**Grand Trunk Trail > Titanic Rail Trail**

So where does the Titanic Rail trail come in? Back in 1992 a group of area residents, lead by our own Ed Calcutt got together to revive the rail trail idea and promote building a rail trail from the “Blackstone to the Pioneer Valley” and they called themselves the “Grand Trunk Trail Blazers” (GTTB) The GTTB organized and incorporated as a nonprofit trail advocacy group promoting the building of the grand trunk into a 50 mile rail trail. For a number of years they held local Mt Bike races, conducted meetings and advocated our political leaders for help in building this trail. Successes were few and far between which took a significant turn for the better in 2000 when members of the GTTB partnered with the Corps of Engineers, Opacum Land Trust, local residents of Southbridge and Sturbridge, and the state office of economic development and held a spring volunteer trail day to start opening up the rail bed along the property of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers just above the Westville lake recreation area. From that initial clean up event, partnerships were formed and local trail committees were created all of which eventually lead to the regional Grand Trunk Trail committee. The Regional GTT Committee (RGTTC) is made up of representatives from the trail committees of Brimfield, Holland, Southbridge and Sturbridge along with the U S Army Corps of Engineers. The RGTTC meets quarterly and coordinates the local volunteer trail day events and celebrations, seeks grants for trail construction and in general coordinates the development of the GTT in our area. The GTTB encouraged by this success started to expand their organizational efforts along the now 66 mile route which incorporates some 6 other rail trails, all going by local names, much like our “Grand Trunk Trail”. In 2010, the GTTB held a contest and selected the name of “Titanic Rail Trail” as the name for this overall 66 mile route. Organizing local friends of trail groups by the GTTB continues with a recent trail organizational support meeting held in the Town of Monson just this past April, today “Friend of trail” groups have now been formed along the entire Titanic Rail trail route, with 13 communities, 2 states, 2 Federal partners and several local non profit organizations.

Here in Sturbridge the trail committee is working a phased approach in completing the 6 mile Sturbridge section. Starting from the dam at Westville Lake (the town line of Sturbridge and Southbridge cuts the dam in ½) the trail is complete and open to the Ed Calcutt Bridge crossing the Quinebaug River, a distance of 1.9 miles. The next ¾ mile section is from the Ed Calcutt Bridge to the River/Farquhar Rd intersection. This section of trail is currently under design by the engineering firm CME for the Town and Mass Highway, who will build this section of trail using a $550,000.00 grant from the last authorization of the Federal Transportation Enhancements Act, or TEA as it is known.

From the River/Farquhar Rd intersection the trail will follow the shoulder of River Rd and cross over I-84 and continue along the OSV Access Rd. out to Stallion Hill Rd. At some time in the future, plans will be made to place this section of the trail on the property of the U S Army Corps of Engineers where practical. Although not all agreements are in place, preliminary discussions have been held with OSV and Mass Highway regarding this route. Once the trail is at Stallion Hill Rd. it will follow the existing sidewalk to the entrance of OSV then cross Stallion Hill Rd into the River Lands. Once on the River Lands a 3 phased construction sequence of the 1.5 mile distance will be accomplished bringing the trial out to Holland Rd. It is along this section of trail that connections will be made to link the trail to the RT 20 Fiskdale Buisness District.

Crossing Holland Rd onto the .3 mile Trolley trail will be completed this spring with a grant from the Last Green Valley. The next .3 mile section will be all new trail on the East Brimfield Lake Corps of Engineers property, bringing the trail out to the East Brimfield Dam itself. From the dam, the one of two possible routes into Brimfield have not yet been fully determined as the Sturbridge Trail Committee is awaiting a decision from the Brimfield trail committee as to which route they would prefer. The two routes up for discussion are, the north route: Riverview Ave out to Rt. 20 and west along the RT 20 shoulder to the Holland Rd in Brimfield or the South route, across the dam to Streeter Rd, then along the shore line of the East Brimfield Lake to Holland Rd in Brimfield. For Sturbridge either route is possible, however for Brimfield either route presents significant costs, environmental and construction concerns that must be better explored before a decision is reached.

The long range planning by the Sturbridge Trail Committee has the complete construction of the Grand Trunk/Titanic Rail trail taking at least 5 to 10 more years.