

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Rail trail will be an asset

To the editor:

An Apr. 18 letter raised concerns about the Topsfield Linear Common (TLC) rail trail. We believe that by understanding each other, we will end up with a better outcome for Topsfield and all parties involved.

The trail is being designed and built for non-motorized uses, such as walking, jogging and bicycle riding. The Federal funding referenced (SAFETEA-LU) establishes three categories of funding for recreational trails: 1) non-motorized trail use; 2) motorized trail use; and 3) diverse trail use. Federal legislation requires that 30 percent of the trail funds be used for non-motorized trails, which is what will apply to the TLC. The lease between the MBTA and the town states that the trail may only be used as a "corridor for bicycle, pedestrian and other non-motorized public transportation, recreation and associated purposes." The National Grid, owners of the northern section of the TLC, also prohibits the use of motorized vehicles.

Regarding safety, Topsfield would not develop the trail if there was any possibility it would pose a safety risk to our children or others. The goal is to provide a safe place for families, children, and seniors to walk, ride bikes and get exercise. The TLC will provide access to a variety of recreational areas in town, away from vehicle traffic.

Regarding crime, the TLC is no more likely to attract criminals than the sledding hill, the Town playgrounds, Klock Park, Pye Brook Community Park, or Hoods Pond. This is supported by a survey of six

Massachusetts towns that have active rail trail, conducted by the Danvers Police Department. The survey concluded "there have been no significant changes in the crime rates" in the vicinity of the rail trails in those towns. This is because the trails, like other recreational areas in town, are self-policing. The presence of a variety of users deters inappropriate and criminal behavior. Other towns that have had rail trails for years have stopped police patrols altogether for lack of need.

Although public access is not currently allowed, the railbed is used by people and inappropriate behavior can easily be concealed. Furthermore, the abandoned railbed poses a variety of safety hazards, including uneven walking surfaces, unsafe bridges, overgrown brush where ticks are commonly found. Emergency access to several portions of the railbed would be very difficult. Development of the trail will remove safety hazards, make the trail accessible to emergency vehicles and create a true asset for the community. The TLC will pass through some currently not accessible areas of town, such as the Beverly-Salem Canal, a two-mile waterway feeding Wenham Lake that provides the drinking water supply for Salem and Beverly.

Those with concerns about the rail trail should visit a trail in another town, such as the Marblehead Bike Path, the Minuteman

Bikeway, the Cape Cod Rail Trail, the Pow-Wow River Trail in Amesbury or the Ghost Trail in Salisbury. Information about the TLC can be found on [www.TopsfieldTrail.Org](http://www.TopsfieldTrail.Org) and the public is invited to monthly meetings, which are posted on the Topsfield Web Page and in Town Hall.

**The Topsfield Rail Trail Committee**

**Joseph Geller, Chairman,  
Gregg Demers, Nancy Luther,  
David Read, Kathie Tremblay  
and David Smith**

## Boxford proves patriotic spirit

To the editor:

At a time when some politicians and others feel that we do not need to have Memorial Day Parades, many people in the small town of Boxford attend the parade and speeches supporting our veterans, troops, and country. Thank you to Chaplains, Selectmen, police, firemen, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campbell Highlanders, singer, Spofford Pond Elementary School band, Masconomet Regional High School band, American Legion Post 379, Bensons Ice Cream, speakers and attendees.

**Capt. Ed Bryant USCG (Ret)  
Parade Marshal, Memorial Day,  
Boxford**



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