

TOWNSEND HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
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Jennifer Shemowat, P.E.
Fay, Spofford and Thorndike
5 Burlington Woods
Burlington, MA 01803

VIA US MAIL & FAX (781) 229-1115

Dear Ms. Shemowat,

I am writing in response to your request for the Townsend Historical Society's comments on the proposed rail trail.

The issue of running a rail trail through the Harbor's Historic District requires genuine creative thinking on a broad scale. A recreational resource like a rail trail in Townsend is an exciting and positive plan for the town. The Harbor Historic District is, in many ways, an obvious part of the plan. Individuals using the rail trail will have a close view of the historic buildings clustered along the rail road bed that formed an early industrial village overlooking the beautiful Harbor Pond. It is uncommon that such a site has been preserved so completely.

The railroad tracks are an integral part of the Harbor's Historic District and, in fact, are an integral part of Townsend's history. They represent the town's growth from three separate and insular villages to one town; from provincial, restricted trade and commerce to far larger markets in the country. The Fessenden barrel industry could not have succeeded without the establishment of the railroad, and the mill's site location near the tracks in the center was no accident. Even the Spaulding Gristmill relied heavily on the railroad for its transport of flour and grain in the second half of the nineteenth century. For this reason, the railroad tracks have always been a part of the Townsend Historical Society's Historic District Tour.

Artifacts of our history and development - world, national, regional, and local - form an invaluable resource that is nonrenewable. Once gone, they are gone forever. Of all the historic districts in Townsend, the Harbor is the best preserved and most complete. In this respect, the Harbor Historic District is a true gem requiring continued protection and preservation for future generations.

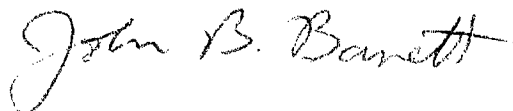
In order to preserve the integrity of the complex the Townsend Historical Society would like FST to explore the possibility of the rail trail passing along Main Street *in front of* the historic properties rather than *through* the district itself for that brief leg of the trail. Given the fact that the Historic District is adjacent to South Street, this compromise would serve two purposes; it would maintain the gestalt of the Harbor Historic District while providing an alternative route for rail trail users to the lights on South Street for safe passage over that roadway.

Alternatively, if it is determined that the rail trail must pass within the right-of-way, then the Townsend Historical Society requests that the railroad tracks which pass through the complex be retained and that an alternate surface, (something that would create the impression of a cart road), be used in this area, allowing the railroad tracks to remain visible, with the rail trail, perhaps, passing to the south of the existing tracks.

We hope that working together a scenario can be reached which will preserve the historical integrity of the Harbor Village and will accommodate the rail trail.

Please feel free to call if you have any questions or comments.

Very truly yours,



John B. Barrett, President