized Users**

**NH Rail Trail Coalition**

**NH Municipal Association**

**Railroad (operating on a State-owned line)**

**Home-Owner (abutter)**

**Governor's Office (NH Office of Strategic Initiatives)**

# Scope of the Plan



## Senate Bill 185 (2019)

- Update the 2005 rail corridor inventory
- Include a statewide economic-impact analysis on the value of rail trails;
- Consider maintenance and cost of maintenance for rail trails;
- Establish a tier system for prioritizing state investments in rail trail projects;
- Develop recommendations for a state funding mechanism to support rail trail projects and the management structure of such funds;
- Develop a template trail management agreement;



# Scope of the Plan



## Senate Bill 185 (2019)

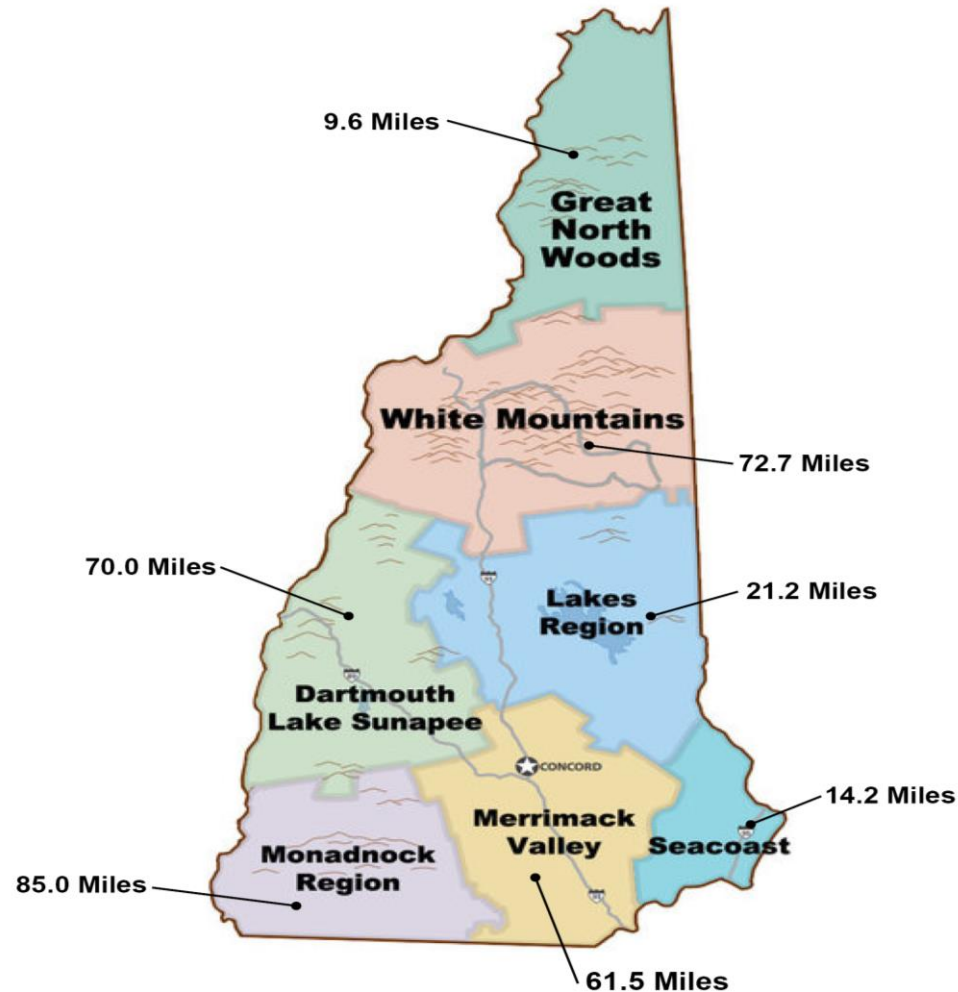
- Compile and maintain a list of trail organizations and the area of the state each serves;
- Identify best practices for acquiring insurance for volunteer trail management groups;
- Document state commitment and support for the development of rail trails for their transportation, recreation tourism, and other economic value;
- Determine how to ensure the integrity of publicly owned rail trail corridors. This may include reestablishing property lines with abutting property owners; and
- Hold a minimum of three public hearings

# Public Engagement



- **Public Hearings (Aug 2021)**
  - Concord
  - Keene
  - Littleton
  - Virtual
- **Public Meetings**
  - 6 Advisory Stakeholder meetings
- **Online survey** (public mtg follow-up)
- **Project website** (<https://www.nhrailtrailsplan.com/>)
- **New state branding website** (RailTrails.nh.gov)

# STATE-OWNED RAIL TRAIL INVENTORY



- **27 Rail Trails**
  - **Owner: 17 NHDOT & 10 DNCR**
  - **Manager: 8 Municipalities & 19 DNCR**
- **338 Miles**
  - **Owner: 249 NHDOT & 89 DNCR**
  - **Manager: 78 Municipalities & 260 DNCR**
  - **Miles on Inactive Rail Corridors: 334 Miles**
  - **Miles on Active Rail Corridors: 4 Miles**
- **Longest Rail Trail: 58 Miles (Northern Rail Trail)**
- **Shortest Rail Trail: 1.5 Miles (Profile Rail Trail)**



# STATE-OWNED RAIL TRAIL INVENTORY





# WIDE VARIETY OF TRAIL USERS

RAIL TRAIL	TRAIL MILES	ACQUISITION SOURCE OF FUNDING <sup>1</sup>	Non-Motorized	Equestrians	Snowmobiles	OHRVs
<b>Great North Woods Region</b>						
Upper Coos Rail Trail	9.6	FRA	✓		✓	✓
<b>White Mountains Region</b>						
Presidential Rail Trail	18	State		✓	✓	Winter Only <sup>2</sup>
Presidential, Pondicherry Segment	1.8	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Ammonoosuc Rail Trail	19.3	Hwy, State	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Littleton-Bethlehem Section	6.9	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Profile Rail Trail	1.5	Unknown	✓	✓	✓	Winter Only <sup>2</sup>
Warren Rail Trail	4.0	Highway	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conway Branch Rail Trail	21.2	TE/State	✓		✓	
<b>Lakes Region</b>						
Cotton Valley Rail Trail	11.4	State	✓		✓	
Farmington Recreational Rail Trail	6.8	TE/State	✓		✓	
Winnepesaukee River Trail	3.5	FRA, State	✓	✓		
WOW Trail	2.4	FRA, State	✓			
Lake Winnisquam Scenic Trail	0.6	FRA, State	✓			
<b>Dartmouth - Lake Sunapee Region</b>						
Mascoma River Greenway	2.3	TE/State	✓			
Northern Rail Trail	58.2	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Sugar River Rail Trail	9.5	State/LWCF	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Monadnock Region</b>						
Ashuelot Rail Trail	21	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Cheshire Rail Trail	39.9	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Fort Hill Rail Trail	8.9	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	
Hillsborough Rail Trail	8	State	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monadnock Recreational Rail Trail	7.2	TE/State	✓	✓	✓	Winter Only <sup>2</sup>
<b>Merrimack Valley Region</b>						
Londonderry Rail Trail	4.5	TE/State	✓			
Windham Rail Trail	4.3	State	✓	✓	✓	
Salem Bike Ped Corridor	5.1	TE/State/Hwy	✓			
Rockingham RRT - Portsmouth Br.	27.4	State	✓	✓	✓	
Rockingham RRT - Fremont Br.	18	State Highway/LWCF	✓	✓	✓	Partial <sup>o</sup>
Greenville Recreational Rail Trail	2.2	DRED	✓		✓	✓
<b>Seacoast Region</b>						
NH Seacoast Greenway	14.2	TE/State/CMAQ	✓	✓		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>337.7</b>		<b>337.7</b>	<b>271.6</b>	<b>305.1</b>	<b>64.6 / 87.3 <sup>4</sup></b>

# ECONOMIC IMPACT – Trails Selected for Surveys

## Calculating Visitor Spending

### Economic Impact of Visitor Spending:



#### Four Steps:

1. Define who counts as a visitor
2. Estimate the number of visitors attracted to the community by the activity
3. Estimate the average level of spending of visitors in the local area
4. Determine the ripple effects of this new money for the community by applying appropriate multipliers

Crompton 2010

## In-Person Survey Locations for "spend" info

1. Upper Coos Rail Trail
2. Presidential Rail Trail
3. Cotton Valley Rail Trail
4. Northern Rail Trail
5. Cheshire Rail Trail
6. Windham Rail Trail
7. Derry Rail Trail
8. Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail (Portsmouth and Fremont Branches)

**Trail counts: estimates from digital trail counters or local sources (RPCs, towns, etc.)  
Not collected as part of this project**



# ECONOMIC IMPACT

## ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS 9 NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE-OWNED RAIL TRAILS



### TOTAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

**\$18,736,000**  
Annual Economic Contribution

**\$2,744,000**  
Tax Revenue\*

**164**  
Jobs Supported

### NH RESIDENT USERS



**85%**  
of trail traffic



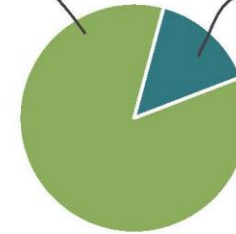
**\$11,835,000**  
Estimated annual Economic Contribution



**\$1,604,000**  
Tax Revenue\*



**108**  
Jobs Supported



■ Residents ■ Visitors

### VISITOR USERS



**15%**  
of trail traffic



**\$6,901,000**  
Estimated annual Economic Contribution



**\$1,140,000**  
Tax Revenue\*



**56**  
Jobs Supported

+Taxes relevant to NH are property taxes, motor vehicle licenses, severance taxes, special assessments, excise taxes, rooms and meals, etc.



### AVERAGE SPEND PER PERSON PER TRIP

**\$14.31**  
NH RESIDENT SPEND

vs.

**\$40.71**  
VISITOR SPEND



**VISITORS  
SPEND 3X  
AS MUCH AS  
RESIDENTS  
EACH TIME  
THEY VISIT A  
RAIL TRAIL**

This impact analysis focuses on nine trails and therefore represents only a limited portion of the total economic impact of state-owned rail trails on the State of New Hampshire economy.

# Rail Trail Funding & Management



## **Funding Sources typically used in NH**

- Federal Programs (TAP, CMAQ, RTP, also FLAP and Northern Borders Regional Commission)
- State Funding (GIA (Grant in Aid) Program)
- Municipal and Non-Profit Funding

## **Other Federal Sources**

- Federal (STBG, HSIP, IIJA – RAISE, Carbon Reduction, etc.)
- Congressionally Directed Spending

## **State Actions to Consider (possible State funding mechanisms)**

- Voluntary non-motorized user fee
- Rail trail parking fee
- General fund appropriation through state operating budget
- Creation of a NH Special Rail Trail Fund



# Management of State Funding & State Rail Trail Mgt



## State Rail Trails Staffing & Management Considerations

- Dedicated State Rail Trail staffing
  - Currently multiple agencies, multiple focus areas
- Redefining Existing State Staffing Resources for Rail Trail Ownership & Management
  - Segment State ownership & management by its predominant current & near-term use
    - DOT: Everyday transportation & active RR lines (rail with trail)
    - DNCR: Recreational



# Prioritizing State Investments

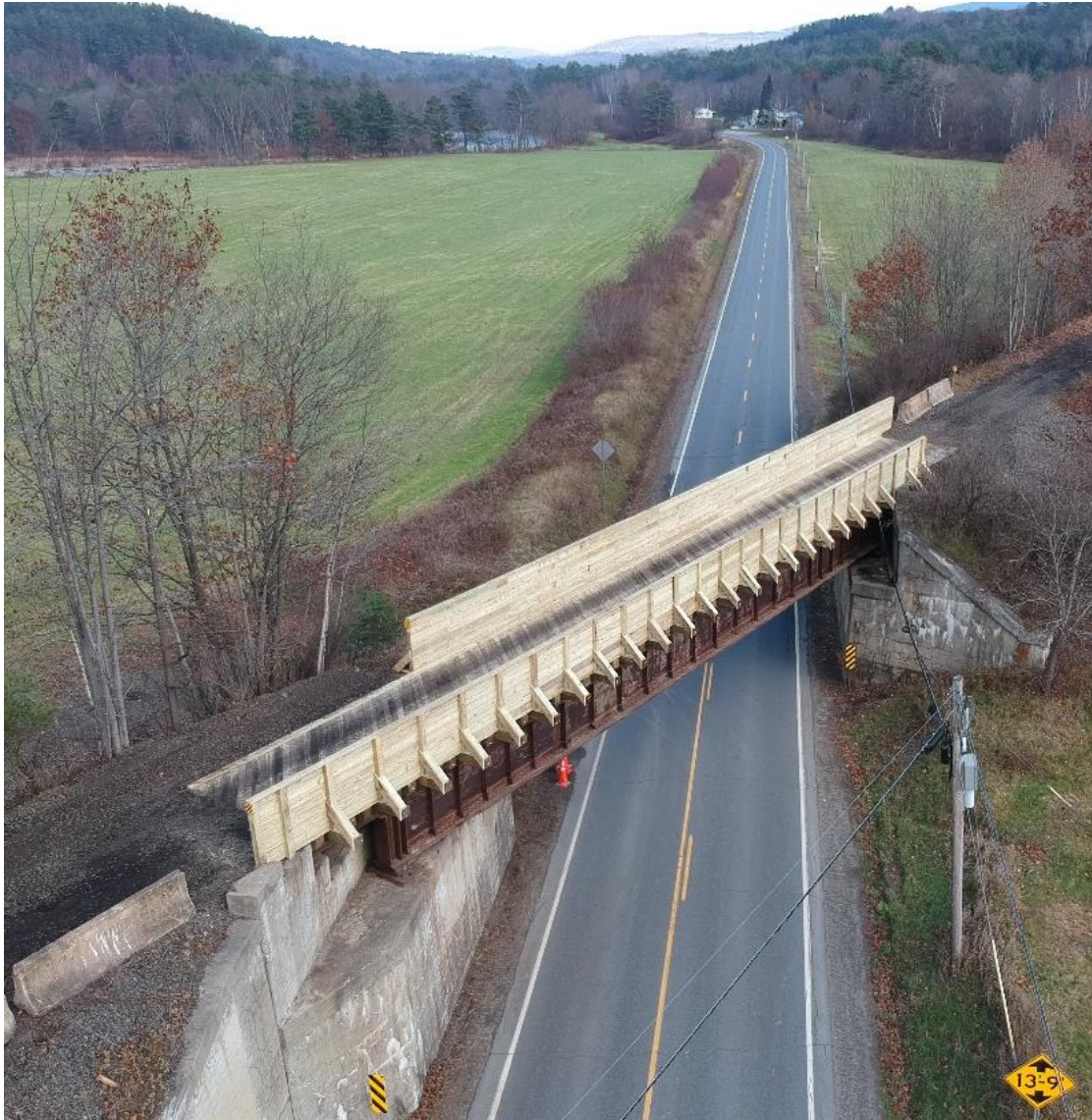


## Recommended Prioritization Criteria

- Connectivity with Existing Rail Trails
- Project Readiness
- Connectivity to Community Assets, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Potential for Everyday Transportation
- Social Equity and Environmental Justice
- Maintaining Existing Rail Trails



# Improvement, Maintenance and Management of Rail Trails



- **Rail Trail Improvement Guidelines**
  - Typical cross-sections (width, vertical clearance, foundation, etc.)
- **Identification of Capital and Routine Maintenance Tasks and Costs**
- **Recommendation for ROW Preservation and Enforcement**
  - Aerial imagery
  - Procedure to report encroachments



# Questions?



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<https://www.nhrailtrailsplan.com/>