



TOWN OF ANDOVER

Haggetts Pond Rail Trail Project

andoverma.gov/HaggettsPondRailTrail



PROJECT PURPOSE & SCOPE

The goal of the Haggetts Pond Rail Trail project is to improve the existing trail along the railbed near Haggetts Pond to make it more welcoming and usable to all town residents. The paved trail proposed at the site will be fully accessible, providing opportunities for persons of all abilities to enjoy Haggetts Pond and the serene environment that surrounds it. When completed, the trail will be the first Town-sponsored accessible and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant trail in Andover, making it a cornerstone of accessible recreational opportunity in the community.

The project consists of two phases which, when completed will span approximately 1.6 miles, from Bellevue Road to High Plain Road. Phase one, which will enter the permitting process this fall, includes the section from Haggetts Pond Road to High Plain Road, including parking lots with handicap spaces at each end, and a fully accessible 8-foot wide asphalt pathway between the two. Other amenities included are interpretive signage, benches, and a new boardwalk that will offer a scenic vantage point at the pond.

Phase two will be the continuation from Haggetts Pond Road to Bellevue Road with a small parking lot on Bellevue Road. The details of this phase and timing are still in the planning phase.

All parking lots are proposed to be constructed with porous pavement to reduce parking lot runoff. Trash barrels and dog waste stations with regular pickup will be placed at each parking lot. Paths are currently, and will continue to be, for non-motorized travel, except in the case of a motorized wheelchair.

SITE SELECTION PROCESS & FUNDING

The selection process of Haggetts Pond as the location for the first Andover accessible trail began in the fall of 2015, when members of the Andover Commission on Disability asked the town to create a trail they could access with friends and family. Representatives from both Conservation and Department of Public Works reviewed all town trails for a location, noting that Haggetts Pond Rail Trail offered the best potential. In 2016, after Town officials and community members representing Andover Recreation, Department of Public Works, Conservation, Planning, Conservation Commission members and members of the Andover Commission on Disability reviewed the trails, the Haggetts Pond Rail Trail was selected due to the ease of grade inherent in rail trails that allows for less disruption to the land in order to create an accessible trail, plus the desire to share this premier beautiful natural area with persons of all abilities.

In 2016 the Institute for Human Centered Design, which also runs the training and educational New England ADA Center, was hired to help the Town envision how to develop an accessible trail at Haggetts Pond Rail Trail. A study was produced in January of 2017 which has served as a guide for the design of the current trail. The study included reaching out to residents with disabilities and inviting 24 residents representing a broad range of ages and abilities to participate in a hands-on research study. The Andover Commission on Disability has advocated for the funding and implementation of this trail ever since. In 2022 the Commission on Disability voiced concern that the Town continued to be out of compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and that the Haggetts Pond accessible rail trail project had not yet been advanced.

SITE SELECTION PROCESS & FUNDING (CONTINUED)

The Andover Planning Department then hired BSC Group to develop a conceptual preliminary design for a trail from High Plain Road to Bellevue Road in order to get an idea of what the cost may be to start working on development of sections of the Haggetts Pond Rail Trail. Departments of Public Works and Facilities worked with BSC Group to further define the plans, bringing in the section of the trail that was identified in the IHCD report, and submitted a MassTrails grant with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The Town was awarded a \$500,000 grant through the MassTrails program in July 2023. This funding was for the section of phase one from Haggetts Pond Road to the new boardwalk. In July 2023 the Select Board directed another \$725,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to the overall project in order to complete at least all of phase one to High Plain Road.

PUBLIC INPUT

Four meetings have been held to gather input from neighbors and the public. Through these meetings, the Town has gathered extensive input and has revised the project's design to align with the preferences and priorities of the community. The Town understands that the design may not alleviate all concerns but we are confident that this design represents the right choices for the collective users and neighbors of Haggetts Pond Rail Trail and honors our commitment to accessibility in Andover. Indeed, it also respects the civil rights of persons with disabilities and fulfills the Town's legal responsibilities to under the Americans with Disabilities Act.



For more information and updates on the project, visit: andoverma.gov/HaggettsPondRailTrail

To request alerts about upcoming meetings and other developments, email: janet.nicosia@andoverma.us



Frequently asked questions

What are Andover's obligations are under Title II of the ADA as it pertains to this project?

The Town's obligation under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that public entities give people with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from and participate in their programs, services and activities. Not only do we have an ethical and moral obligation, but a legal one as the town is currently out of compliance without an ADA accessible trail.

Why can't this be put on AVIS or other lands?

In order to be in compliance, the area for the trail must be town owned land.

Will the project have an impact on the Town's water supply, and has the Town's Water/Sewer Department weighed in on the potential impacts?

Both the DPW Director and Water Superintendent have been part of this process and are in support of the project. The Town is confident that with appropriate safeguards the water quality will not be negatively impacted. Trash collection, doggie bags, post and rail fencing, and added stormwater treatment will help to improve water quality.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

What additional water monitoring will take place of the water supply both during construction and afterwards?

Water systems and quality are monitored constantly at the Water Treatment Plant. In addition, site monitoring will continue throughout construction.

What process has been followed to examine the expected impact on our drinking water supply?

The conservation commission is the body that protects wetlands, and indeed this is a wetland. Contaminants are carried over impervious surfaces to a water body when erosion is not properly thwarted. This project will improve drainage, keeping runoff away from the pond. The presence of asphalt itself is not the primary concern when it comes to toxins as once it cures, it becomes inert. The problem associated with roadways arises from the deterioration of tires containing metals, rubber, and fluid leaks that occur on the road surface. These substances then get worn down or seep onto the road, eventually being carried away by rainwater into nearby water bodies. This concern does not apply to walking paths. According to the DPW the change of this pathway is not a source of contaminants and provides the opportunity for runoff to be improved. As we finalize design, these calculations are part of the Conservation application for impact to the wetlands.

What was the process for selecting Haggetts Pond as the location for an ADA Trail and how was the community engaged?

In selecting a suitable site for an accessible trail, several factors, primarily stringent legal requirements mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and state regulations, significantly restricted the range of feasible locations on Town-owned land. The Town engaged a panel of residents representing a broad range of ages and abilities in the site selection process. Since Haggetts Pond was selected as the location, the Town has encouraged participation from the broader community in determining important features and details of the project.

How will this impact local traffic and safety?

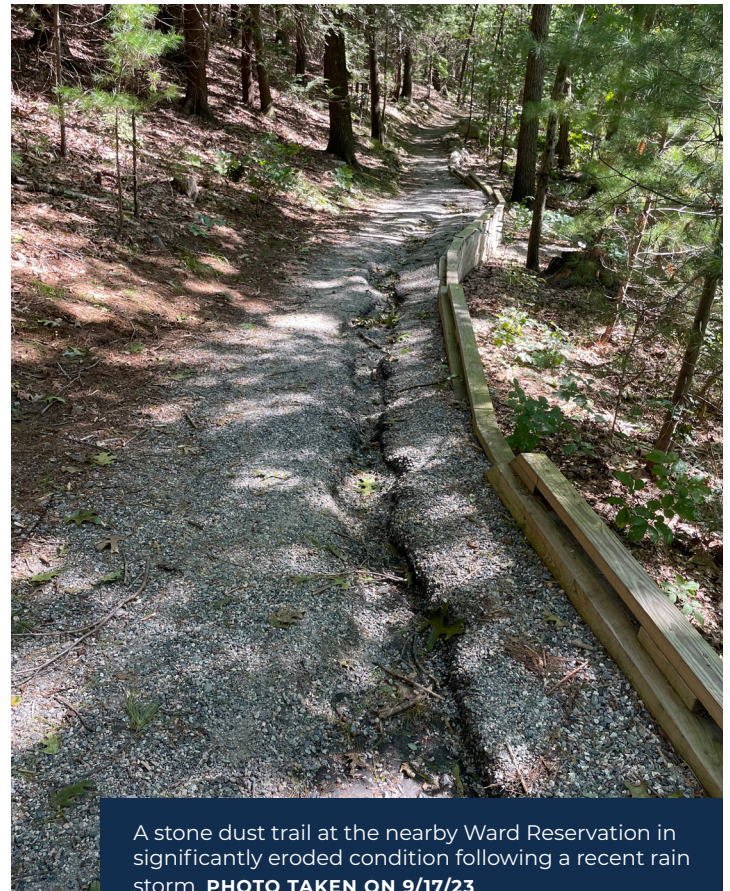
By adding designated off-street parking at both High Plain Road and Haggetts Pond Road, visitors will be directed to park at either end and will be prohibited from parking on the streets nearby. Crosswalk safety will also be implemented where the trail crosses the roads, including flashing button activated crosswalk beacons, striping and signage.

We have consulted with the Police Department and they are committed to increase patrols in the area.

Why is the town choosing to use pavement instead of another common surface like stone dust?

One of the conditions of Title II of the ADA requires the town to provide an ADA compliant surface, not just at the time of installation, but also for as long as the trail is for public use. While stone dust may have traditionally been seen as an accessible surface, it is proving to be unable to hold up to ADA compliance consistently, especially in recent years. This is because of both the increase and size of storm events causing divots, but also from wheelchair and bicycle wheels that create alterations in wet surfaces. A pave asphalt surface provides the most reliable method for the trail to remain in ADA compliance and for the trail to remain safely usable to residents of all abilities.

The Town reached out to the Massachusetts Office on Disability and the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program. Officials from both agencies agreed that stone dust trails can quickly become non-compliant after a few rainstorms and heavy use.



A stone dust trail at the nearby Ward Reservation in significantly eroded condition following a recent rain storm. PHOTO TAKEN ON 9/17/23



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

What is the role of the Conservation Commission and how will the permitting process work?

When a project application involves work within an area that is a certain distance to a wetland, this triggers the requirement that an application must be filed with the Conservation Commission. Projects are reviewed for environmental impact to the wetlands using both State (Wetlands Protection Act) and local (Andover Town Bylaw) regulations. Projects must meet certain requirements as set forth in those regulations in order to receive a permit.

When a permit application is filed for a project, Conservation Department staff work with the applicant to make sure the application contains the required information and design drawings. This involves visits to the proposed work site to make sure the information on the application is accurate. Staff also work with the applicant to understand and follow the wetlands laws. When an application is complete, it is presented to Conservation Commission members for review at their public meeting. At these meetings, the project details are explained, the environmental information from the applicant's engineers is reviewed, and the Commission will ask for additional information if needed. During these meetings, the public is invited to ask questions and share concerns. Some applications take several meetings to review the proposed project, because additional information is required. For example, the Commission will require a peer review, which is a third-party on-site review from certified environmental experts. The Commission will also participate in a scheduled site walk in order to fully understand the project. All site walk observations and peer review studies will be discussed at the additional Conservation Commission public meetings. When the Commission feels they have the necessary information to make a decision, they will take a vote on the application.



Will this trail be plowed or maintained in the winter?

Based on input received during public engagement sessions, the Town does not intend to remove snow from this trail during the winter. The existing trail is not plowed or otherwise maintained during winter months. Improvements to the trail proposed through this project could potentially prolong its usability into typically damp months, subject to weather conditions.

For updates and more information about the Haggetts Pond Rail Trail project, including previous public presentations, visit:

andoverma.gov/haggettspondrailtrail

