



Over the river and through the woods: Recommendations for walking paths to link Williamstown's center with outdoor recreation areas

Team TRAIPSE*

Bill Sacks '03, Nina Trautmann '03, Kristina Weyer '03

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Professors: Hank Art and Sarah Gardner

Client: Leslie Reed-Evans, Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation (WRLF)

* TRAIPSE= "Trail Routing And Integration of Populated and Scenic Environments"

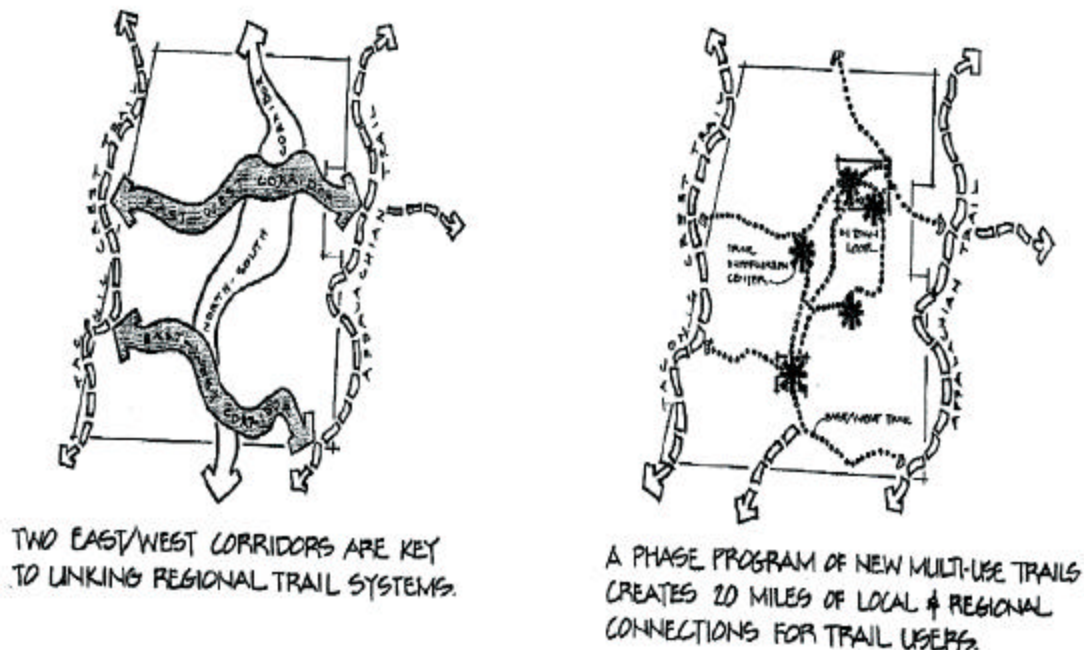
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I. Introduction

Problem Identification

The 2002 Williamstown Master Plan envisions Williamstown as a future “Town of Trails.” This plan recommends creating links between existing trails and between the town center and the outlying trails, as well as establishing a number of trail kiosks around town to provide information about the town’s trail system. New multiuse trails could also connect the recreational, cultural, residential and commercial segments of town: for example, a trail along the Green River to a possible recreation area at the confluence of the Green and Hoosic Rivers (Williamstown Master Plan draft, 2002). Some of these new paths could be short and relatively flat, providing the opportunity to see some of the area’s natural beauty for both local residents and tourists who



“Town of Trails” Idea (Williamstown Master Plan draft, 2002)

are currently unable to: for example, children or the elderly, who may be unable to hike existing strenuous trails.

There are currently two major north-south trail systems running through Williamstown: the Taconic Crest system in the west and the Appalachian trail system in the east. The “Town of Trails” idea envisions two or three east-west trail systems connecting these unconnected north-south systems. One east-west system would run through the town center in the northern section

of Williamstown, one would run through southern Williamstown, and a third — the Mahican-Mohawk trail — would run north of the town center (Williamstown Master Plan draft, 2002; Reed-Evans).

Our client for this project is Leslie Reed-Evans, director of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation (WRLF). The WRLF has taken much of the responsibility for implementing the trails component of the Williamstown Master Plan. One of Reed-Evans' main objectives is to make it easier for people to use Williamstown's existing trail system. In addition to benefiting outdoor enthusiasts, this goal is valuable from a land-preservation perspective. If more people come to appreciate Williamstown's preserved land, they will be more likely to see the value in preserving *additional* open space. The "town of trails" plan would help accomplish this goal by providing walking access from the town center to the surrounding trails, as well as by providing easily accessible information about the town's trails (Reed-Evans). The presence of trails on additional town properties will also make it more likely that these properties will remain preserved rather than sold for development.

Project History

The trail projects outlined in the Master Plan draft are still in the initial stages, and before our work, they had not been studied extensively. Williamstown's Open Space Plan, written in 1994, analyzes some of Williamstown's trail needs. The report asserts the need for additional hiking, biking and jogging trails in Williamstown and especially for short, easy walking trails near the town center. In addition, the report states that one of Williamstown's problems is lack of information about existing trails. Some other needs listed in the Open Space Plan are better access to nature areas near the center of town (such as the Hoosic River) and more recreational opportunities that serve the elderly and handicapped (Williamstown Open Space Plan, 1994, pp. 39-43). Some specific actions listed in this report are creating new trails that access wetlands as well as new trails that access areas with significant concentrations of wildlife or vegetation along the Taconic Crest Trail (Williamstown Open Space Plan, 1994, p. 46).

More recently, the Open Space and Recreation section of Williamstown's Master Plan (2002 draft) suggests promoting Williamstown as the "Trail Center of Western Massachusetts," or a "Town of Trails," as described above. The plan suggests starting by making the town's streets more bike and pedestrian friendly, possibly even converting some streets to bicycle and

pedestrian-only. Next, the master plan suggests purchasing corridors of protected land and creating at least two sets of east-west trail corridors — through the northern and southern parts of town — as well as a “coordinated network of pedestrian paths.” The plan lists many possible connections but does not evaluate any of the options. Finally, the master plan suggests building a multi-use trail through town that would connect popular destinations as well as existing trail systems (Williamstown Master Plan draft, 2002).

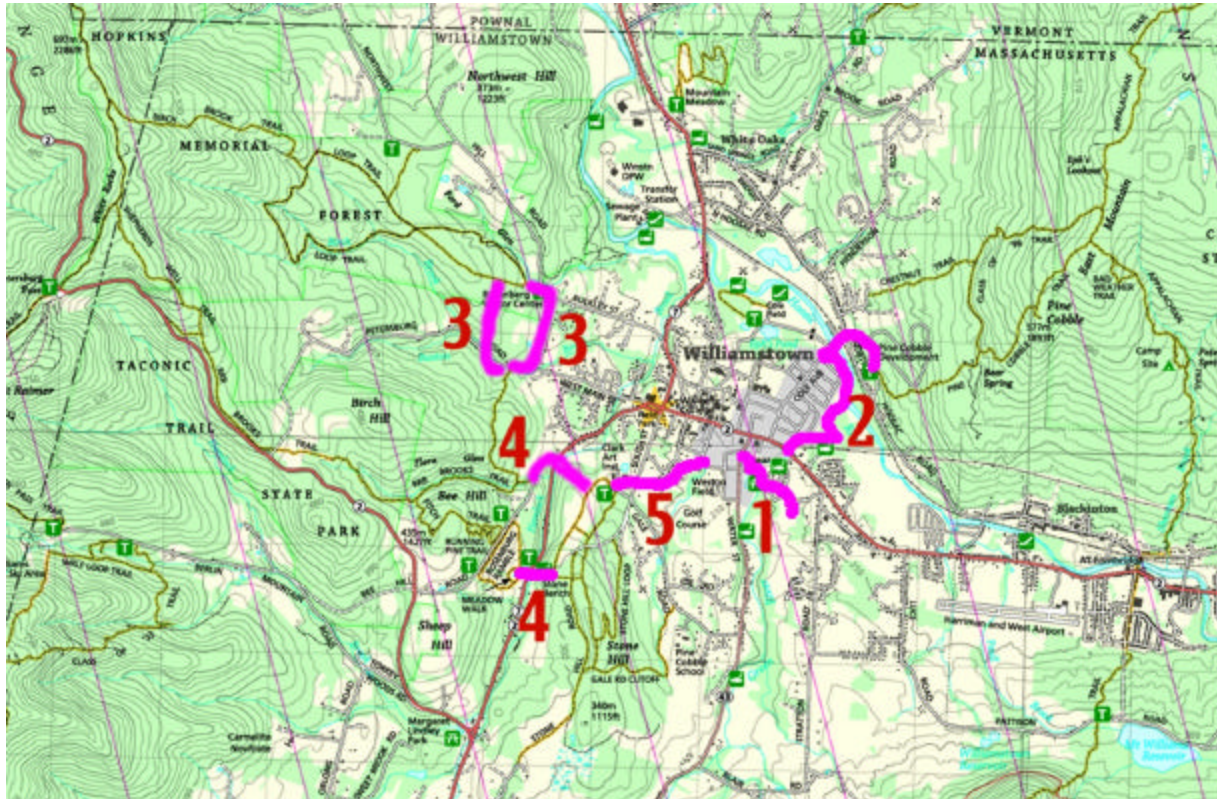
Project Overview & Scope

Because Williamstown already has a good trail network, we decided that the goals of our client would be best met through facilitating greater use of the existing trail and public recreation areas. We thus decided to focus on the creation of smaller trail connections that would link such areas near the town center instead of examining the possibilities for longer additional trails, including multi-use trails, in Williamstown. For the purposes of this project, we defined the town center as primarily consisting of the Spring Street area; we considered Water Street to the east and South Street (including the Clark Art Institute) to the west to be extensions of the town center, but not as central as Spring Street itself. These trail connections could later be incorporated into a larger east-west connection through Williamstown. For the present, though, they would be useful in their own right, providing easier access to trailheads and recreation areas. We chose to focus our evaluation on two general types of trails: paths connecting the town center with nearby trailheads and recreation areas, and short trails linking currently unconnected trail networks near the town center. The possibilities we looked at included wooded trails as well as marked paths along roads and sidewalks.

We identified potential needs for additional walking paths and trails near the town center by studying Williamstown’s existing trail system. We then narrowed our focus through discussions with our client and with Willard Morgan, interim director of the Williams Outing Club. Morgan suggested, for example, that with Williamstown’s current abundance of forested trails, more paths through town are needed most, such as along the Green River. Such paths would be popular with people who prefer short strolls to long hikes. Unlike forested routes connecting existing trails, these in-town paths would fill a niche not currently filled by Williamstown’s trail network (Morgan).

From these discussions, we chose to evaluate five areas:

1. A connection between Linear Park and the Lowry property, a parcel of town conservation land beyond Eastlawn Cemetery.
2. A connection between Linear Park and the Pine Cobble trailhead. This trail would run along the Green River to its confluence with the Hoosic River, at which point it would continue along roads.
3. A connection between Hopkins Forest and the RRR Brooks Trail, utilizing an existing new trail between the RRR Brooks Trail and Petersburg Road, the Hatton Trail. This connection, which could run either through the woods or along Northwest Hill Road, would complete a 9-mile hiking loop from Hopkins Forest to the Taconic Crest Trail to the Shepherds Well Trail to the RRR Brooks Trail and then back to Hopkins Forest.
4. A connection between the Bee Hill/Sheep Hill trails and the Stone Hill trail system. The two possibilities for this connection would be from near the base of Stone Hill to Bee Hill Road to the RRR Brooks trailhead, or from further south in the Stone Hill trail system to the base of Sheep Hill at the Rosenburg Farm.
5. A marked walking route between the Clark Art Institute and Spring Street, which could extend to the Williams College Museum of Art, thus connecting the two art museums in Williamstown with each other and with the downtown shopping district.



Proposed routes (numbers refer to numbers in paper) (North Berkshire Trails map)

Although we decided not to investigate an east-west connection between the Appalachian Trail and the Taconic Crest Trail as one of our explicit goals, these additional trails would come close to creating such a connection. The Hatton Trail to Hopkins Forest route and the Stone Hill to Sheep/Bee Hill route both connect the Taconic Crest trail to places near the town center, and the Linear Park to Pine Cobble trail connects the town center to the Appalachian Trail.

To investigate these different routes we conducted a community survey (see Appendix A for detailed results and discussion), visited the sites, and contacted affected landowners, relevant committee officials, and local residents with interest in Williamstown trails.

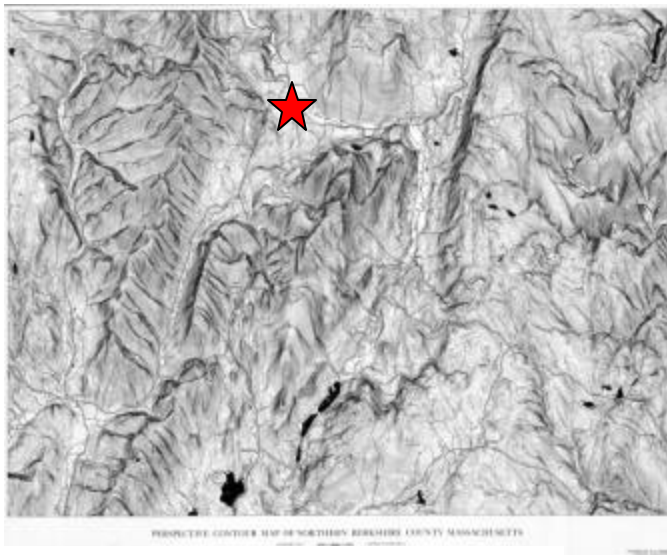
II. Town Profile

The Village Beautiful: A Tourist Destination

Williamstown, Massachusetts is a small, quaint New England college town of 8,310 residents nestled in the foothills of the Berkshires (“Facts and Information”). Located on 47 square miles near the junction of Routes 2 and 7 in the northwest corner of the state, Williamstown is approximately a one-hour drive from Albany, a half-hour drive from Bennington, and a three hour drive from New York City and Boston (“Especially for Visitors”). The town’s main employer is Williams College, a small liberal-arts school with 1,988 students (“Facts and Information”).

Tourists from around the world travel to visit the town’s cultural attractions including the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Williams College Museum of Art, the annual Williamstown Jazz Festival in April, the Williamstown Film Festival, and the nearby Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) (Williamstown Chamber of Commerce). Another tourist draw is the valley’s scenic beauty. Known as “The Village Beautiful,” the region offers beautiful fall foliage, 360° views of surrounding farmland and mountains, and excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation including hiking, backpacking, camping, fishing, birding, swimming, canoeing, mountain biking, golfing, and cross-country and downhill skiing. Numerous other communities within an afternoon’s drive offer additional opportunities for cultural visits and outdoor recreation.

Town Setting & History



Red star denotes downtown Williamstown.

Williamstown’s regional geologic history greatly influences its geography and town layout. The town is located along the western side of an H-shaped valley between north-south ridges that were created by plate collisions and the resulting east-west compressional forces. Subsequent glaciation and scouring carved out U-shaped valleys in the region, and the valley where Williamstown now sits was

once filled by the Glacial Lake Bascom. The main section of town, centered at Spring and Water Streets, has an elevation of 600-700', and surrounding ridges rise to elevations of up to 3487' at Mt. Greylock, which is the highest peak in Massachusetts and a popular tourist destination.

Until a century ago, much of Williamstown was cleared and used for farming and pastureland. Over the last fifty years, most of agricultural land has been abandoned and has since reforested, but remaining stone walls and foundations in the woods remind hikers of the town's agricultural past. The town has several small ponds, brooks, and two larger rivers, the Hoosic and Green Rivers. Williamstown's steep topography and streams, including the location of existing bridges and potential new bridge sites, affects the nature of the current trail system and must be considered when planning new trail routes in the region.

Williamstown's Trail System

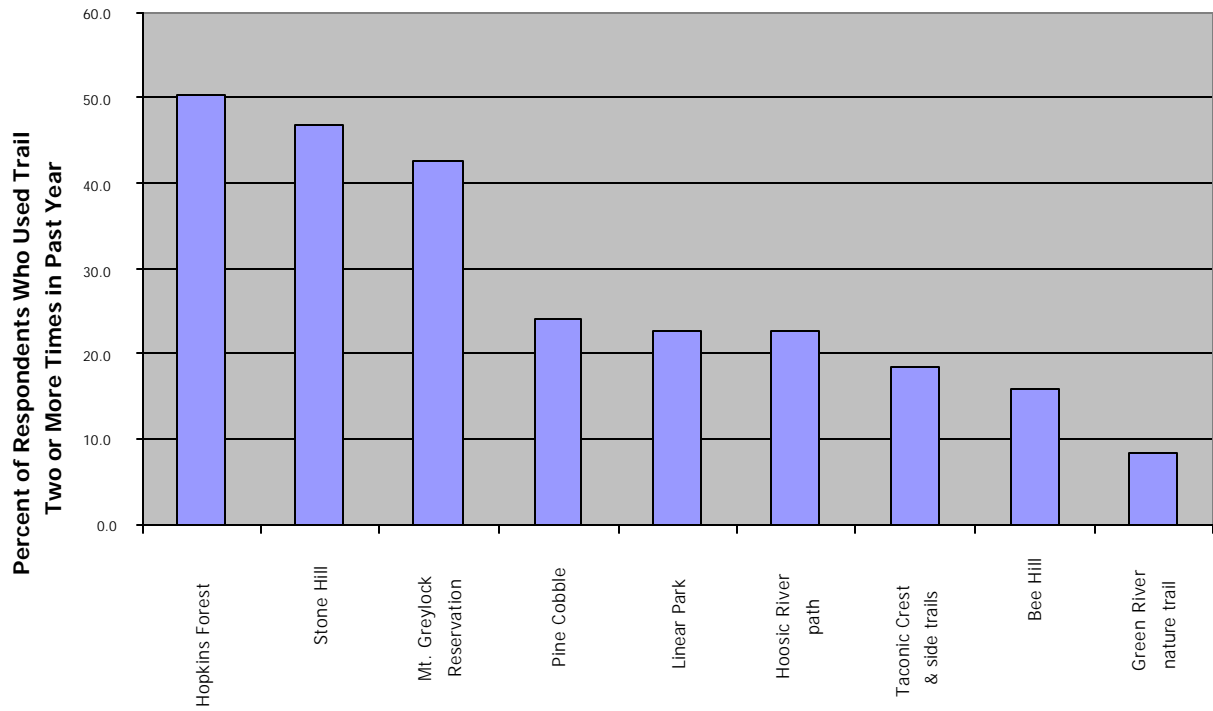
The Appalachian Trail runs through the eastern part of town and forms the backbone of the Mt. Greylock State Reservation, which spans the towns of Williamstown, North Adams, New Ashford and Adams. Besides Mt. Greylock, this trail network includes popular destinations including the Hopper, Stony Ledge and Mt. Prospect, all three of which lie within Williamstown's boundaries. The Pine Cobble Trail is a popular access point to the Appalachian Trail, and also a popular place to start a through-hike of the Long Trail. Pine Cobble trail has its trailhead only slightly over a mile from Williamstown's center and offers great views of Williamstown and surrounding areas. To the west of town lies the Taconic Crest trail, which weaves back and forth between Williamstown and the state of New York. There are a number of side trails in Williamstown that connect with this long North-South trail, including the Birch Brook Trail (which connects to the Hopkins Forest loop trail), the Shepherd's Well Trail (which connects to Bee Hill via the RRR Brooks Trail), the Berlin Mountain trails and the Phelps Trail.

There are also a number of smaller trails near the center of Williamstown. The Hopkins Forest loop is a relatively leisurely figure-eight. There is a network of trails on Bee Hill: the RRR Brooks Trail, the Fitch Trail, and the Running Pine Trail; on nearby Sheep Hill there is a walk around a hilly field, the Rosenberg Ramble. Across Routes 2 and 7 from Bee Hill is the Stone Hill trail network, which starts in back of the Clark Art Institute and meanders through the fields and woods of Stone Hill. There are also at least three riverside paths near the town center: the Hoosic River loop trail behind Williams College's Cole Field; a short trail along the west bank of

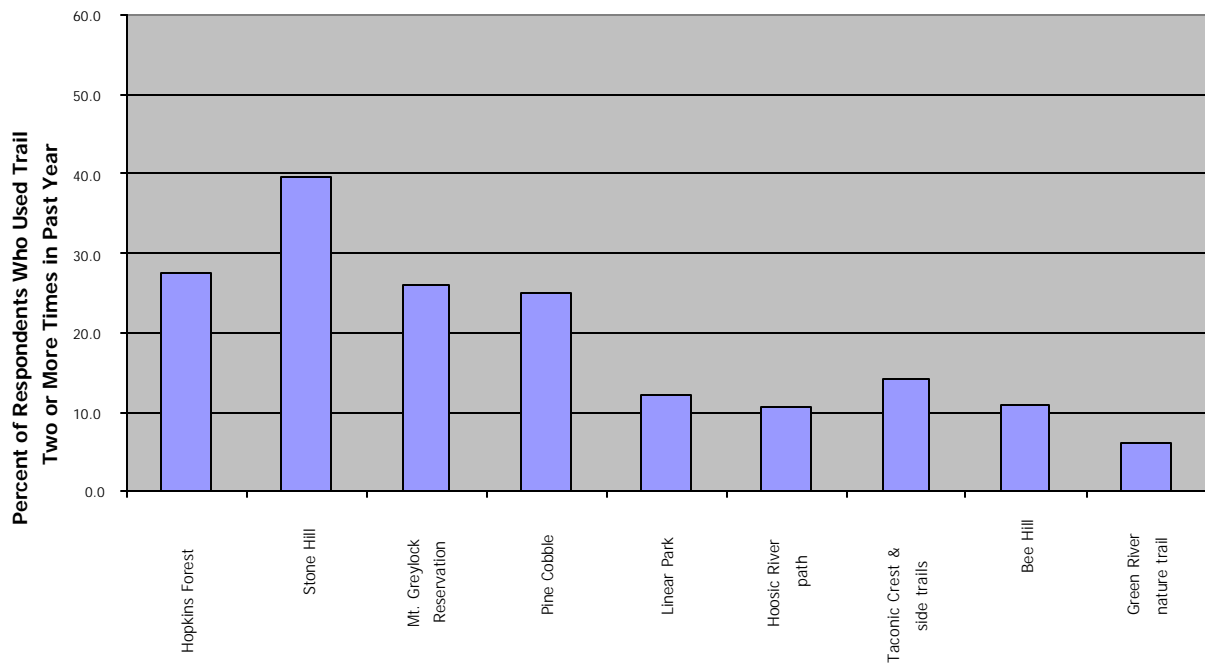
the Green River near its confluence with the Hoosic River; and Linear Park, a small park and playground nestled in a bend of the Green River near the intersection of Water Street and Route 2. Consult the map “North Berkshire Trails: Hiking Trails of the Williamstown Region” (Williams Outing Club, 2002) for a comprehensive view of these trails.

Through our survey, we obtained some information about the frequency of use of these trails (see Appendix A). Residents reported hiking in Williamstown more frequently than Williams students (82% of resident respondents vs. 64% of student respondents). We found that Stone Hill and Hopkins Forest get the most use among both Williamstown residents and Williams students. Survey respondents also hike in the Mt. Greylock reservation frequently, and students often hike the Pine Cobble trail, probably because of its proximity to campus. The Green River trail gets the least use — many respondents reported not even knowing of its existence — and the Hoosic River trail gets an average amount of use by residents but little by students, which is somewhat surprising given its location near the Williams College athletic fields. The other trails on our survey get a medium amount of use by both students and residents, although the Bee Hill trails rated slightly lower than the others in this range.

Current Trail Usage Among Williamstown Residents

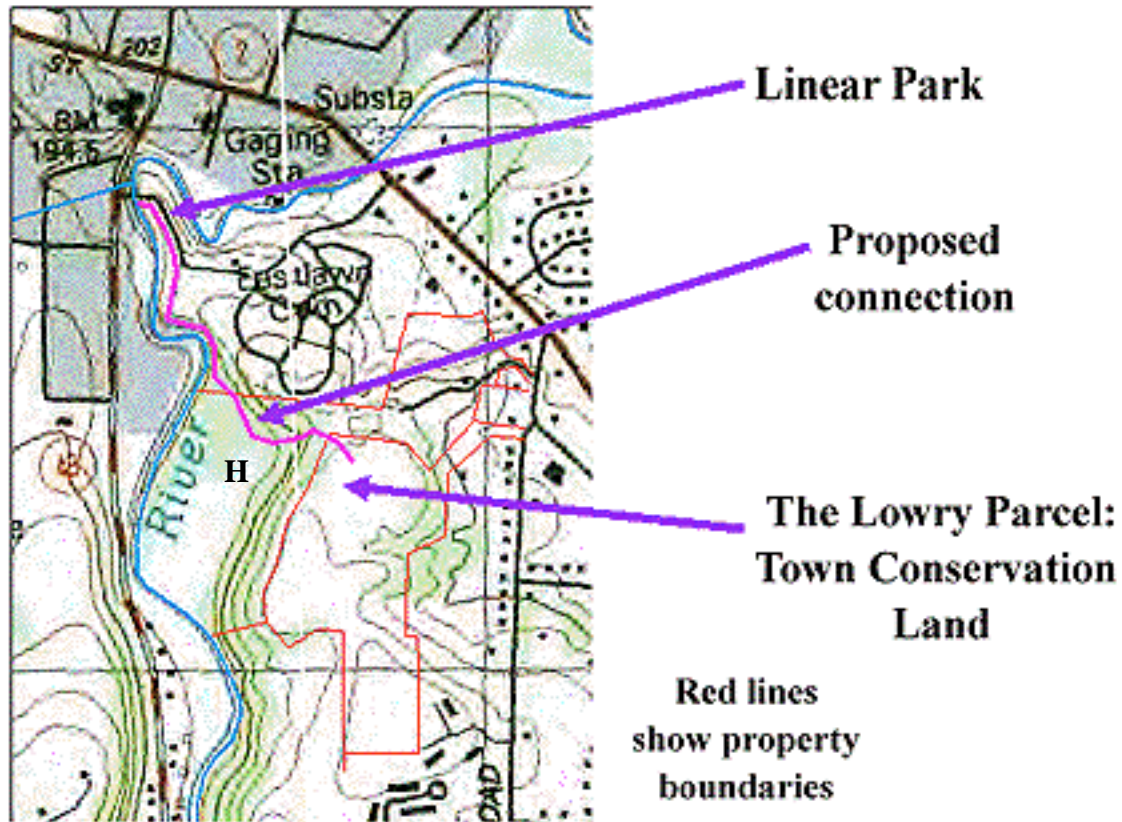


Current Trail Usage Among Williams College Students



III. Descriptions of Proposed Routes

1. Path connecting Linear Park to the Lowry Parcel



The affected property owner is labeled above: H = the Henderson property (Clover Hill Farm).



Linear Park, south of Route 2

Linear Park officially includes town property both north and south of Route 2, but we have chosen to refer to just the southern portion as “Linear Park.” The park has swimming access to the Green River, a grassy picnic area with tables and barbeque grills, a playground, and a parking lot.

The Lowry Parcel is a 30.5-acre parcel of town conservation land located half a mile to the southeast of Linear Park. Most of the Lowry Parcel is scenic, open fields, and the rest is wooded. The town currently leases some of the parcel for agricultural use to a local farmer. A main feature of this parcel is the beautiful view of Williamstown to the north. Although the Lowry Parcel is currently open to the public for passive recreational purposes such as walking, the site has poor access and signage, so it is infrequently visited. An unmarked public right-of-way exists across a field to the southeast of the property, but the only currently signed public access is from the condominium parking lot at the parcel's southern end, where a small metal sign details the regulations for public use of this land. No current public access exists at the northern end of the Lowry Parcel, which is close to the popular Linear Park.

A half-mile path could connect these two town properties for recreational purposes, and a



Trail must avoid cemetery gravestones

scenic picnic area with tables could be installed at the northern edge of the Lowry Property. Since Stone Hill has a similar path with a nice view and is currently very popular, it is likely that a connection trail between Linear Park and the Lowry Parcel would be well-used by local families, college students, and possibly even tourists

wanting a view. The connection would also provide a walking route for people who live in the condominium

developments south of the Lowry Property to walk to Linear Park or into town.

A trail connecting the two properties could go around the southern end of Eastlawn Cemetery or down along the Green River. The former is not an option, since cemetery managers are unwilling to allow a public footpath around the back edge or a blazed route along the existing paved road through the cemetery, since either could be an unwelcome distraction to mourners (Lemoine).

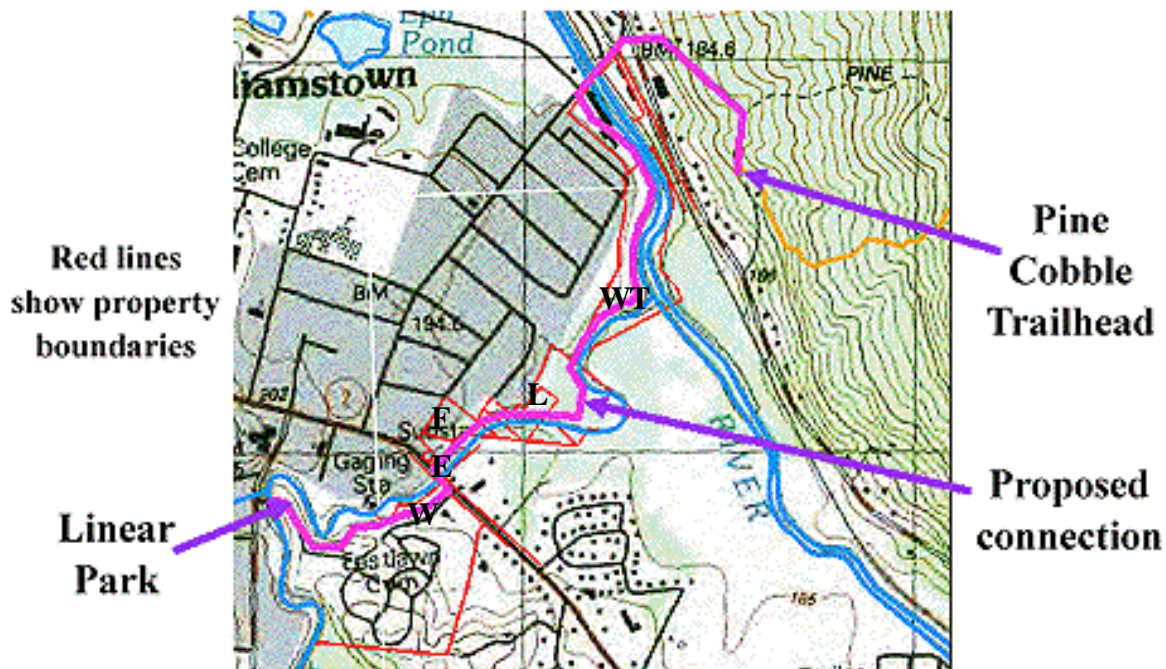


Looking down slope to Green River

The second route option would go down a relatively steep slope to the bank of the Green River across from the Carol Cable site, requiring the installation of stairs, as seen in the picture to the left. The area past the playground before descending to the river is currently piled with gravel road and piles of dirt, and is probably used by the town or

cemetery for maintenance. The trail would then follow the bank of the Green River through woods on the Henderson property, later sloping gently upward through some cleared land, past fences on the horse farm, and up to the currently hayed segment of the Lowry property. There is currently a path around the perimeter of the hayed fields on the Lowry parcel that could easily be incorporated into this route. One private property separates Linear Park from the Lowry Parcel: Clover Hill Farm, a horse farm and B&B owned by Carolyn Henderson and Robert Micley.

2. Path connecting Linear Park to the Pine Cobble Trailhead via the Green River path



Affected property owners are labeled above: W = Weatherbee; E = Massachusetts Electric Company; F = Fuqua; L = Lehovec; WT = Williamstown town land. Details are best seen by consulting maps in the Williamstown Assessor's office.

This trail would connect three outdoor recreation areas near the center of town: the “official” Linear Park, the lesser-known northern section of Linear Park on town land behind the Williamstown Youth Center, and the Pine Cobble Trailhead. Currently, a poorly-publicized nature trail with signs installed by the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation (WRLF) runs through town property adjoining the Green River south of the Hoosic River. The trail is flat and often muddy, and it is used by local residents, dog walkers, and motor bikes (though this is not a permitted use).

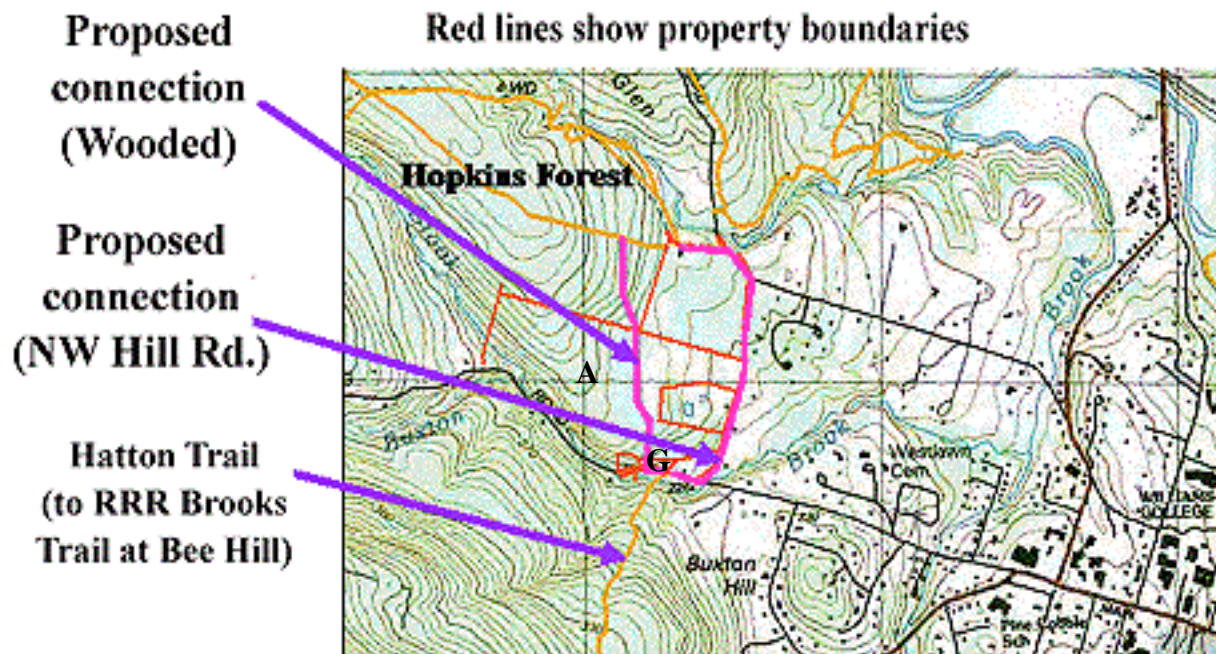
The nature trail project was jointly created by the WRLF and the Hoosic River Watershed Association (HooRWA) and funded in 1997 by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. The project included a feasibility study for handicapped accessibility, but it was found that the road grade was too steep for wheelchairs. WRLF has since maintained the signs and made many repairs after frequent vandalism (Reed-Evans).

To get from Linear Park to Route 2, a path could be marked along the edge of Eastlawn Cemetery, which might partially go over property owned by Pam Weatherbee that borders the east side of the Green River. The path could then go behind the utilities building owned by Massachusetts Electric Company and continue north along an informal access to a town-owned nature area on the Green River (northern “Linear Park”). This informal access to the town land from Route 2 is clear because of a sewer easement. It crosses several parcels of private land, whose owners are Massachusetts Electric Company, Charles and Mary Fuqua, and Kurt Lehovec.

At the northern end of the town property, the scenic riverside part of our proposed route would end by the Photech site at the Hoosic River. Pedestrians interested in continuing on to the Pine Cobble Trailhead could cross the Cole Avenue bridge, cross North Hoosac Road, and ascend the wooded Cole's Grove Road to its intersection with Pine Cobble Road, where a plain, rectangular sign currently points the public to the trail head a short distance to the right.

While town residents tend to drive to the Pine Cobble Trailhead, many students without cars walk, and this route along the Green River would be a scenic way to get to the trailhead by foot from Linear Park or the eastern side of Williams College.

3. *Route connecting the Hatton Trail trailhead on Petersburg Road north to Hopkins Forest*



Affected property owners are labeled above: A = Alden; G = Goethals. Details are best seen by consulting maps in the Williamstown Assessor's office.

The Hatton Trail, recently constructed by local Boy Scouts, connects the southern base of the RRR Brooks Trail north to Petersburg Road. A new trail connecting the northern end of the Hatton Trail on Petersburg Road with the Hopkins Memorial Forest Rosenberg Center or Lower Loop would complete a 9-mile hiking loop. It would be possible for tourists, students, or town residents interested in a rigorous day hike to park at the HMF trailhead, hike up the Birch Brook Trail, follow the Taconic Trail south, take the Shepherd's Well Trail and RRR Brooks Trails to the southeast, cut north on the Hatton Trail, and complete the loop on the (yet-to-be-built) connector north to HMF.

The new connector trail, unless routed along Northwest Hill Road, would cut across two private properties—the Goethals' and Nancy Alden's. Al and Marion Goethals own a thin band of land between the Alden property and the Hatton Trail, and the best location for a trail is along their western property boundary, away from the house. Nancy Alden owns a large amount of land directly between the Hatton Trail and Hopkins Forest, and a trail connecting the two would have to pass through her property containing a network of private trails, one of which connects to the Hopkins Forest Lower Loop Trail. Although the trails have become overgrown in recent

years, only a small section of new trail would have to be cut to connect the Hatton Trail with HMF over her property.



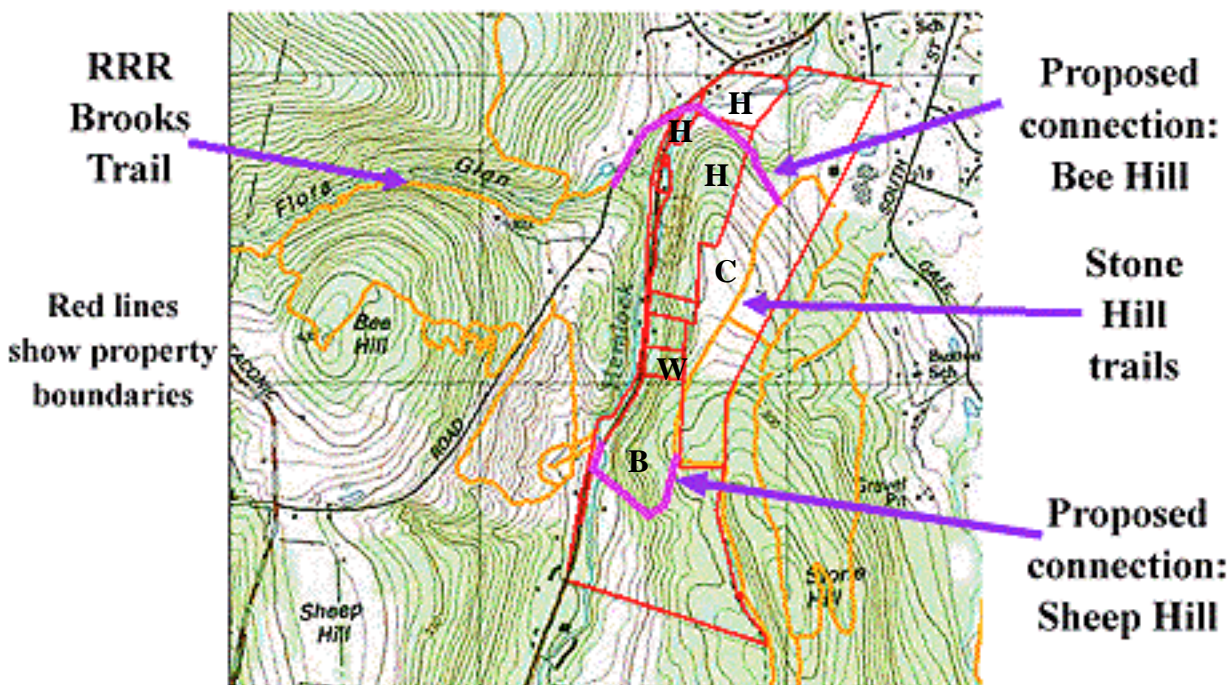
Petersburg Road, looking toward Northwest Hill Road

It would also be possible, although less safe, to route the Hatton Trail-HMF connection along Northwest Hill Road. The northern end of the Hatton Trail ends at Petersburg Road near its intersection with Northwest Hill Road. Following the latter would take a pedestrian to the main entrance to Hopkins Forest. The country road is a scenic walk,

but cars drive quickly around the narrow, curvy road. Some pedestrians, especially

Williams students, currently walk along Northwest Hill Road to reach Hopkins Forest from campus.

4. Path connecting Stone Hill to Bee Hill and/or Sheep Hill trails





View of Stone Hill from the east

The Stone Hill trails, which are relatively leisurely and offer beautiful views, are popular walking trails in Williamstown. The Stone Hill trails are located just south of the Clark Art Institute and cross both museum land and private property. We examined ways to connect Stone Hill trails with additional trail networks on the other

side of Routes 2/7: Bee Hill, including the RRR Brooks and Fitch Trails (popular ways

to access the Taconic Crest Trail), and Sheep Hill, including the Rosenberg Ramble and Meadow Walk.

A connection between the top of the northern Stone Hill meadow with the base of the RRR Brooks at Bee Hill is a logical public link between the Stone Hill trail network to the east of Route 2/7 and the RRR Brooks and Fitch Trails to the west. Currently, Buxton School students take this informal route starting at the base of Stone Hill and crossing Haley Farm property to access the RRR Brooks trail (Haley). Such a route would cross the Haleys' property towards the north end of Stone Hill, where the topography is not very steep.

The trail could skirt the edge of a scenic meadow, head downhill towards a private wooden bridge directly behind a few houses, and cross Hemlock Brook over the bridge near where Bee Hill Road intersects Routes 2/7.



View of Rosenberg Farm

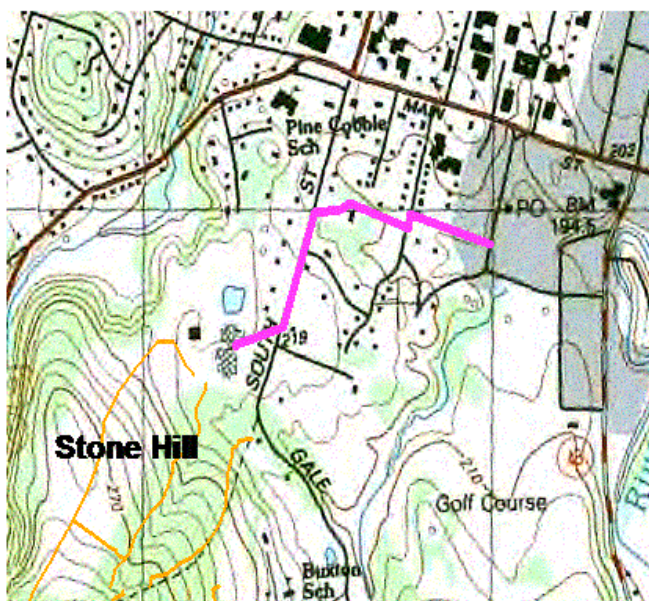
A second connection between Stone Hill and trails on the west side of Routes 2/7 would be to Sheep Hill and the Rosenberg Farm, which the WRLF has owned since November of 2000, when they purchased the property to build a new office and home for their ongoing programs and permanent exhibits about the Rosenberg family,

Williamstown's agricultural history, and the history of Sheep Hill. The WRLF has donated a conservation restriction to the state on the open space portion of the property, and the Sheep Hill property has a history of recreation, since the Williams Outing Club had its ski hill on Sheep Hill during the 1930's until the 1950's (Reed-Evans).

A connection between Stone and Sheep Hills would require crossing steep terrain and crossing Hemlock Brook. The connection could potentially be made across one of two private properties: that of Pam Weatherbee, or that of Henry Bratcher. Weatherbee owns a small plot of Stone Hill land just west of the Clark Art Institute's underground water tower, which is extremely steep (i.e. practically a cliff). Her property is north of the Sheep Hill trail network, so a steep trail across her land would likely require some travel along Routes 2/7 to reach the Rosenburg Ramble trail at Sheep Hill.

Instead of pursuing this topographically difficult route, we decided to investigate the possibility for a Stone Hill to Sheep Hill connection across the Bratcher property south of the Weatherbee property. The former already contains a wide, more moderately sloped route from Stone Hill to Routes 2/7. This route leads directly to the Bratchers' house and is sometimes driven by a pick-up truck. However, one potential option would be to construct a new path through the woods to the north of their house, well out of sight of the house, and it could either cross their driveway bridge, or go across a newly bridge built further from the house.

5. Marked Route between Spring Street and Clark Art Institute



The Clark Art Institute lawn

A marked route between Spring Street and the Clark Art Institute would encourage students, residents of the town center, and tourists to walk to the Clark and the Stone Hill trails. It would also get some Clark visitors to walk to Spring Street to explore the heart of downtown Williamstown.



Looking south along South Street towards the Clark

After talking with Eric Beattie from Williams College Buildings & Grounds, we determined that the most feasible route would start at the Spring Street parking lot (or new town visitor center after 2004), head down Walden Street, cross Hoxsey St., go through the Williams College Health Center parking lot and Agard dormitory driveway, cross South Street, and head down the South Street sidewalk to the Clark. The entire route is paved. The only curb without a cut is on the west side of South Street across the road from where Agard's

driveway intersects with South Street. Because this route is entirely along paved surfaces, it would be accessible for bikes,

wheelchairs, and strollers.

The section through the Health Center parking lot and along the Agard driveway currently has no sidewalk and is currently not an obvious walking route. Landowners affected by this connection are Williams College, which owns the land surrounding the Health Center and Agard, and the Clark Art Institute.

It is possible that this route could be extended from Spring Street to the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA), which would require only additional signs. We discuss this possibility in our recommendations, but conducted our investigation on the feasibility of this route assuming a connection just between Spring Street and the Clark Art Institute (i.e. WCMA was not mentioned in the survey for this route).

IV. Decision Matrix

While all of our proposed routes would be worthwhile and add to the recreation opportunities of Williamstown, we evaluated them in a decision matrix to determine which would be the most worthwhile with limited time and money. This tool was also a way to put together all our research on these trails in a standard way. Our final recommendations reflect the numerical scores, but are not strictly based on a threshold of benefit: even routes that did not come out very favorably may still be relatively easy and worthwhile to implement.

We rated each route based on a list of factors that affect benefit and feasibility, divided into three categories: *Community Desire*, *Location*, and *Permissions and Costs*. How well a particular route satisfies each factor is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 (a route that satisfies the factor the least rates a 1; the best rates a 5). A few of the factors received numerical inputs directly from our survey results, and the rest were determined by our research and inquiries throughout this project.

In an analysis such as this, not all factors should be considered equally. For example, for our analysis, factors such as community desire is more important than cost, since there are means for obtaining funds, and none of the costs are prohibitively great. All factors should be considered, but some should be weighted more heavily than others. We chose weights also on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the least important, 5 the most) based on our client's goals, and our own judgments. We summed each route's score multiplied by corresponding factor weight to reach our final results. Because this analysis is weighted, the same analysis done with different priorities may produce a different result.

See Appendix B for the full decision matrix.

Community Desire

One of the most important inputs to determining the benefits of a trail to Williamstown is what the community finds beneficial. For this category, 4 distinct factors are important. The first two come directly from our survey of Williamstown residents. We listed each of our proposed routes specifically on the survey, and asked respondents to rate their desire for each on a scale of 1 to 5 (no desire → strong desire). The average value was entered into our matrix. We also inquired into the desire for general types of trails (e.g. "rigorous hiking" or "leisurely walking;"

see Appendix A for full results). For this factor, a proposed route received the score of the general type it exemplifies.

Two other factors should be considered in overall community benefit, and they follow from our original goals in this project which were oriented primarily around connections: Does the proposed route connect existing trails or parks? The scores for this are a simple 5 for “yes” and 1 for “no.” Another factor asks the question: Does the proposed route connect to the town center? These scores were determined by our judgments – some trails connect directly, like the Clark route to Spring Street, while others do so indirectly, perhaps to an extension of the town center, such as Water Street, and others do not at all. Including both of these connector questions covers the broad range of functions that our proposed routes serve.

Location

Four factors comprise this category, all related to where the trail is situated: terrain, aesthetics, traffic safety, and open space protection. “Terrain feasibility” is an obvious factor in any trail construction, and, here, considered independent of cost. A very steep rocky face will not be feasible, even if funds were available for construction. Additionally while a new trail needing to be cut through the woods may be possible, it is certainly more difficult than marking signs along an already existing path, and this should be taken into account.

Aesthetics was the most difficult category to judge, but is a factor we considered crucial in assessing the merits of a proposed path. In an attempt to make this inherently subjective valuation as objective and meaningful as possible when we use it in comparison, for each route we started with a baseline of 1, then added 1 additional point up to 5 for each of the following contributions to a positive aesthetic: river views, landscape views, natural setting (forested/fields), no highway, no urbanity. While these do reflect our own judgments of what is aesthetically pleasing, we can be confident that at least a few of these match those of the town. For example, the Williamstown Master Plan survey shows that on average residents feel the importance of river access in town exceeds supply (Williamstown Master Plan Survey, 2001).

Traffic safety is related to the presence of highways under aesthetics, but is an important separate factor in evaluating a trail’s merit. Routes that cross major roads (Routes 2 and 7, North Hoosac Road), as well as ones that follow minor roads with considerable traffic (Northwest Hill Road), scored poorly.

Some of the routes we proposed include with them a possibility for open space protection, which is a general community desire, as evidenced by the Williamstown Master Plan survey, as well as a goal of our client. If a route could meet this desire of open space protection, it scored well. All routes that involve the purchase of a trail easement would include some open space protection the easement, but it is possible that a route could contribute further to open space protection by creating access to open land with the possibility for protection.

Permissions and Costs

One of the most substantial tasks of this project was contacting landowners regarding the possibility of routing a public trail through their land; the information gained from these endeavors are reflected in this factor. At this stage in evaluation of the routes, we have not entered into discussions with individual landowners about which specific options (i.e. easements or informal licenses) might be most agreeable to them, nor do we feel that in many cases it would be our place to do so, since ultimate negotiations would go through the town or the WRLF. The scores for the factor of “landowner approval” reflect our impressions after talking to the landowners involved for a given trail: whether they were generally interested in the idea or reluctant. We did not differentiate in score between a landowner who may express interest in the level of donating an easement and a landowner who may only be willing to start with the informal trail use agreement. For the scope of this project, the trail could still soon be put in and used. (See Appendix C for detailed discussion of trail corridor options and a discussion of issues related to public passage over private lands).

A final factor is costs of implementing a proposed route: both monetary costs and non-monetary quantities such as volunteer time. We did not estimate actual costs, since many would be difficult to approximate without detailed investigation, and at this level we are more interested in a general comparison of feasibility. Also, for our purposes ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 are sufficient and in keeping with the rest of the inputs. Elements of cost include trail construction (hopefully inexpensively obtained by volunteer hours and organizations such as the Boy Scouts), surveying and legal fees of easements, as well as potential purchase fees, and signs. After conversations with Jeff Kennedy, Sign Commissioner, we assumed that all signs would be equally feasible, but differ between routes in quantity. We assigned a score to each route after consideration of all these costs.

Factor Weights

From the outset we did not expect that all factors of trail merits and feasibility would warrant equal consideration, though all are important. Our client felt that above all, what the community expressed as their desires should warrant the most weight, and so the two factors with inputs directly from our survey received the highest weight of 5. The other two factors under community desire regarding connections also received high weights of 4.

Terrain feasibility also received a high weight of 5. This expresses the consideration of actual trail building: no matter how desired a trail may be, or how perfect the connection, if the terrain does not lend itself to a path then a trail is not possible and is not worth the effort of working against the terrain. Aesthetics and traffic safety both received weights of 4: both are essential aspects of what makes a pleasant trail or path. Possibility for open space protection is a factor that would be a bonus to any trail, especially from the perspective of land conservation, which is certainly an interest of our client and the WRLF. However, according to our client, it is not nearly as important as putting in a trail that the community desires and would use; it received a weight of 2 as a factor that would be nice to have, but is not nearly as essential as many of the other factors.

Landowner approval is a large part of any trail implementation and received a weight of 3. According to our client, who has had much experience with landowners and construction of new trails across private land, often some sort of agreement can be negotiated that is agreeable to all parties, which is why arrangements such as trail use agreements exist (see Appendix C). It allows hesitant landowners to give the trail a try, while not entering into a permanent commitment; Reed-Evans has never had a landowner terminate the agreement. The last factor includes all the various costs of a trail, but given the natures of the proposed routes, this factor receives the lowest weight of 1. None of the trail would have costs that would be prohibitively expensive. There are grants and money available from the Williamstown surtax for projects such as these (Reed-Evans). It is our client's opinion that if the most important aspects of a trail indicate it should be done, such as community desire, cost should not be a significant factor.

Decision Matrix Factor	Weight
<i>Community Desire</i>	
Survey Data: Proposed Route	5
Survey Data: General Type of trail	5
Connection of trails/parks	4
Connection to town center	4
<i>Location</i>	
Terrain Feasibility	5
Aesthetics	4
Traffic Safety	4
Open Space Protection	2
<i>Permissions and Costs</i>	
Landowner Approval	3
Costs	1

V. Analysis of Proposed Routes

1. Linear Park to Lowry Parcel



Stairs would need to be constructed for slope down to Green River

This route received an average rating of 3.2 on the survey, in the middle of the range. The topography would have small amounts of up and down, but the one significantly steep part would be made easy by stairs. It is also not a very long trail, and the land around the Lowry property at the end of the trail is quite gentle and easy. Thus we classified it in the category of leisurely walking trail and it received the corresponding score of 3.6 for the general trail

type factor. This trail rated a 5 for connecting existing trails and parks, since it connects Linear Park to the Lowry property, on which passive recreation is permitted as town conservation land. Indeed, it is already well-used by some regular users. It also fulfills the function of linking to the town center. One might even imagine this trail being used by residents on Stratton road on the southern side of the Lowry parcel to walk to town by a more pleasant route than Route 2, which is currently the only option. Thus a trail linking Linear Park, which is directly on Water Street, to the Lowry property rates a 4 for connecting to the town center.

As discussed, the terrain for this trail would incline at some points, even requiring stairs, and is wooded and would require trail cutting. There is a general drainage area through which the trail would run, possibly requiring some planks, though it is not a wetland or a floodplain. All of these things are possible without too much trouble, so this route rated a 3 for terrain feasibility. This route rated the highest possible score for aesthetics (5), and was the only route to do so. It runs right along the Green River, has scenic views from the top of the Lowry parcel, is within woods for a majority of the way, does not cross or run along any roads, and is by only minimal development (mostly Clover Hill Farm, and the Carol Cable building is visible across the river). Since it is not affected by any roads, it also rates the highest score of 5 for traffic safety. This route also rated extremely well (5) for open space protection, and again is the only route to do so. The Lowry parcel is currently conservation land, but has been looked at for various kinds of

development to satisfy some of the town's needs (such as affordable housing or new recreation areas) because it is considered by some to be an unused piece of land (Williamstown Master Plan draft; Gardner). However, access to this site from Linear Park, which many people already frequent, could easily lead to increased use and thus justify maintaining this land as conservation land rather than using for development.

Henderson, the property owner, has expressed interest, pending negotiation with the town, in seeing the construction of trails leading from Linear Park and around the Lowry property, since she would prefer that the Lowry property remain undeveloped and would enjoy using the trails for the horses from Clover Hill Farm (Henderson). There are complications, but overall the landowner is receptive to the idea of trails, so we rated this route a 3. Finally, the costs of implementing this route will include trail construction: stairs, planks, and cutting of new trail. There may also be surveying and legal fees associated with easements, and it seems likely that an easement may need to be bought. For these it rated a 2.

This trail received an overall weighted score of 146.0, the highest overall score.

2. Linear Park to Pine Cobble Trailhead

This route received one of the highest survey averages: 3.4. Of the general types of routes we listed on our survey, it falls under two categories: leisurely walking trails and marked signs in town leading to trailheads. Because of this we wanted to include in some way the fact that it satisfies two desired categories, yet not give it an unfairly high score compared to the other routes. Instead of giving it a 3.6 (for leisurely walking trails) or a 3.3 (for marked signs to trailheads), we increased it by a bit and entered 3.9. It is a good connector trail, rating a 5 for connecting existing trails and parks, since it goes from Linear Park up to the Town Recreation Area by the Green River at the northern end of Elm Street, and then links to the Pine Cobble Trailhead. It rates a 4 for connecting to the town center, since it connects an outlying trailhead to Linear Park, which is almost in the town center.

Since this route is mostly along existing path or road, it rates a 5 for terrain feasibility. Its aesthetics are hard to judge, since at some parts, such as along the Green River, it is extremely pleasant, while at other parts, such as when it goes behind the utilities substation on Route 2, it is not as attractive. Using our scheme, it rated a 3: it has river views, and is wooded for a major

segment along the Green river, though has no scenic views, and is near highways, roads, and development for significant portions.



(Left) Green River views, contrasted with (Right) passage behind Mass. Electric substation on Route 2

The route crosses Route 2, and then later, joins with the end of Cole Ave to cross the bridge, crosses North Hoosac Road, where cars travel quickly despite an existing crosswalk, and is on minor roads the rest of the way. These factors culminate to give this route the lowest rating of all the routes for traffic safety: 1. The opportunities for open space protection reside in the trail easements along the Green River, which are scenic and natural areas, though not great in acreage. Open space protection rated a 3.

The first part of this trail would skirt along the western edge of Eastlawn Cemetery. As previously discussed, the cemetery managers are quite averse to a trail running along the western (back) edge due to proximity to graves, but a trail skirting the side of the cemetery along the Green River until Route 2 would not be a disturbance. Also, there is a small parcel of private property along that same edge where the trail could run owned by Weatherbee, who is very enthusiastic about the creation of new trails. From Route 2 to the town land, the path is clear because there is a sewer easement that has been in place for several decades, and sewer easements must remain cleared. The trail must first go around the Massachusetts Electric Company power substation. Joanne Derosé, the local representative of the company to whom we spoke, was optimistic that having a trail corridor through that land would not be a problem (Derosé). The next private property belongs to Charles and Mary Fuqua. Since this informal path created by the sewer easement has been in place for quite some time, they already have had the public crossing their land, though not in an official capacity. Unfortunately, this experience has

been negative for them, since many of the trespassers have been noisy motorbikers who come farther onto their land than the path. They are hesitant to support an effort that would bring even more people to this path by making it an official route and publicizing it. Fuqua suggested that a chain link fence separating the trail from the main part of his property could be an agreeable negotiation. Certainly some way to monitor trail use and specifically prevent motor vehicles will be an essential part of negotiating this trail.

The final affected private property owner is Kurt Lehovec, who owns several parcels. While we were not able to contact him personally, we have heard from Larry Wright, the chairman of the Williamstown 250th Anniversary trail sub-committee, that it is possible that Lehovec could be amenable to having a public trail cross his land with some negotiation (Wright). Landowner approval rated 3. Another option for routing this trail may be possible if a proposed bridge is built that would bypass these three property owners. Both the Mahican-Mohawk bike trail and trails planned by the Williamstown 250th Anniversary Committee, trails sub-committee, are interested in a bridge over the Green River. If this were to happen, the trail could run east along Route 2 to the driveway for the town tennis court, follow the planned trails for that side of the river until the bridge, and then link to the Pine Cobble trailhead the rest of the way from there (Wright).

The final issue of cost rated a 2. The route itself will not require much trail cutting. Main expenses will be for signs and for fences or other possible methods of deterring trespassing, which may be great relative to other costs.

This trail received an overall weighted score of 130.5.

3. Hatton Trail to Hopkins Forest

This route received the highest rating on our survey: a 3.4. We suspect that this was because it would complete a 9-mile loop with the Taconic Crest Trail. Some of the comments we received on the survey suggested that people prefer hiking loops to backtracking. Hikers could park at Hopkins Forest and then return to their cars after a scenic 9-mile hike. Although the new 1/2-mile or so of trail that this route would create would be fairly easy, the loop as a whole would be relatively strenuous, climbing up to the Taconic Crest and then descending back into the valley. Since the main point of this route would be to complete this loop, we classified it as a strenuous route, reflecting the difficulty of the rest of the loop. Since our survey respondents

expressed the least desire for new strenuous routes in Williamstown, this trail rated the lowest in the category of general desire, only receiving a 2.5.

We gave this route a 5 for connecting existing trails/parks. Although the trails it connects are already connected, it creates a more direct connection between Hopkins Forest and the Bee Hill trail system in addition to completing the aforementioned loop. It does not, however, provide a connection with the town center — getting to this trail from the town center would require walking about a mile along West Main Street. Posting signs that direct people from the Spring Street area to Hopkins Forest via this route would provide a more formal connection with the town center, and we discuss our suggestions for doing so later. The Hatton Trail – Hopkins Forest connection itself, though, does not provide such a connection, and so it received a 1 for connection with the town center.

We analyzed two different possibilities for this Hatton Trail – Hopkins Forest connection. The first, the wooded route, would enter the woods almost directly across Petersburg Road from the Hatton Trail trailhead. The trail would cross the property of two landowners — the Goethals property for a short distance and then the Alden property for much of its length — before reaching Hopkins Forest, where it would connect with the southern branch of the lower loop trail. The second option, the road route, would be along Petersburg Road for a short distance to its intersection with Northwest Hill Road, and would then proceed along Northwest Hill Road to the main entrance to Hopkins Forest. The above analysis applies to both options. We did not explicitly ask about the road connection on our survey, but we assigned the value for the wooded route to the road route as well; this may have artificially inflated our survey number for the road route. The following analysis is divided into two sections for the two different alternatives.

Wooded Route



The wooded route would be the more pleasant of the two. It received a 4 for aesthetics, since it is forested, does not cross any major roads, and does not pass any areas of “urbanity” — it would pass within sight of a few houses, but not too closely, and would remain out of the sight of houses for most of its length. It is also the safer of the two routes, crossing only one small road, Petersburg Road, which as a dead end

Wooded route: forested and safe

receives little traffic; thus it received a 5 for traffic safety.

The terrain in this area would certainly be feasible for a trail. There would be some slight inclines, but nothing very steep. One potential issue is a swampy, spring-fed area near the road, spanning both the Goethals and Alden properties. The ideal trail location seems to be somewhat west of this wet area, though — this would keep the trail further from the Goethals' house and would provide a more gradual incline. Thus this swampy area does not seem to pose any serious obstacles to trail construction here. Of course, the terrain feasibility is still slightly lower than that of a road, so this route received a 4 for this category. The only possibility for open space protection that this trail would offer would be the trail corridor itself — Hopkins Forest is already protected, and the Hatton trail is already on conservation land. Thus we gave this trail a 2 in this category.

The trail construction costs for this route would not be too high. There is an existing trail network connecting the Alden property with Hopkins Forest. These trails would probably have to be cleared of some brush, and a short section of trail would have to be created connecting the trails on the Alden property with Petersburg Road. These trails would require routine maintenance, but would be short so this maintenance should not be prohibitive. Other costs would be those related to the purchasing of an easement: legal costs and the purchase itself. We gave this route a 3 for costs. The biggest potential difficulty with this route would be obtaining landowner permission. The Goethals' have given their permission to have a trail run through their property as long as it is not too close to their house, which it would not be (Goethals'). The Goethals' property is, however, only a small fraction of the length of this new trail. Alden, the landowner over whose land most of the trail would run, seemed reluctant to discuss the possibilities for a public trail on her property. In initial discussions with Alden, she said she might only be willing to have a trail on her property if it ran around the edge (Alden). This would make for an overly-circuitous route, and one that probably would not be worth having at all. We were unable to reach Alden for further comment.

Furthermore, there are potential issues on the Hopkins Forest side. This new access point to the forest could potentially create trail use issues, since it would have to be restricted to foot traffic — horses and wheeled vehicles would have to be excluded, as they are on other trails in the forest. In addition, the trail would have to be routed to avoid the Rye lot research site. These issues would by no means be insurmountable, but the trail would have to be approved by the

Hopkins Forest user's committee (Jones). It is promising, though, that a similar route to Hopkins Forest existed a few decades ago, which avoids any permanent research sites (Art). Because of all of these potential landowner issues, this trail received a 1 for landowner permission.

This trail received an overall weighted score of 119.5.

Marked Route along Northwest Hill Road



HMF entrance from Northwest Hill Road

The road route would consist of signs along Petersburg and Northwest Hill Roads, directing hikers between the Hatton Trail and Hopkins Forest. It would not be as aesthetically appealing as the wooded route, but would not be totally unappealing either. As road walks go, this would be a relatively pleasant one, passing a few houses but also passing

woods and with mountains visible over some of the houses. This route received a 3 for aesthetics

since the road is small (i.e. not a “highway”) and the area is rural enough not to count as “urbanity.” There would, however, be some traffic safety issues. Although Northwest Hill road does not receive much traffic, it is narrow and does not have sidewalks or shoulders. Thus this route received a 3 for traffic safety. Since this route would be entirely along a road, terrain feasibility is high (5), but it does not offer any possibility for open space protection (1).

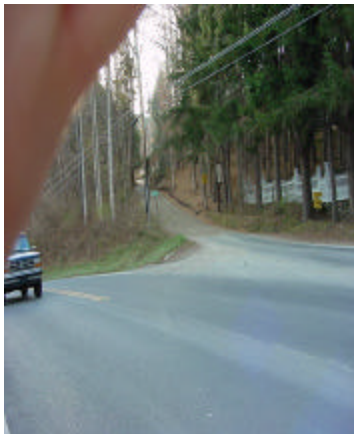
The costs for this route would be low, as they would only involve the creation and posting of a few trail signs. Maintenance costs would likewise be low, so this route received a 5 for costs. Similarly, there would be no landowner issues, and so it received a 5 for landowner approval.

This route received an overall weighted score of 124.5. The only area in which it is significantly worse than the wooded route is in traffic safety, and because it avoids landowner issues it is more feasible, at least in the short-term. In addition, although this was not a factor in our analysis, a marked route along Northwest Hill Road could be incorporated into a marked route from the Spring Street area to Hopkins Forest along West Main Street and Northwest Hill Road, leading people from the town center to the Hopkins Forest entrance.

4a. Stone Hill to Bee Hill

This route received an average survey rating: 3.2 (this route and the Stone Hill – Sheep Hill route use the same survey number for route ratings since both connect the same general areas). This route would be fairly leisurely and would connect two systems of relatively leisurely trails. Consequently, it would help satisfy people’s desire for additional leisurely trails in Williamstown. Thus this route received a 3.6 for general desire.

We gave this trail a 5 for connecting existing trails and parks, since its main purpose is to connect the well-used Stone Hill trail system with the Bee Hill trail system. In doing so, it would also indirectly link the Stone Hill trails with the Taconic Crest trail and Hopkins Forest. Since the Stone Hill end of this trail would be near the Clark Art Institute, it would serve to some degree as a connection with the town center. However, it is not as direct of a connection as some of the other routes we analyzed. Getting to this trail would require a short walk along the Stone Hill pasture trail — that is, the new trailhead would be slightly removed from the Clark itself. Thus we gave this route a 3 for connection with the town center.



**Intersection of Bee Hill Road
with Route 2/7**

This route would have both aesthetic attractions and drawbacks. It would be through woods and fields for part of its length, and would offer a variety of scenic views. It would, however, pass close to at least one house, and would require crossing Routes 2/7. It therefore received a 3 for aesthetics. There are also significant traffic safety issues with this route. First, there is the highway crossing, which is on a section of road without much visibility. Second, the route involves walking along Bee Hill Road for a few hundred yards. While this dirt road does not receive much traffic, it is very narrow and people often drive

quickly on it. For these reasons, we gave this route a 2 for traffic safety.



Muddy terrain from Hemlock Brook

Although the terrain is steep on parts of Stone Hill, the slope is relatively gradual in the area in which this trail would run. The crossing of Hemlock Brook, a stream wide enough to require a bridge crossing, is a potential problem. There is,

however, a bridge on the Haley property, and so the trail could be routed over this bridge. Another potential difficulty is that the farm through which this trail would run is in the floodplain of Hemlock Brook, so it could potentially be wet at some times of year. In fact, the field seemed mostly covered by mud when we looked at it in late November. We believe, though, that the trail could be routed to avoid the wettest areas of the field, such as by keeping it in the woods for as much of its length as possible, and so these floodplain issues could be circumvented to some degree. Our belief that this would be a feasible route is partially based on the information that some people already walk this route (Haley). Because this trail has two potential terrain issues but these issues can probably be avoided with careful trail routing, we gave this trail a 4 for terrain feasibility. The only possibility for open space protection that this trail offers is that of the trail corridor itself, so it received a 2 in this category.

The costs for this route would be relatively low. It would require clearing a short length of trail through woods, keeping clear a short length through the field, and a few signs directing hikers across Routes 2/7 and along Bee Hill Road. If the route received significant use, it could warrant a crosswalk across Routes 2 and 7. This is a cost that would be covered by the Massachusetts State Highway Department if the need for such a crosswalk is demonstrated (by showing that the crossing receives a certain threshold amount of use); a crosswalk cannot be installed if the crossing does not meet this usage threshold (Longton). Since the Highway Department would fund such a crosswalk, we did not factor it into our cost analysis. As for our other routes, there would also be small costs associated with the purchasing of an easement. Because of the short distances of necessary trail construction, we gave this route a 4 for costs.

This is probably the most uncertain route in terms of landowner approval. We were only able to talk with Haley very briefly, and were not able to contact him again to discuss the possibilities for a trail through his property in greater depth (Haley). Because of this uncertainty, we gave this route a 3 for landowner permission.

This route received an overall weighted score of 123.0.

4b. Stone Hill to Sheep Hill

This route, which would connect two existing trail networks, received approximately the same general public desire in our survey as all the other routes: an average of 3.2. It has the potential to be a steep route, and our survey respondents expressed a below-average interest (2.5)

in the creation of more rigorous trails. This route would connect existing trail networks, so it got a 5 for that category. We gave the route a 2 for “connection to town center,” since it connects the Clark Art Institute, one of the most visited places near to the town center, to the outlying Sheep Hill trails. It received a slightly lower rating than the Stone Hill to Bee Hill route for this factor, since the connection would be further from the Clark itself than the Bee Hill connection would be.

Because the Stone Hill to Sheep Hill route would possibly have to cross steep terrain, it scored lower than most others in the terrain feasibility area. The terrain feasibility depends on whether the route crossed the property of Weatherbee or Bratcher. The former is very steep—almost a cliff—and would require extensive trail construction labor to create erosion-resistant banks, switchbacks, and steps. This factored into our cost analysis, so we gave the route a 4 for cost. The latter is already used as a walking and sometimes vehicular (truck) route and is less steep. Both options are aesthetically nice, crossing forested land and/or fields. Aesthetically, the route got a 3, because although it would go through the woods, cross a quaint brook, and possibly offer a view through the trees from the top, it also crosses Routes 2/7, a more urban area, and possibly a few houses if the path had to go along the highway to get to a Sheep Hill trailhead. The route also rated a 3 for traffic safety because of the highway hazard. The opportunity for open space protection for this trail is minimal, since the land is private property, and any easement possibly granted for the trail would most likely be small.

The landowner approval in this case is uncertain. The southern landowner does not seem interested in having a path cross his land, because he is concerned about liability issues as well as walker safety during hunting season, when he allows hunting on his property (Bratcher).

5. Spring Street to Clark Art Institute



Agard dormitory driveway

This route got a low public survey rating (2.8), probably because the town residents and students taking our survey know how to get to the Clark already. However, we believe that this route would benefit new students as well as town visitors who do not know ways to cut around college buildings and private property to get from Williams

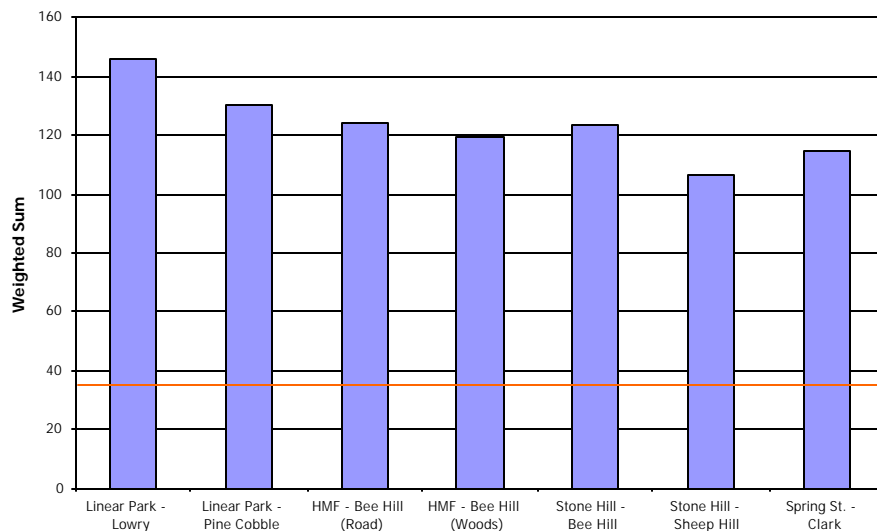
College or Spring Street to South Street. Spring Street businesses are frequently asked directions to get to the Clark, and with this route, they could recommend that pedestrians head to the end of Spring Street and follow the marked route to the Clark. The route thus got a 5 for forging a connection to the town center and a 1 for connection of existing trails, since there are no trails or parks at the Spring Street end.

The route ranked high with a 5 for terrain feasibility, since it is entirely along paved surfaces with no major slopes. Aesthetically, however, we found the route to be more urban and thus less visually pleasing. The South Street sidewalk is a pleasant stroll, but skirting the Health Center and Agard is less visually pleasing. While some people believe urban areas are beautiful, based on the rating system we established for our aesthetics category, we had to deduct points for “urbanity.” Our rating system obviously was not perfect, and this route lost points for being less attractive, despite the fact that its purpose is different from that of our other trails.

The route got a 4 for traffic safety: if the college built a sidewalk next to the Health Center and Agard driveways, the only minor safety concerns would be crossing Hoxsey and South Streets. Neither is a dangerous road and both have low speed limits, good visibility, and adequate sight lines allowing a good stopping distance.

We gave the route a 4 for landowner approval, since both the Clark and Williams College B&G expressed interest in this route during meetings we had with them. The route scored lowest with a 1 for economic cost, since it would require sidewalk construction through the Health Center and Agard driveways.

The final decision matrix results for all routes are summarized in the figure below. The red line (= 37) indicates the lowest possible sum any trail can receive based on our point system.



VI. Recommendations

The final results from the decision matrix revealed that all routes are at least somewhat worthwhile pursuing. Indeed, we chose them ahead of time based on what seemed like would be worthwhile. The variations in score, however, do illuminate which of the proposed routes would be most worthwhile. In our recommendations we include both whether the route should be implemented and also who seems to be in the best position to implement it. We also follow with some general recommendations related to increasing trail use in general, which came up early in our project but were not pursued with the same level of analysis as our proposed routes.

The question of which existing body in the town would be best suited for adopting a trail proposal is a tricky one. The town does not have an official position designed for a task such as overseeing trails in implementation and maintenance (Wright), and current town maintenance bodies already have much to do (Hirsch). WRLF often functions in this respect, though is not a town body, and has limited resources. Williamstown Recreation Committee is a town body, but is intended primarily as a programming body, focusing on activities such as planning hikes, and programs for the Williamstown Youth Center, though they have the overreaching goal of promoting town recreation (Hirsch). A final body that may be appropriate for these tasks is the Williamstown 250th Anniversary trails sub-committee (hereafter, “250th”). They are quite interested in being an active part of new trails, especially in a few areas of town. In some cases, the Town Conservation Commission has taken on responsibility for trails, though this is usually when the trail runs on town conservation land (Art). With these groups in mind, we recommend the following.

1. Linear Park to Lowry Parcel

This route scored the highest, and thus we strongly recommend that it be implemented. The party that seems in the best position to do this is the Williamstown Recreation Committee, which is interested in incorporating this proposal into their plans for improving Linear Park (Hirsch). The bulk of implementing the trail will be negotiations with the landowner, and cutting a new trail through the woods, including stairs. A few small signs may be included. The trail also

could be linked through the Lowry property to Stratton Road, for access from that part of the town.

2. Linear Park to Pine Cobble Trailhead

This route is the next highest scoring, and thus we also strongly recommend that it be implemented. It happens that the 250th is already looking at trails in this area, and thus our proposed route would be a fitting extension of their plans. We recommend that this group push forward on this proposal, and the question of maintenance and responsibility will fit within who they choose to do these things for the other parts of their trails network.

3. Hatton Trail to Hopkins Forest Recommendations

We recommend the creation of a marked route along Northwest Hill Road and Petersburg Road directing hikers between the Hatton Trail and the Hopkins Forest main entrance. This would formally complete the 9-mile loop with the Taconic Crest trail at little cost in terms of money or labor. The WRLF should be the party primarily responsible for creating the signs for this route, but Hopkins Forest caretakers can provide some support, such as in the actual posting of the signs. The signs should be designed as free-standing signs (that is, not to be posted on telephone poles, since this is not permitted by the Town Sign Bylaws (see Appendix D) or the utilities company (Derose)) and submitted to the sign commission for approval.

If a public trail can be negotiated with Alden in the future, the wooded route would be a valuable connection. This should not necessarily replace the road route. Instead, the road route should be incorporated into a longer marked route from the Spring Street area to West Main Street to Northwest Hill Road to the Hopkins Forest entrance, as suggested in our general recommendations.

In order to make this connection more feasible, the Hatton Trail should be improved. Currently it is strenuous, poorly maintained, and hard to follow. A hard-to-see wooden sign marks the southern end of the Hatton Trail where it meets the RRR Brooks Trail. The Hatton Trail sometimes follows old logging roads, sometimes skirts through the forest, and occasionally and quite suddenly changes direction to ascend/descend steep hill slopes. A series of orange blazes and pieces of orange marking tape tied to trees identify the “trail,” but the blazes are difficult to follow and do not clearly identify turns. Thus, part of the construction of a new trail connecting the Hatton Trail to HMF could involve better blazing of the Hatton Trail.

4. Stone Hill to Bee/Sheep Hills Recommendations

These two connections should be a lower priority than either of the two Linear Park connections or the Hatton Trail to Hopkins Forest connection. A connection between the Stone Hill trail system and Bee Hill or Sheep Hill would be worthwhile, but the drawbacks and potential hurdles — such as traffic safety and landowner permission for the Sheep Hill route — partially outweigh the benefits. If resources permit after the creation of the three other routes mentioned above, then we recommend that the WRLF create the Stone Hill to Bee Hill connection. This connection is more favorable than the Sheep Hill connection in that it offers a more direct connection with the town center, would be more leisurely, and has more trail-suitable terrain. First, though, a more extensive conversation would have to be conducted with Haley to gauge his interest.

The Stone Hill to Sheep Hill trail seems more difficult to implement at present. It seems that the most feasible connection would be through the Bratcher property; other connections would either require an unpleasant road walk along Routes 2/7 or the ascent/descent of prohibitively steep terrain (such as in the Weatherbee property just north of the Bratcher property). Bratcher, however, has not expressed interest in having a trail through his property at this time. If a feasible route can be found, then there is no reason this trail should not be created. If it is created, the WRLF should be responsible for its construction and maintenance.

5. Spring Street to Clark Art Institute

Though this route did not receive a high final score based on our decision matrix, we feel that this route would benefit the town, and especially visitors, who were not considered in our analysis. The Spring Street connection to the Clark Art Institute and surrounding Stone Hill trails will provide a walking route to facilitate pedestrian access between the town center and the



Health Center parking lot

museum, and could also be extended to Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA), connecting the two museum to each and to the town center. This connection could help attract shoppers to businesses on Spring Street as well as draw more residents and tourists to the museum and beautiful surrounding trail network. Various people have

discussed this route for some time now (Conforti), and we recommend that the Clark Art Institute, Williams College, and the Town should collaborate on implementing this route.

The least safe part of the route is through the Health Center parking lot and Agard driveway, where pedestrians currently walk through areas where cars are driven. The rest of the route is along the currently existing Walden Street and South Street sidewalks. We recommend that Williams College Buildings & Grounds install a sidewalk through the Health Center parking lot and Agard driveway area to increase pedestrian safety through this area. The Clark Art Institute, working with the Town Sign Commission, should decide what type of signs would make the most sense for this route based on signage issues detailed in Appendix D. Each end of the trail (The Clark, the Spring Street parking lot and/or new visitor center, possibly WCMA) should have a sign with map describing the paved route and detailing how long it takes to get to each destination on the route by foot.

6. General Increase in Trail Information

From the beginning of the project, we realized there are at least two major ways to facilitate greater outdoor recreation. One is to connect trails and parks for easier public access and enjoyment, which we pursued. The other is simply to provide better information about trails. To this end we have a few general recommendations based on our research, although we did not investigate this area in detail. Two sets of interviews that we conducted suggested that the dissemination of trail information may, in fact, be as important as creating additional trails. Tom Mavilia and Alex Steele, employees of the Mountain Goat (Williamstown's primary outdoor equipment store), could not think of any trails, or even types of trails, that are especially needed in Williamstown. Instead, Steele suggested that what is most necessary is a way to get trail information out to people, especially to tourists — possibly through an inexpensive or free pamphlet (Steele). Willard Morgan agreed about the importance of the dissemination of trail information, also suggesting a trail brochure that could be distributed to students, Williamstown residents and tourists (Morgan). Another way to get such information out would be through trail kiosks as suggested by the Williamstown Master Plan.

The idea of a Williamstown trails brochure has come up several times in our investigations during the project, with multiple parties interested in one being produced. There already exist several larger scale maps, the Mount Greylock Reservation map, and the Williams Outing Club (WOC) map. The benefits of a more local map are that it could provide more detail

for in-town trails and parks (perhaps places that even many local residents do not know about because they are not publicized or well-signed) and could be printed on a small scale with relatively little cost, such that it could be widely distributed for free (unlike the WOC map which must be purchased). We recommend that the Williamstown Recreation Committee take on this task, since it fits within their goals of promoting use of recreation areas. Other parties that have expressed enthusiasm about (and could collaborate on) the creation of this pamphlet include the Williamstown 250th Anniversary Committee, WOC, and WRLF.

We believe that town signs leading to trailheads would be beneficial, so we asked a question on our survey to find out people's desire for “more marked signs in town leading to trailheads.” The average response on the scale of 1-5 was 3.3, indicating that people generally did have a desire for such signage. From our investigations into Williamstown’s sign laws and conversations with Jeff Kennedy, the Town Sign Commissioner, it seems feasible that a reasonable sign design would satisfy requirements. A comprehensive project involving the installation of signs to many local places of interest would be ideal, because the signs could have a standard, recognizable design. We recommend that the WRLF work with the town to design such a system of signs, possibly based on England’s carved “Public Footpath” signs. Some of the possibilities for such signed routes could lead from the Spring Street area to Hopkins Forest and Pine Cobble.



Trail kiosk at Sheep Hill

Finally, we recommend that the WRLF work to install kiosks in popular outdoor recreation areas, in addition to the Sheep Hill kiosk they have already installed. These kiosks would be an important source of information for both local residents and Williamstown visitors and would contain a large map, small pamphlets highlighting popular local paths, and other trail information. The Chamber of Commerce does already have a substantive information booth on the corner of Route 7 and Main Street, but more kiosks specifically about trails at trailheads and town parks

could provide additional information to residents and Williams College students. There will soon be a new visitor's center on Spring Street, and this would be an ideal location for a kiosk.

VII. Appendices

Appendix A: Our Survey

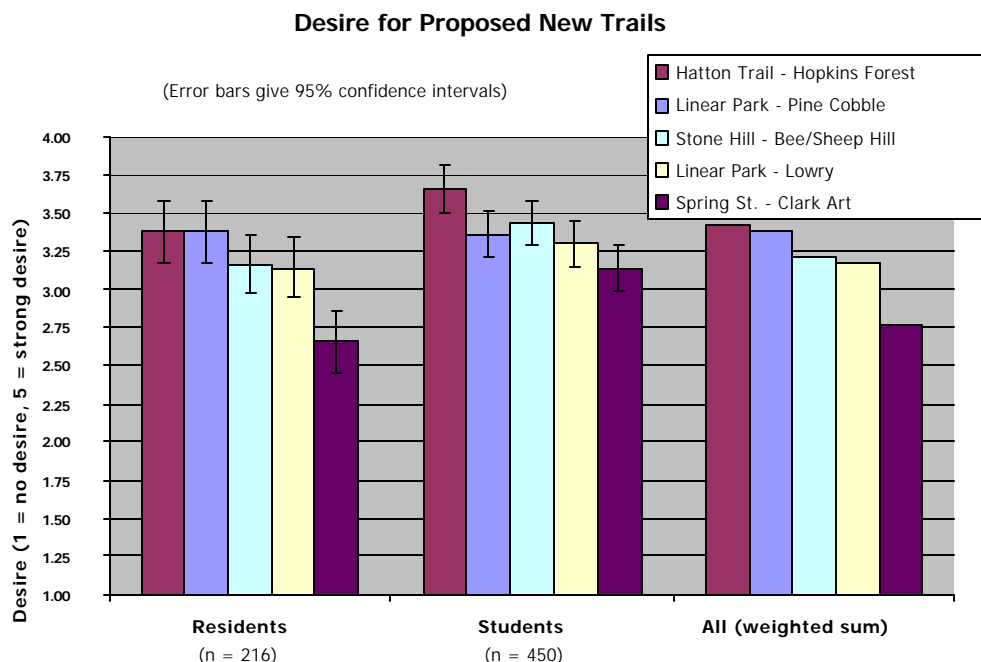
We conducted face-to-face surveys outside the Williamstown Post Office and in the Williamstown public library, and we sent an e-mail to all faculty, staff and students at Williams College asking them to fill out a web-based survey. This survey asked about current trail use and the desire for additional trails in Williamstown, both for the specific trails that we evaluated and for general types of trails. The full survey is included at the end of this appendix. We received 450 responses from students and 216 responses from Williamstown residents. Because most of our results came from the web-based survey, our sample was somewhat skewed — 179 of the 216 resident respondents were Williams College faculty or staff. We also received 112 responses from non-Williamstown residents, most of whom were Williams College faculty or staff. We decided, however, to look only at the responses of Williams students and Williamstown residents since our sample of non-Williamstown residents included only Williams College faculty/staff and people who happened to be in Williamstown when we conducted face-to-face surveys — thus we had a skewed sample of this population.

We conducted a separate face-to-face survey of visitors to Williamstown to try to get a sense of how many people come to Williamstown for recreational reasons, where they hike, from what sources they received trail information, and their desire for the addition of different general types of trails in Williamstown. We were not, however, able to get enough respondents to be able to draw any significant conclusions. Furthermore, most of the respondents to our visitor survey were part of the same party, in Williamstown only briefly for a wedding. To get a better picture of visitor recreation in Williamstown, a similar survey should be conducted in either the summer or early fall (or, preferably, both) — we conducted our survey in mid-November, past the prime recreation time in Williamstown.

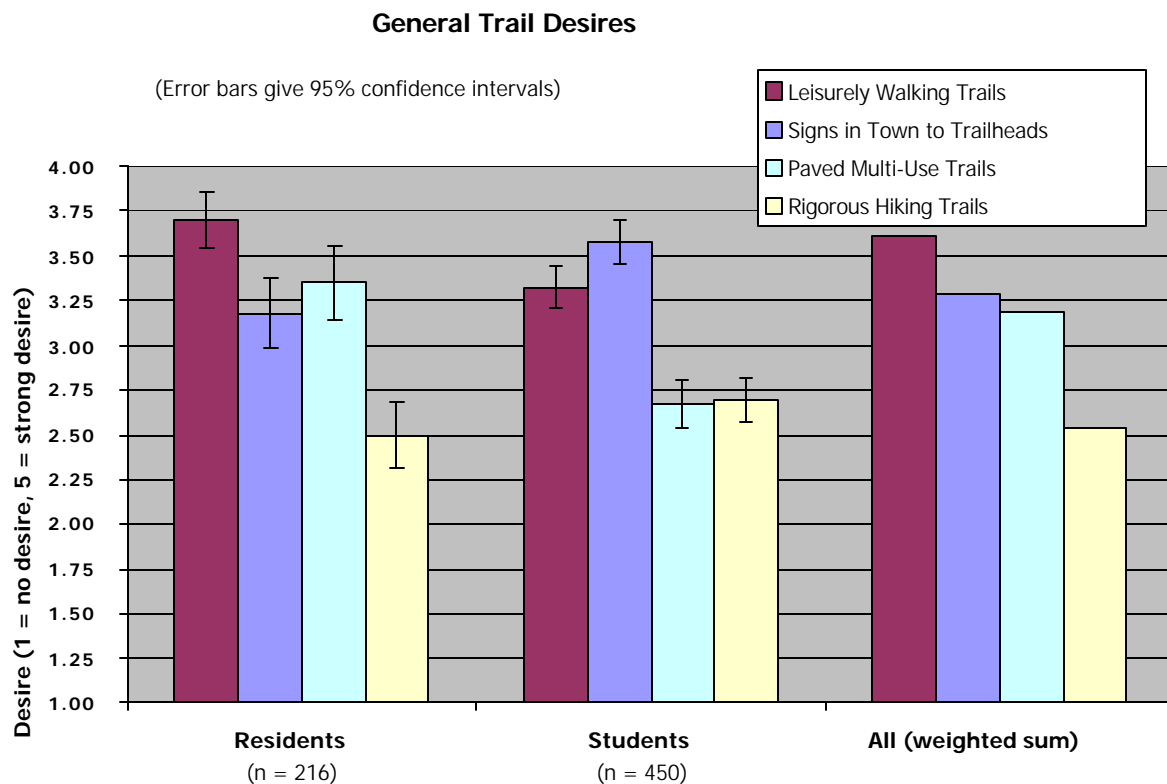
We obtained final, overall averages for each question by taking a weighted average of the student responses and the resident responses. That is, there are a total of 8,310 Williamstown residents, including students (“Facts and Information”) and there are 1,988 Williams College students (“Fast Facts about Williams”). Thus, we multiplied the student average by $1988/450$ (for the 450 student responses) and the resident average by $(8310 - 1988)/216$ and then added these two weighted averages to obtain final weighted averages for each question. Note that this

weighting system puts more emphasis on the desires of Williamstown residents than on the desires of students. These weighted averages are the numbers we used in the decision matrix.

The complete survey results are given at the end of this section. The results of the first question that related to current trail use are discussed above in the section about Williamstown's current trail system. The results of the second question, related to respondents' desire for each of the proposed new trails, are shown in the figure below. Residents expressed the greatest desire for the Hatton Trail – Hopkins Forest and Linear Park – Pine Cobble connections, followed by the Stone Hill – Sheep/Bee Hill connection (which was included as a single category on the survey because these two connections serve a similar purpose) and the Linear Park – Lowry connection, and the least desire for a Spring Street – Clark Art connection. Students also expressed the greatest desire for a Hatton Trail – Hopkins Forest connection, followed by roughly equal desires for the two Linear Park connections and the Stone Hill – Sheep/Bee Hill connection, and again the least desire for a Spring Street – Clark Art connection. We suspect that visitors would have expressed greater desire for the marked route to the Clark, and although we did not analyze the responses of non-residents in depth, it is worth noting that they expressed a greater desire for the Spring Street – Clark Art connection, giving it an average rating of 3.19, thus making it the second-highest rated route among non-residents.



The results of the third question, related to respondents' general desire for additions of different types of trails and routes in Williamstown, are shown in the figure below. Residents expressed the greatest desire for additional leisurely walking trails, followed by paved multi-use trails and signs in town leading to trailheads, and the least desire for additional rigorous hiking trails. Students expressed the greatest desire for signs leading to trailheads, followed by leisurely walking trails, and the least desire for rigorous hiking trails or paved multi-use trails. We suspect that people feel that there are enough rigorous hiking trails in Williamstown, and so there is no need for more. Students, who are probably not as familiar with the town's trail system, see a greater need for signs directing people to trailheads.



WILLIAMSTOWN TRAIL USE SURVEY

We are conducting a short survey about local trails for our Environmental Planning course at Williams. Whether or not you hike, we need your input, so please take 5 minutes to fill out our survey. Thanks!

1) Do you ever hike in Williamstown? Yes No

***If NO**, why not? (please circle all that apply):

Not interested Trails too strenuous Not enough time Don't know where trails are

Other: _____

***If YES**, how many times in the past year have you used each of these current trails?

(See "Existing Trails" map)

					Why (optional)?
(1) Hopkins Forest	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(2) Stone Hill trails (behind Clark Art)	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(3) Bee Hill (RRR Brooks, Fitch)	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(4) Pine Cobble	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(5) Taconic Crest and side trails	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(6) Mt. Greylock Reservation (eg. Hopper, Money Brook, Haley Farm, Mt. Prospect)	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(7) Hoosic River path (behind Cole field)	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(8) Green River Nature Trail	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
(9) Linear Park (no trail)	0	1	2-5	>5	_____
Other: _____					

2) Please rate your desire for these proposed new routes: (circle '0' if unfamiliar with area)

(See "Proposed New Routes" map)

(1) 1/4 mile path connecting Linear Park through
Eastlawn Cemetery to open town conservation land

0

no desire → strong desire

1

2

3

4

5

with a view of Williamstown	0	1	2	3	4	5
(2) 1/2 mile trail connecting Stone Hill and Bee Hill (RRR Brooks) trails across Routes 2/7 [Note: Route on map was Stone Hill – Sheep Hill connection]	0	1	2	3	4	5
(3) Wooded trail connecting Bee Hill (RRR Brooks) north to Hopkins Forest, creating a 9-mile hiking loop up to the Taconic Crest	0	1	2	3	4	5
(4) 1 mile flat riverside trail connecting Linear Park and Eastlawn Cemetery to Pine Cobble trailhead along the Green River Nature Trail	0	1	2	3	4	5
(5) Marked route connecting Spring Street to Clark Art Institute	0	1	2	3	4	5
Other:						

3) Please rate your desire for more of the following in Williamstown:

	no desire		→	strong desire	
rigorous hiking trails	1	2	3	4	5
leisurely walking trails	1	2	3	4	5
marked signs in town leading to trailheads	1	2	3	4	5
paved multi-use trails	1	2	3	4	5
(allowing strollers, bikes, wheelchairs, rollerblades)					

4) Are you a

- ___ Williams Fac/Staff, Williamstown resident?
- ___ Williams Fac/Staff, non-Williamstown resident?
- ___ Williams College student?
- ___ Other Williamstown resident?
- ___ Williamstown non-resident?

Williamstown resident survey results								
# RESPONSES	216		Fraction					
Ever hike in W'town?	Yes	177	0.819					
	No	39	0.181					
If no:	Not interested	11	0.282					
	Trails too strenuous	1	0.026					
	No time	19	0.487					
	Don't know trail locations	9	0.231					
		0	1	2-5	>5			
If yes:	Hopkins Forest	38	30	67	42			
	Stone Hill	45	31	58	43			
	Bee Hill	123	20	32	2			
	Pine Cobble	81	44	35	17			
	Taconic Crest	109	28	31	9			
	Mt. Greylock Res.	63	22	57	35			
	Hoosic River path	97	31	35	14			
	Green River trail	142	17	5	13			
	Linear Park	109	19	27	22			
		Unfamiliar	1	2	3	4	5	mean
Proposed routes:	Linear Park - Lowry	34	32	24	50	38	38	3.14
	Stone Hill - Bee Hill	37	29	18	58	43	31	3.16
	Bee Hill - Hopkins Forest	30	28	18	47	41	52	3.38
	Linear Park - P. Cobble	29	29	23	38	42	55	3.38
	Spring St. - Clark	30	61	24	45	29	27	2.66
		no response	1	2	3	4	5	mean
General Desire:	Rigorous trails	6	69	41	52	24	24	2.49
	Leisurely trails	2	13	15	58	64	64	3.71
	Signs to trails	4	39	34	43	41	55	3.18
	Paved multi-use trails	3	41	27	38	30	77	3.35

Williams student survey results								
# RESPONSES	450		Fraction					
Ever hike in W'town?	yes	290	0.644					
	no	160	0.356					
If no:	Not interested	41	0.256					
	Trails too strenuous	7	0.044					
	No time	113	0.706					
	Don't know trail locations	87	0.544					
		0	1	2-5	>5			
If yes:	Hopkins Forest	99	68	72	51			
	Stone Hill	65	47	101	77			
	Bee Hill	190	51	31	18			
	Pine Cobble	87	91	84	28			
	Taconic Crest	192	35	44	19			
	Mt. Greylock Res.	84	89	87	30			
	Hoosic River path	219	23	29	19			
	Green River trail	242	21	12	15			
	Linear Park	212	23	27	28			
		Unfamiliar	1	2	3	4	5	mean
Proposed routes:	Linear Park - Lowry	248	12	34	67	60	29	3.30
	Stone Hill - Bee Hill	205	15	32	79	69	50	3.44
	Bee Hill - Hopkins Forest	210	14	32	54	62	78	3.66
	Linear Park - P. Cobble	219	18	36	68	62	47	3.36
	Spring St. - Clark	100	76	45	72	68	89	3.14
		no response	1	2	3	4	5	mean
General Desire:	Rigorous trails	1	117	83	121	76	52	2.69
	Leisurely trails	0	50	58	125	128	89	3.33
	Signs to trails	1	49	52	82	123	143	3.58
	Paved multi-use trails	1	137	78	99	67	68	2.67

Appendix B: Decision Matrix

Left column for each trail is the *unweighted score*: survey data entered directly, other scores assigned. The right column for each trail is the *weighted score* = unweighted score * weight for that factor. *Results* are the sum of the weighted scores.

Scale of 1 – 5 5 = best score 1 = worst score	weights	Linear park - Lowry parcel		Linear Park - Pine Cobble Trailhead		Hatton - HMF (wooded)		Hatton - HMF (road)		Stone Hill – Bee Hill		Stone Hill – Sheep Hill		Spring St - Clark	
Community Desire															
Survey Data: Proposed Route	5	3.2	16	3.4	17	3.4	17	3.4	17	3.2	16	3.2	16	2.8	14
Survey Data: General Type of path	5	3.6	18	3.9	19.5	2.5	12.5	2.5	12.5	3.6	18	2.5	12.5	3.3	16.5
Connection of existing trails/parks	4	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	5	20	1	4
Connection to town center	4	4	16	4	16	1	4	1	4	3	12	2	8	5	20
Location															
Terrain Feasibility	5	3	15	5	25	4	20	5	25	4	20	3	15	5	25
Aesthetics	4	5	20	3	12	4	16	3	12	3	12	3	12	1	4
Traffic Safety	4	5	20	1	4	5	20	3	12	2	8	3	12	4	16
Open Space Protection	2	5	10	3	6	2	4	1	2	2	4	2	4	1	2
Permissions and Costs															
Landowner Approval	3	3	9	3	9	1	3	5	15	3	9	1	3	4	12
Costs	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	5	5	4	4	4	4	1	1
RESULTS:			146		130.5		119.5		124.5		123		106.5		114.5

Appendix C: Landowner concerns and legal options for trail corridors through private land

Almost all of our proposed trails cross over private land so negotiations with landowners are critical to making our recommended routes reality. There are three major areas that should be satisfactorily addressed in every case where a landowner may permit a public access through their property: liability, monitoring public use, and maintenance (Reed-Evans).

A Massachusetts state law exists to protect landowners who allow public uses such as passage over a trail on their property: Massachusetts Recreational Use Statute (Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) ch. 21, §17C, amended 1998, ch. 268). This protects landowners who permit public use without charge by limiting liability to circumstances of “willful, wanton, or reckless conduct” on the part of the landowner assuming that they keep hazards off their property (Creating Greenways). It has stood up against lawsuits several times and as such is a reliable assurance that allowing public passage will not be a source of liability concerns (Creating Greenways). A copy of the amendment to this act is included below.

A major part of negotiations for a trail between the landowner and trail proponent is establishing who will maintain and monitor it. Groups that currently provide or have provided maintenance around Williamstown are WRLF volunteers, the town Conservation Commission, WOC, and local Boy Scouts; the maintenance body should be set at the time of the trail agreement. Occasionally potential problems may arise, such as loiterers, trespassing off the trail corridor, and unauthorized motorized use. To control use, landowners and trail proponent should establish terms at the time of agreement, and put signs in place to inform users (Creating Greenways). For an issue such as motorized use specifically, there are state law fines (\$250) for operating motorized vehicles on private land, even if there are no signs specifically addressing it: MGL ch. 266, §121A (Creating Greenways). The trail proponent and landowner can cooperatively work to inform local authorities of infringements. Certainly measures should be taken to ensure that the public not abuse this privilege for passage through private land.

If a landowner is willing to allow a trail through their land, the next step is for the trail corridor to become official. For landowners hesitant to grant a permanent easement, a license (rather than an easement) is often the most agreeable option to both parties. It includes a clear delineation of where the trail is, answers the questions of monitoring and maintenance, covers the landowner under the liability law discussed above, but can be terminated at any time with a

simple letter to the other partners in the agreement (usually a body such as WRLF). While this is not the most ideal option from the perspective of permanent trail preservation, this solution still allows the trail to be implemented and is often made with the hope that the trail will prove a satisfactory situation and that a permanent easement could be negotiated in the future. There is no survey cost for a license, and one has the option of having it registered with the registry of deeds. (See later in this appendix for example of a license used by the WRLF.)

An easement is a more permanent option and is a legally enforceable agreement, a permanent status that is included in the property (it is bought and sold with the property), and requires some legal and survey fees. Easements are described under MGL, ch. 184, §31-33. Ideally a landowner might offer to donate the easement, and perhaps the non-profit (WRLF) or the town will offer to pay the fees. Or, a landowner could sell an easement, at a price to be determined per acre and decided in part by the official survey. Selling or donating such conservation restrictions may be applicable for property tax abatement (MGL, ch 61B) (Creating Greenways). The width of a trail corridor depends on location: a buffer zone may need to be larger if it is a forested area or near a stream that could force a minor re-routing.

Landowner Liability Statute

The protection of landowners from liability for allowing public use on their land (such as a trail corridor) is described below.

Chapter 268 of the Acts of 1998

AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE LIABILITY OF CERTAIN LANDOWNERS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 21 of the General Laws is hereby amended by striking out section 17C, as appearing in the 1996 Official Edition, and inserting in place thereof the following section:-

Section 17C. (a) Any person having an interest in land including the structures, buildings, and equipment attached to the land, including without limitation, wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water, who lawfully permits the public to use such land for recreational, conservation, scientific, educational, environmental, ecological, research, religious, or charitable purposes without imposing a charge or fee therefor, or who leases such land for said purposes to the commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof or to any nonprofit corporation, trust or association, shall not be liable for personal injuries or property damage sustained by such members of the public, including without limitation a minor, while on said land in the absence of wilful, wanton, or reckless conduct by such person. Such permission shall not confer upon any member of the public using said land, including without limitation a minor, the status of an invitee or licensee to whom any duty would be owed by said person.

(b) The liability of any person who imposes a charge or fee for the use of his land by the public for the purposes described in subsection (a) shall not be limited by any provision of this section. The term "person" as used in this section shall be deemed to include the person having an interest in the land, his agent, manager, or licensee and shall include without limitation, any governmental body, agency or instrumentality, nonprofit corporation, trust or association, and any director, officer, trustee, member, employee or agent thereof. A contribution or other voluntary payment not required to be made to use such land shall not be considered a charge or fee within the meaning of this section.

Approved August 10, 1998.

Example license

An example license (informal trail use agreement) is included below. This was used by the WRLF in negotiations for the Mahican-Mohawk Trail. Property owners names and address have been omitted, as well as specific deed numbers.

TRAIL AGREEMENT

The Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, Inc., a Massachusetts non-profit corporation having its address at 18B Spring Street, Williamstown, MA 01267 and ----- (“Property Owners”) of -----, Mohawk Trail, North Adams, MA 01247 desire to establish a hiking and cross country ski trail for public use across private property, as shown on Exhibit A attached to this document and indicating the routing of this trail.

Property Owners agree to allow the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation to mark and maintain a five-foot right-of-way for the section of the trail known as the **Mahican-Mohawk Trail** across a portion of the property located in the town of North Adams, Berkshire County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, described and recorded at the Northern Berkshire Registry of Deeds in Book -- -- on Page ---- and indicated in Exhibit A. This section of trail will be used exclusively for hiking and cross-country skiing during daylight hours. No camping or open campfires are allowed on the property. Horseback riding or use of any wheeled or motorized vehicles shall at all times be prohibited.

Volunteer works of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation and the Mahican-Mohawk Trail Committee will perform the season marking and maintenance of the trail. Marking will consist of mounting yellow plastic markers on trees along the route, and basic maintenance, after the initial cutting, will consist of pruning brush and trees necessary to clear the footpath. Trail marking and maintenance will follow the standard procedures in the Appalachian Mountain Club Trail Maintenance Manual.

Property Owners reserve the right to require a relocation of the trail or any part of the trail to a different portion of the property. In determining the route of said trail or a relocation, the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation will work cooperatively with the owner to determine the most appropriate location

Property Owners may, at any time, revoke this permission upon 60 day’s written notice to the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation. In the event the Property Owners contract to sell the property, or any part thereof abutting or intersecting the trail, the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation shall be notified at the time of signing of the contract. The agreement shall be terminated 60 days after the recording of the deed unless the agreement has been renewed with the new owner between time of recording and 60 days after recording. In the event the agreement is terminated, trail markers will be removed by the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation no later than 60 days after termination.

This agreement is subordinated to any present or future financing of the owners.

Appendix D: Williamstown Sign Regulations

One of our recommendations is to improve signage near both new and existing trailheads. In addition, since all of our proposed routes either start at a road or cross a road, it would be beneficial to place signs at the trailheads and trail road crossings. Any local sign “within public view of a public way, public park or reservation, in the town” is subject to Chapter 53 of the Williamstown Code, which outlines town signs regulations. The signage permission needed for our proposed routes is as follows:

1. The Spring Street to the Clark Art Institute route would start at the Spring Street parking lot (or new visitor center by the old gas station), lead down Walden Street, cross Hoxsey St., go down the Health Center parking lot & Agard driveways, cross South Street, and head down the South Street sidewalk to the Clark. A combination of the following could be used to mark the route, which is entirely along paved surfaces.
 - Standard painted trail blazes (2” x 6”) on telephone poles and/or trees
 - Coaster-sized (3-4”) colored round disks spaced along the route, either plain or with a simple logo, on telephone poles and/or trees
 - Freestanding directional signs, defined as “any sign designed solely for the purpose of traffic and pedestrian direction” (§53-2.1), with arrows pointing the way to Spring Street, the Clark Art Institute, and potentially WCMA. The signs could be up to 18”x36” (§53-6.1), and carved directional signs are encouraged (§ 53-1.2). Directional signs are not permitted on trees, telephone poles, or light poles (§53-4.1).

The blazes and disks are most likely exempt from Williamstown sign regulations since they are so small, but when permission is requested from the Sign Commission for trailhead directional signs, permission should also be requested to blaze this route (Jeff Kennedy, Sign Commissioner).
2. The Stone Hill to Bee Hill or Sheep Hill connections cross Routes 2/7. Sign Commission approval is needed for signs visible from this public highway.
3. The Linear Park to the Lowry Property connection would require directional signs at Linear Park and the Lowry Property. The Green River path to the Pine Cobble trailhead connection would require signs at Linear Park, and Route 2. In addition, where the trail exits the wooded Green River area, crosses the Cole Avenue bridge, and heads up the Pine Cobble Development road, either blazes, coaster-sized disks, or directional signs are necessary. All of these signs require Sign Commission approval.
4. The Hatton Trail to Hopkins Forest connection will require directional signs, either marking the way to Hopkins Forest and the RRR Brooks trails at the Petersburg Road end of the Hatton Trail, or if the Northwest Hill Road route is chosen, marking the way along that road.

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