

***Recreational Trails Program
2006 APPLICATION COVER SHEET***

Project Name: Squannacook River Rail Trail

Organization: Squannacook River Rail Trail Advocacy Committee

Brief organizational overview (municipalities, state agencies n/a):

The Squannacook River Rail Trail Advocacy Committee is a volunteer group of approximately 20 members committed to converting 2.5 miles or more of abandoned railroad into a recreational trail in Townsend, Massachusetts.

Contact Person and title: Al Futterman, Land Programs and Outreach Director

Address: Nashua River Watershed Association, 592 Main Street, Groton, Massachusetts 01450

Telephone: 978-448-0299 ***Fax:*** 978-448-0941 ***E-Mail:*** alfutterman@NashuaRiverWatershed.org

Project Location (town): Townsend, Massachusetts

Amount Requested: \$ 20,000 ***Total Project Value:*** \$ 25,000

Will the proposed trail project actively facilitate use by:

Motorized users ____ ***Non-Motorized users*** ***Combination of Users*** ____

Have you previously applied for Recreational Trails funding? No

If so when? _____ ***Years Funded*** _____

Please provide a three-sentence description of your proposed project:

The Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee requests \$20,000 to fund a preliminary project design and engineering study for a proposed rail trail in Townsend, Massachusetts. The Squannacook River Rail Trail is one of four rail trails in our congressional district designated for funding under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Before Townsend can apply for the earmarked construction funds, the mandatory study must be completed by a professional civil engineering firm.

Recreational Trails Program **APPLICATION**

PART I: *Complete the application cover sheet (below)*

PART II: *Description (2-3 pages)*

A. Project Description

1. *Explain the scope of work or what it is you intend to accomplish with this project. Describe the range of trail users the project will serve and how the project will actively facilitate different trail use if it will, how it connects to or enhances a greater trail system, or how it solves an existing problem or issue.*

The Squannacook River Rail Trail is a proposed conversion of approximately 2.5 miles of abandoned Peterborough & Shirley Railroad into a recreational trail in Townsend, Massachusetts. The purpose of the trail is to provide a safe and enjoyable route for human-powered travel between the major population centers of town. The trail will provide a safe resource for kids, adults, seniors, physically challenged individuals, and families to exercise, explore, walk, run, bicycle, and enjoy the outdoors. Currently the only connection between our main residential, business, and historic centers is Route 119, a narrow and heavily used state highway that is extremely dangerous for bicycles and pedestrians. The rail trail will provide a safer, more scenic, and more direct alternative. For more information about the proposed Squannacook River Rail Trail, please see our web site at <http://www.squannacookriverrailtrail.org>.

The trail will connect Townsend's two main population centers. Townspeople will have easier access to our town library, town common, historical districts, high school, and the only two shopping districts in town. There will be access to the rail trail at several points and parking at each end. Our town has Townsend State Forest, but the rugged trails are not suited for everyone. The smooth surface of a rail trail, over a level slope with signage and rest rooms, will appeal to a large percentage of our townspeople. We feel that this rail trail project would have a dramatic impact on the sense of community we feel as a town.

The trail parallels the Squannacook River and will improve access to this important waterway, which defines our town but has been mostly utilized only by a few anglers and serious outdoors people. More residents and visitors will experience the beauty of the Squannacook River and its surrounding woodlands. The trail passes alongside Townsend Harbor, a picturesque pond and dam on the Squannacook River, and will facilitate an inviting walking tour of many of Townsend's historic treasures clustered around this scenic body of water. Attachment B includes maps and photographs of some of the natural and historic features along the trail.

The Secretary of Environmental Affairs has recognized the quality, uniqueness and significance of Townsend's natural and cultural resources by designating the Squannassit Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). We believe that the rail trail supports the ACEC goals of preservation and stewardship of both natural and cultural resources. In a region threatened by development and loss of connection between wildlife habitats, the trail is a step in the right direction toward preserving, restoring, and enhancing critical resources. Attachment C includes a letter of support from the Squannassit-Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (S-P ACEC) Stewardship Committee. (For more information, please see <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/index.htm>.)

This rail trail project has excellent potential to become a multi-phase, multi-jurisdictional effort in the future. The neighboring town of Groton has expressed interest in collaborating to extend the trail an extra mile eastward to a terminus the Bertozzi Wildlife Management Area in West Groton, which creates potential for ultimately connecting to the existing and highly popular Nashua River Rail Trail. Toward the northwest, the potential exists to convert 4.5 additional miles of abandoned railway to the New Hampshire border, connecting with the existing 13-mile Mason-Greenville Trail for an interstate rail trail totaling more than 20 miles.

2. *Summarize the specific tasks to be accomplished during the course of the project. Include work that is part of the project match as well as proposed grant funded portions of the project. (Be clear and realistic.)*

The tasks necessary for completion of the overall project are:

- a) Complete preliminary project design and engineering study
- b) Purchase environmental liability insurance

- c) Negotiate lease with the MBTA
- d) Apply for Federal Highway and State funding for design and construction
- e) Design and construction

The tasks necessary for completion of the proposed grant-funded part of the project are:

- a) Issue RFP for the preliminary project design and engineering study
- b) Contract a professional engineering firm to complete the study
- c) Conduct the study
- d) Submit the completed study to Mass Highway

3. *Describe how your project meets the program criteria.*

As shown in the maps provided in Attachment B, the rail trail will be a recreational corridor along the Squannacook River and the Townsend Harbor historic district, providing opportunities to enjoy our natural, cultural, and historic treasures. It will connect to the Squannacook River State Wildlife Management Area and Townsend State Forest, encouraging passive use of open spaces where people can enjoy the outdoors close to home. The trail has potential to connect in future phases to a larger network of trails, including the Nashua River Rail Trail and New Hampshire's Mason-Greenville Trail, becoming a long-distance, inter-town, multi-state trail.

The trail will serve the recreational needs of our community by encouraging non-motorized activity and bringing the much-needed health benefits of outdoor exercise to our increasingly car-dependent population. The trail will make our town much more accessible, linking the community together in ways that roads cannot. In a region facing intense growth pressure and spreading development, the rail trail will provide a protected open corridor along Townsend's Harbor Pond and the Squannacook River and will be a lasting contribution to the quality of life for all residents.

4. *Summarize the relevant environmental and social issues. Describe the existing conditions on the project site, and how the project will minimize and/or mitigate impacts to natural and cultural resources. Discuss any relevant permitting issues.*

The abandoned Peterborough & Shirley Railroad, built in 1847, is now overgrown and of limited usefulness except by all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles. Beginning in 2002, four members of our committee studied the feasibility of converting the abandoned railroad into a rail trail. In 2005, the committee submitted a detailed report proposing a rail trail to the Board of Selectmen. (See Attachment D — *Final Report of the Squannacook River Rail Trail Feasibility Study Committee*). In 2005, the civil engineering firm of Faye, Spofford, and Thorndike completed a preliminary reconnaissance of the proposed rail trail and found no obvious environmental or engineering issues that would present significant obstacles.

The proposed Squannacook River Rail Trail is one of four trails in our congressional district that are earmarked for Federal funding from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) highway bill. However, before we can apply for Federal funding, we must obtain a preliminary project design and engineering study, required by Mass Highway to be completed by a professional civil engineering firm before federal funds can be released to pay for detailed design and construction costs. The study will formally address such topics as railroad right-of-way, encroachment and easements, physical assessment, cross-walks, safe route to high school, culverts, impact on abutters, historical settings, erosion, wetlands, vernal pools, potential environmental contamination, storm water management, and parking.

5. *Provide a realistic time-line for completion of the project, including grant- and match-funded activities.*

For the completion of the preliminary project design and engineering study, the specific grant- and match-funded activities and target dates are as follows:

- Issue a Request for Proposals for the preliminary project design and engineering study – Fall 2006
- Select a consulting firm from bidding contractors – Early winter 2006
- Raise funds to cover cost of study – Now through Spring 2007
- Complete the preliminary project design and engineering study – Spring 2007
- Present the completed project design and engineering study to the town – Spring 2007

- Place an article on the town meeting warrant for a vote to lease the railroad property from the MBTA – Spring 2007 (First town meeting of the year)
6. *Visual Support. You must include clearly labeled map(s) showing the location of all work. Also include photographs, diagrams, or plans if they help to illustrate the proposal. Remember to include four copies of all supporting material.*

Attachment B provides maps and photos showing the proximity of the rail trail to town facilities and population centers, natural and open spaces, and historic districts.

B. Need for Project, Community Support

1. *Explain how the project will fulfill a recognized recreational need. How will the project further a goal of an adopted statewide, regional, or local plan, e.g. Commonwealth Connections (available at www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/connections.htm) state park management plans, local master plans and open space & recreation plans).*

The proposed rail trail is consistent with the greenway vision for Massachusetts, as described in *Commonwealth Connections* published by the Department of Environmental Management. Specifically, the trail supports the statewide trail vision shown on pages 22 and 23 for Central Massachusetts with respect to the Squannassit Regional Preserve and the Nashua River corridor. As stated previously, the proposed rail trail will provide a safe resource for outdoor recreation. The trail will connect our town population centers and provide human-powered access to the Squannacook River, Townsend State Forest, the Squannacook River State Wildlife Management Area, and Townsend’s historic district.

2. *Describe the type of support your project has from the community and any partnerships that will be formed among trail users, organizations, agencies, and others. To document this support, please provide a letter from the chief elected official of the municipality(ies) where the project will take place, as well as other support letters, endorsements, news clippings, etc. (Please include no more than 4 or 5 different examples). If you are proposing a project that will take place on land that is not owned or managed by your organization/agency, you must include with your application a signed statement from the appropriate landowner or manager authorizing the project and ensuring continuing public access.*

In a non-binding referendum on the ballot in Townsend’s special election on May 10, 2006, voters were asked if the town should pursue a rail-to-trails conversion. The ballot question passed by 1021-259, with Townsend voters showing support for the proposed rail trail by nearly a four-to-one margin.

Our committee has significant support from Massachusetts State Representative Robert Hargraves and United States Congressman John Olver, who has earmarked funds in the TEA-LU transportation bill specifically for the design and construction of this project. We have made presentations and gained support from the Townsend Historical Society Board of Directors, Townsend Police Chief Marshall, the Townsend Lions Club, the Townsend Land Trustees, the Townsend Lunenburg Rotary, the Townsend Highway Superintendent, the North Middlesex Superintendent of Schools (now retired), and the Townsend Couples Club. The railroad property is available for an 85-year lease from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) at a cost of \$1.

Attachment C contains the following letters of recommendation:

- John Olver, United States Congressman, Massachusetts 1st Congressional District
- Robert Antonioni, Massachusetts Senator, Worcester and Middlesex District
- Townsend Board of Selectmen
- Squannassit-Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Stewardship Committee
- Edward Torcoletti, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Willard Brook/Pearl Hill/Nashua River Rail Trail

Please limit your description (Part II) to 3 typed pages. Address the selection criteria but send only material that is necessary to support your proposal. Concise is best. Remember, four copies of everything.

PART III: Budget (1 page)

A. Funding Request

1. *Dollar amount requested.*
2. *Itemized list of proposed expenditures for which you are requesting funding. (For example, project personnel time and cost per hour, costs of materials needed to complete the project, etc.)*
3. *If your project encompasses multiple state fiscal years (July 1 to June 30), please try to break down your budget by fiscal year.*

The Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee requests \$20,000 to fund a preliminary project design and engineering study for the proposed rail trail in Townsend, Massachusetts. The funding will be used to engage the services of a qualified professional engineering consulting firm to complete the study. We estimate the cost of the study at \$25,000 based on verbal estimates from engineering firms. The exact amount will be determined by a competitive bidding process. The actual amount may be less than estimated because of the preliminary work already completed and the additional work to be contributed by our committee.

B. Match

1. *Full dollar value of match to be provided.*
2. *Itemized list of contributions toward the 20% (minimum) local match. List sources and value of funds, in-kind services, volunteer hours, donated equipment, materials, etc.*

The estimated value of the local match is \$9,512. The Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee's contributions toward the local match are summarized in the following table.

Volunteer Services	Hours	Hourly Rate	Value
Develop Request for Proposals	16	\$18	\$288
Manage proposal process (announce and distribute RFP, address inquiries, acknowledge submissions, etc.)	16	\$18	\$288
Evaluate proposals and select consultant	36	\$18	\$648
Develop contract and obtain legal review	24	\$100	\$2,400
Manage project (schedule, resources, meetings, communications)	60	\$18	\$1,080
Assist with project (photodocumentation, GIS mapping, interviewing abutters, etc.)	80	\$18	\$1,440
Schedule and facilitate meetings with town boards, abutters, school officials, police and fire departments	20	\$18	\$360
Schedule, publicize, and facilitate public meetings	8	\$18	\$144
Evaluate and submit completed study	40	\$18	\$720
Public relations/press releases	8	\$18	\$144
		Subtotal	\$7,512
Materials and Equipment Use			
Photocopier, computer, printer, and fax use			\$300
Paper supplies, postage, phone			\$100
		Subtotal	\$400
Facility Use			
Nashua River Watershed Association meeting room @ \$50 per hour			\$2,000
		Subtotal	\$2,000
		TOTAL	\$9,512

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Financial Forms
- B. Maps and Photos of Proposed Rail Trail
- C. Letters of Recommendation
- D. Final Report of the Squannacook River Rail Trail Feasibility Study Committee

Attachment A – Financial Forms

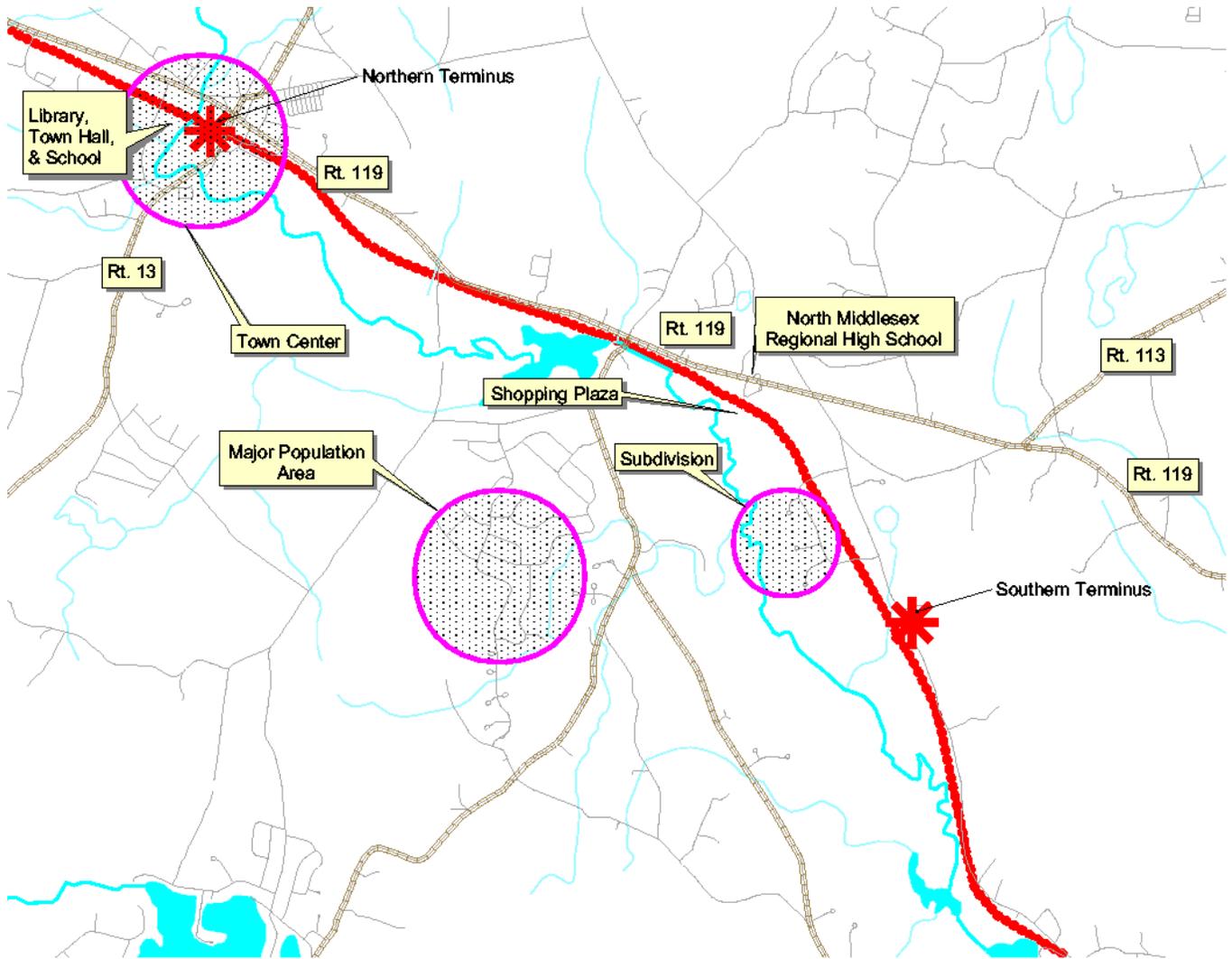
Financial Forms

Please complete and include one copy each of the "Request for Verification of Taxation Reporting Information W-9," the "Commonwealth Terms & Conditions," the "Standard Contract" and "Signature Verification" forms. These forms are available at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/trails/grants.htm> or by calling 413-586-8706 ext 20. Fill out only the lines and areas indicated with arrows, and have the authorized official of your organization sign all four forms. Original signatures required - no photocopies. Non-profit organizations must also include a copy of your "Tax Status Determination Letter" from the IRS.

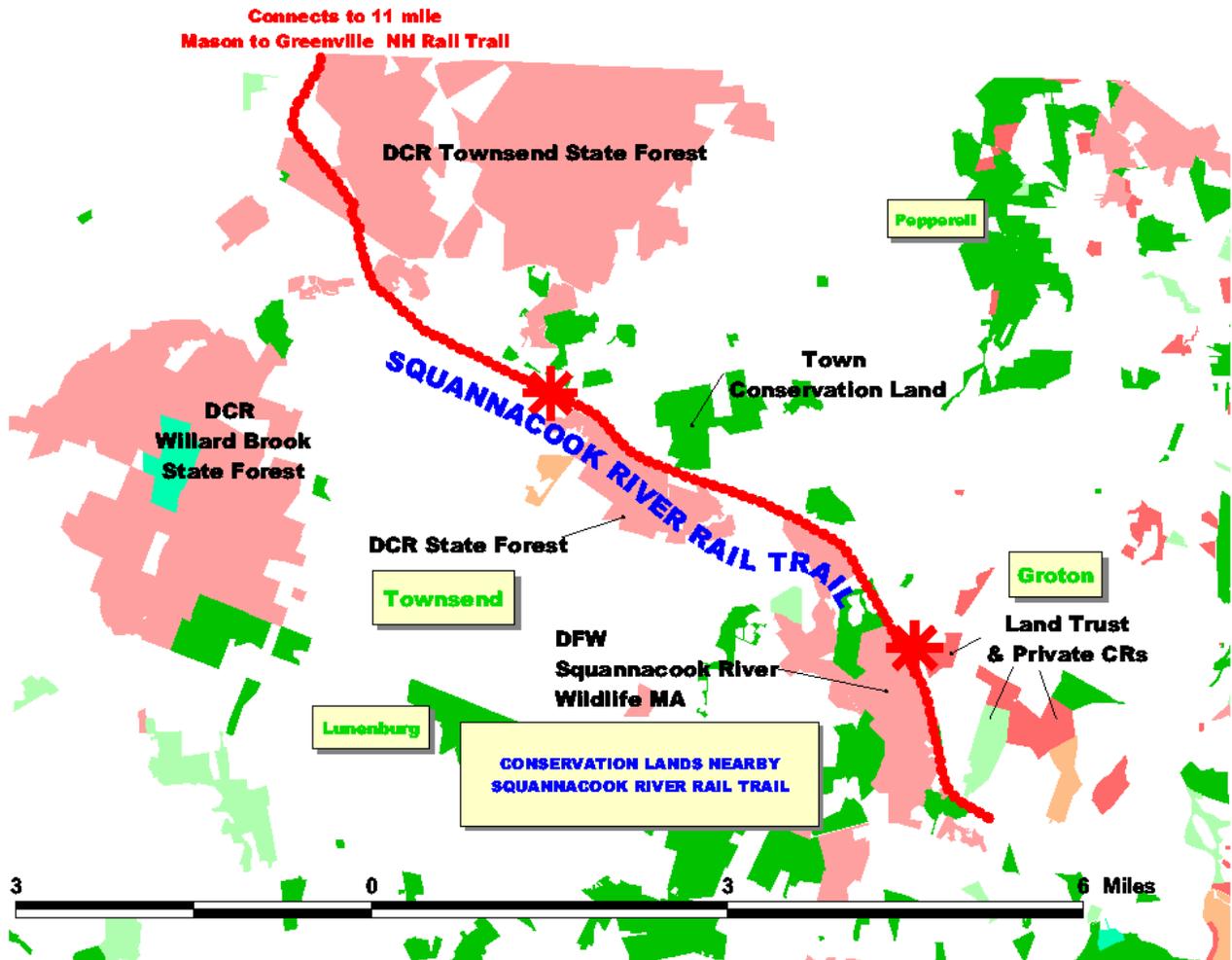
Note: Municipalities and other government agencies need only include the signed contract form.

Attachment B – Maps and Photos of Proposed Rail Trail

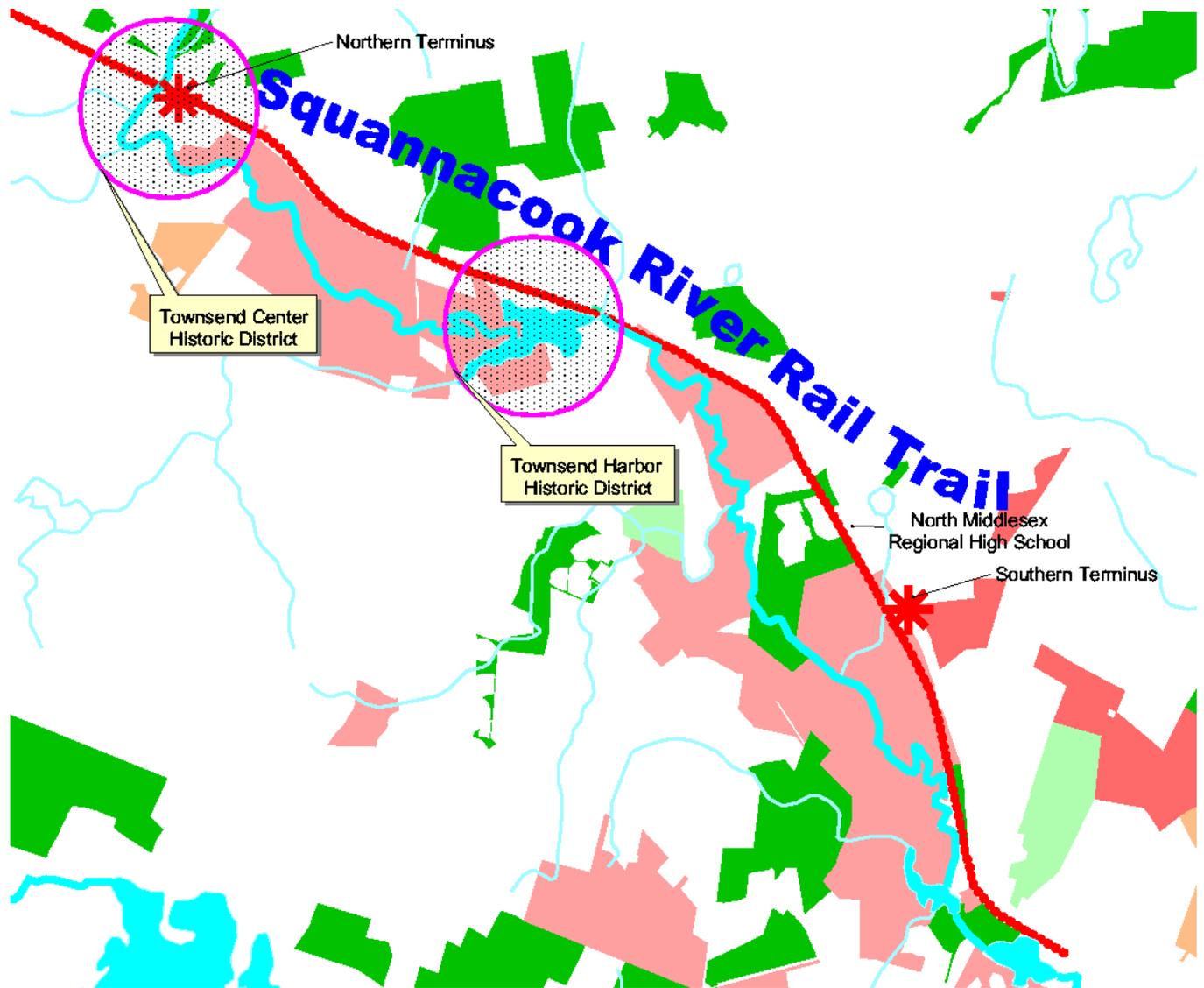
Map 1 - Location of town facilities, population centers, shopping districts, schools, and major roadways along the rail trail.



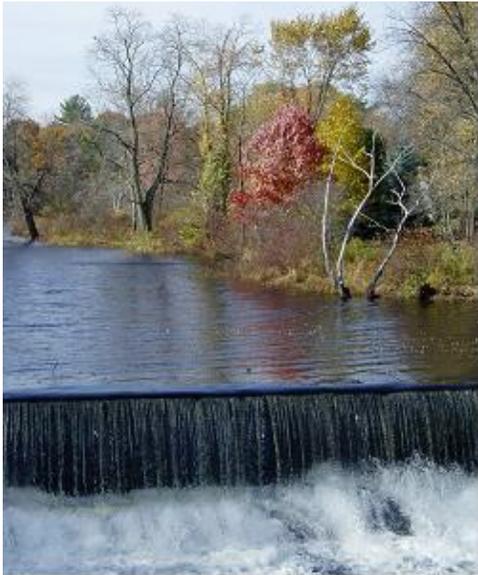
Map 2 - Location of state forests, conservation lands, wildlife management areas, and land trusts along rail trail.



Map 3 - Location of town historic districts along rail trail.



Photos 1 - Natural features along the rail trail



Dam on the Squannacook River at Townsend Harbor.



Harbor Pond with the railroad in the foreground.



The Squannacook River near the proposed rail trail.

Photos 2 - Historic features along the rail trail



The Spaulding Grist Mill, which processed corn and grain grown by local farmers until it closed in the 1920s.



The Cooperage, a well-preserved mill on Townsend Harbor built in 1733.



The Harbor Church, built in 1853 as a Unitarian meetinghouse.



Reed Homestead, which houses the Townsend Historical Society's Historic House Museum (railroad in foreground).

Attachment C – Letters of Recommendation

John Olver
United States Congressman
Massachusetts 1st Congressional District

Robert Antonioni
Massachusetts Senator
Worcester and Middlesex District

Townsend Board of Selectmen

Squannassit-Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
Stewardship Committee

Edward Torcoletti
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Willard Brook/Pearl Hill/Nashua River Rail Trail

**Attachment D – Final Report of the Squannacook River Rail Trail Feasibility Study
Committee**