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Our view: Topsfield should get on rail-trail bandwagon

Wonder whether those who proposed laying down the first street grids had to deal with the same fears that arise anytime someone proposes turning an abandoned rail line into a bike trail? Probably not, or else we'd all still be walking everywhere.

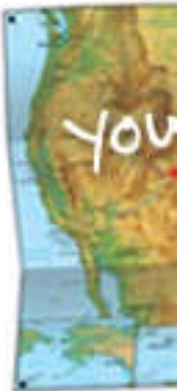
Topsfield is the latest focal point in the debate over rail trails. Creating such pathways makes sense for several reasons — encouraging people to ride their bicycles rather than get in their car whenever they need to get someplace, is good for the environment; providing people with a place to ride, run or walk is good for their health. Yet inevitably the cry goes out that such trails will attract hooligans and predators.

Such protests usually come from those whose homes abut the abandoned rights-of-way. They certainly wouldn't want trains running along those old tracks again, but they'd prefer they not be used for any other purpose either.

Fortunately, this NIMBY sentiment has failed to prevail in most communities, and we are now well on our way to having a bike path that extends to the New Hampshire border and encircles Boston. Such a trail would be a major recreational resource for the region and Topsfield should be part of it.



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