

## Crime fears are knee-jerk concerns

IT'S A little sad to see that some residents of Sudbury are bandying about knee-jerk and invalid concerns about a rail-trail increasing crime and vandalism in their neighborhoods ("Suburban peace vs. pedal power," Page A1, July 5). It took 18 years for the Minute-man Bikeway, running through Arlington, Lexington, and Bedford, to go from idea to completion, and many residents who opposed its construction on the same grounds now see it as an asset and an enhancement of their property values. And the police departments of all three towns report no discernible increase in crime resulting from rail-trail use.

Apparently some of the abutters of the CSX rail right of way bought their property thinking that it came with a free 12-foot-wide extension of their backyards. The reality is that CSX has the right to sell that right of way for other uses, or convert it back to rail use. Given the high price of fuel and the new attractiveness of rail transport, I would think that the Sudbury abutters should be glad that a rail-trail, and not freight trains, would be running on that right of way.

BEN GUSTAFSON  
*Framingham*

## Have bike, will travel

SATURDAY MORNING was a bit cool, so I put on my long-sleeved "Support the Topsfield Rail Trail" shirt.

I was surprised then to see Sarah Schweitzer's article that day about some Sudbury residents being concerned about a bike trail.

Topsfield is also considering a rail trail, and preliminary approval for planning was given at our town meeting in May. Trail opponent Marianne Maurer's message to bicyclists — "My whole theory is: Go to the gym that you got the membership for and that you are not using" — seems completely incongruous. Does that mean that we are supposed to drive our cars to the gym in these days of nearly \$5-a-gallon gasoline?

As a 73-year-old, I may not be a bicycle racer, but I definitely find that riding a bike on a safe trail is preferable to riding on a highway with cars.

DOROTHY WASS  
*Topsfield*

## Wide-brush portrait of Sudbury unfair

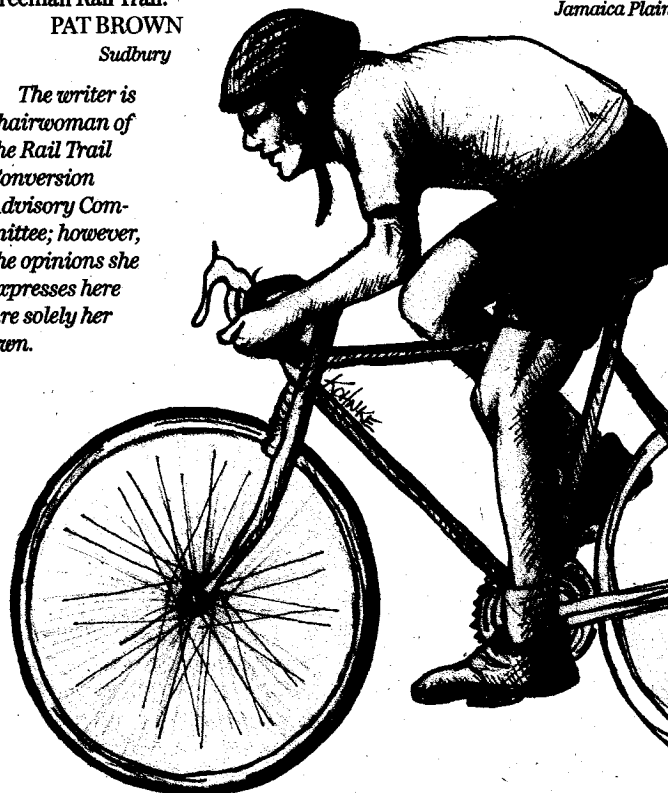
TO PORTRAY Sudbury as "a hold-out" blocking extension of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is both unfair and inaccurate. Framingham is not considered a "holdout" even though it has "just begun appraising . . . the cost." Towns nearer the southern end of the right of way are simply less advanced in this project.

Tom Michelman states, "The public benefit far outweighs any other concerns." These apparently include both project costs and state priorities. MassHighway currently estimates construction costs for the 4.8 miles of trail in Acton at \$7.7 million. The 2007 Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan announced last year by state Transportation Secretary Bernard Cohen states that the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton is a secondary priority even among bicycle projects. In Sudbury, it's even less important.

The Globe characterizes all Sudbury as a bastion of snobbery based on interviews with citizens chosen for their extreme positions. Despite the Globe's insinuations, this "wealthy hamlet" faces financial constraints and must prioritize worthy projects. Its citizens hold many divergent opinions. The article not only gratuitously besmirches Sudbury, but trivializes the very real challenges facing the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

PAT BROWN  
*Sudbury*

*The writer is chairwoman of the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee; however, the opinions she expresses here are solely her own.*



## Typical arrogance

ACTIVIST MARIANNE Maurer states that the proponents of the Lowell to Framingham bike path are like a "cult." And she is the one covertly monitoring e-mails about the project. I can only imagine the unbearable din of bikes, Nikes, and rollerblades on this enormous 10- to 12-foot-wide green pathway. It will be just terrible for these poor land abutters to see people actually exercising in public while getting to work. Are they afraid they may have to condescend to the occasional friendly greeting in passing? To be social with the common people? The "cult" Maurer speaks of is her side, her typical not-in-my-backyard arrogance.

CHRIS SPITTLE  
*Rockport*

## Here's an alternative

I HAVE a solution that I think will please both sides in the debate over the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Build the trail, but line it with a concrete retaining wall 2 feet thick by 20 feet high. The granola types could get their zero-carbon exercise, and the misanthropes living along the corridor would retain their privacy. Sudbury could reinforce its section with guard towers (jobs!) and mirrors on the outside (virtually doubling the number of trees!). Think of all the high-paying construction jobs — and no messy ceiling panels!

TOM JACOBSON  
*Jamaica Plain*