



“The Mill River is of great significance for the historic development pattern created around industrial mills clustered along the river which today create a series of village centers, somewhat disconnected from each other but for the highly traveled Route 9. **The question most participants sought to explore over the coming years is how the two village centers along Route 9 be connected through multi-use paths and sidewalks,** encourage vibrant commercial shopping and entertainment establishments, provide affordable housing within walking distance to local services, and respect and protect the Mill River as a unifying factor throughout Williamsburg... This is especially desirable for safe routes to Williamsburg schools for students and for easier routes around the village for elderly and disabled residents.”

- Williamsburg Open Space & Recreation Plan 2011

MILL RIVER GREENWAY COMMITTEE

2012-2014



thank you!

Gaby Immerman, chair
Nick Dines
John Hoogstraten
Dave Weber
Joe Rogers
Jim Hyslip
Francie Borden
John Connolly
Jen Black
Eric Bloomquist
Rachel Koh

Past Members:

Jody Nishman
Jim Ayres
Charles Dudek
Mary Dudek
JM Sorrell
Todd Lynch
Mimi Kaplan
Larry West
Emmet Anderson
Jim Weed
Neal Bastek
Rob Stinson
Marvin Ward
Matt Wilhelm



WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

- Alternative Transportation Corridor
- Ecological Restoration
- Conservation
- Cultural/Social benefits
- Economic engine
- Safe Route to School
- Amenities (benches, kiosks)
- Local History
- Climate Resilience



150 YEAR COMMEMORATION

MAY 16, 1874

MILL RIVER FLOOD



www.historicnorthampton.org



Leeds button mill before the flood



MAY 16, 1874



Leeds button mill after the flood

The sudden collapse of the Williamsburg dam in western Massachusetts let loose a flood that swept away parts of Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydenville, and Leeds. It killed 139 people, all within an hour.

150 YEAR COMMEMORATION

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

EVENT SCHEDULE 2024

Cascade of Bells

May 16, starting at 12:10 p.m.

Listen to the relay of church bells from Williamsburg to Northampton, ringing a total of 139 times, once for each flood victim.

Floods Past and Present

May 16, 5:00-6:30 p.m.

Grow Food Northampton Community Farm, Florence
Registration begins April 1 at growfoodnorthampton.org/events/

John Sinton and Gaby Immerman of the Mill River Greenway will lead a discussion on the natural and human-driven hydrologic cycles of life on a floodplain farm. From the era of Glacial Lake Hitchcock through 10,000 years of Indigenous land stewardship, to the colonial era, and to our current period of global warming, attendees will reflect on the natural cycle of flooding along the Mill River.

The 1874 Mill River Flood

Talk by Eric Weber

May 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Meekins Library, 2 Williams St., Williamsburg

Commemoration of the Mill River Flood

May 18 at 2:00

First Congregational Church of Williamsburg, 4 North Main St., Williamsburg

The program will feature new musical compositions by Nick Reid and Louise Mosrie, the "May 16th, 1874" ballad by Lynne Bertrand and Penny Schultz, with cellist Stephen Katz, and the story of the disaster in the words of witnesses (arranged by Elizabeth Sharpe) with a reading of the victims' names. A re-enactment of dam keeper George Cheney's frantic horseback ride to warn the village will follow on North Main Street. Two trees will be planted at the church honoring the first two victims of the flood.

Leeds Commemoration Gathering

May 19 at 1:00 p.m.

Church lawn, 195 Main St., Leeds

There will be a recounting of Myron Day's heroic ride warning Leeds, a reading of the names of the 51 Leeds victims, and the performance of an original song by John Daniel. River-inspired art pieces by Leeds artists, original illustrations from *Millicent* and *The Day it Rained Buttons* by Nancy Meagher, and an art piece made by the Leeds After School Enrichment River Arts Club will be on display. A memorial tree will be planted to honor Myron Day.

Who Was Responsible for the Mill River Disaster?

May 31 at 7:00, June 1 at 1:00 and 4:00

Old Hampshire County Courthouse, Main Street, Northampton
Registration begins April 1 at historicnorthampton.org

A readers' theatre presentation about the coroner's inquest into the cause of the Mill River disaster will take place in Hampshire County's historic courtroom. The audience will be invited to participate by reading some of the testimony and commentary from the inquest. Elizabeth Sharpe, author of *In the Shadow of the Dam: The Aftermath of the Mill River Flood of 1874*, will narrate.

Paintings by Frances Kidder

Mill River Disaster of 1874

May 1 - May 31

Talk by Frances Kidder, May 11 at 1:00 p.m.

Meekins Library, Neil Hammer Gallery

Artwork and Poetry Exhibit by Dunphy School 3rd Graders

Curated by Nancy Meagher

May 1 - May 31

Meekins Library

Guided Walks to the Dam Ruins

May, June, and September

Registration begins May 1 at historicnorthampton.org

Historians, naturalists, and engineers will lead walks and discuss the design and construction of the dam, the dam break, and the changes in the natural landscape.

Videos about the Flood

May and June

Historic Northampton, 46 Bridge St.
Wednesday to Sunday, 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Visitors can select from among five videos about the disaster, its impact, and its artistic representations, including the 18-minute 1993 film by Art Donahue for Chronicle, WCVB-TV Channel 5 Boston.

Follow the Flood - Self Guided Tours

May and June

An interactive, online map, designed and hosted by Smith College, will show the length of the Mill River, the span of the flood, and the locations of 75+ historical markers that describe what happened at each site. Markers will be posted in the villages of Williamsburg, Haydenville, Leeds, Florence, and Northampton and at victims' graves in five cemeteries. Click the QR code in the bottom corner (will be live May 1) to access the online Story-Map.

Flood Memorial Tree Project

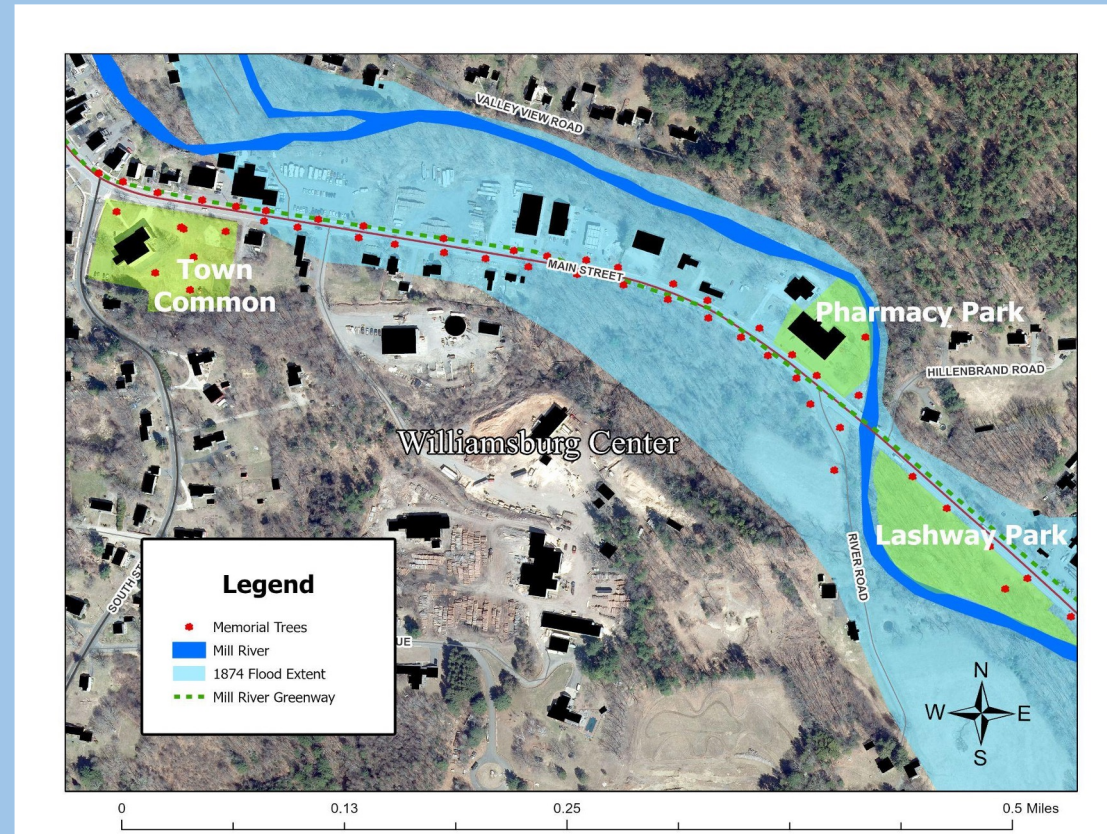
May 2024 - 2029

A total of 144 trees (one for each of 139 victims and five heroes) will be planted along the river as a living memorial. Each tree will be dedicated to an individual flood victim, the entire family that perished, or a hero of the day. The plantings will take place over five years as the Mill River Greenway shared-use path along the river is developed.

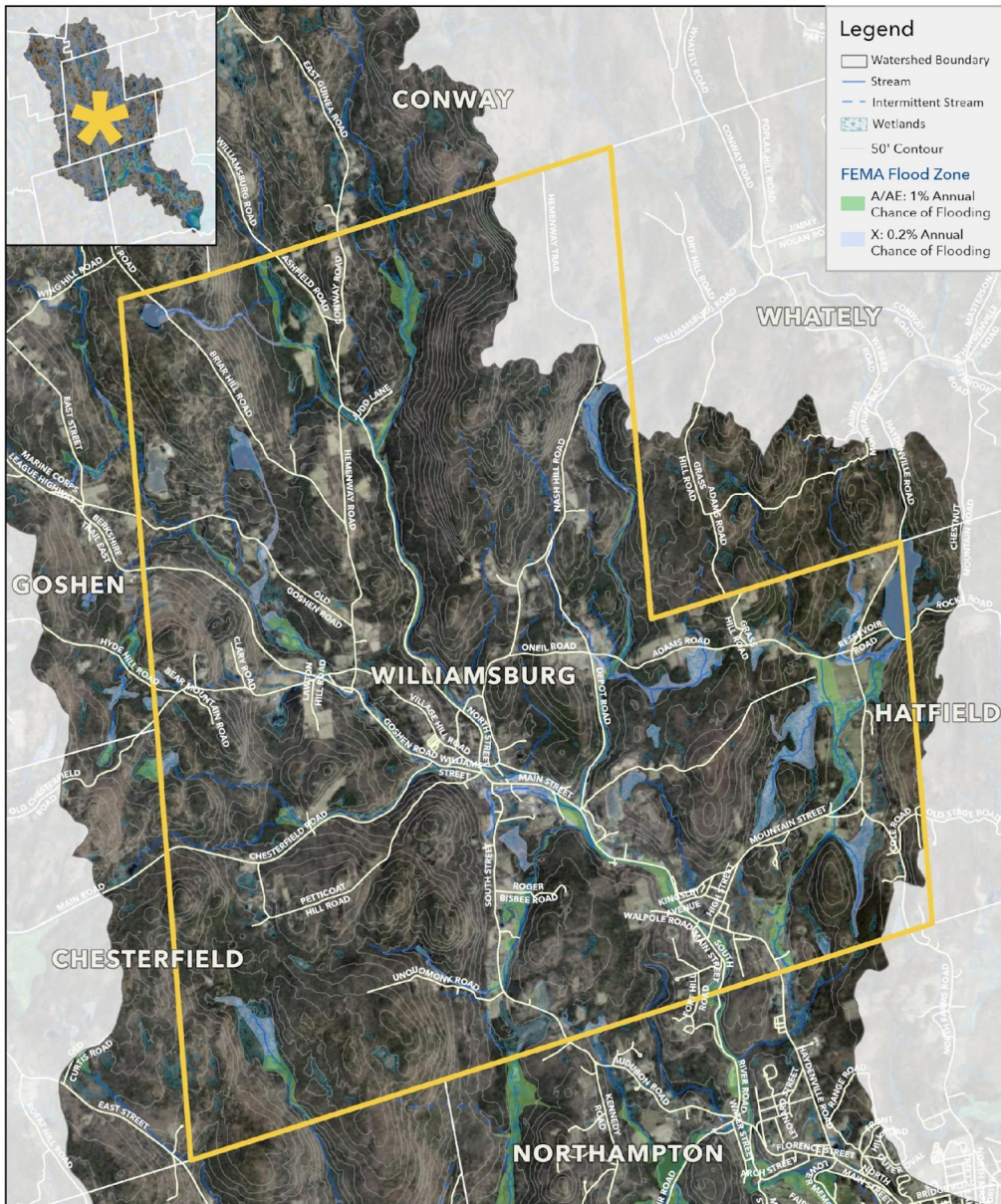


MILL RIVER FLOOD URBAN MEMORIAL FOREST, 2024-2029

139 TREES PLANTED IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO PERISHED



www.millrivergreenway.org



UPPER MILL RIVER WATERSHED PLANNING FOR FLOOD RESILIENCE

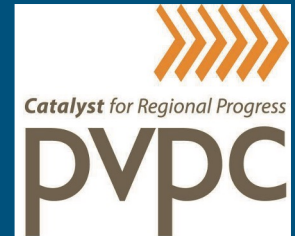
Williamsburg

PREPARED BY: DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning

0 0.5 1 Miles



Mill River Watershed Planning for Flood Resilience



Native People



DODSON & FLINKER
Landscape Architecture and Planning



Williamsburg
residents &
businesses



A two-year project made possible by an Action Grant from the
Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program to the
Town of Williamsburg

Project Elements



Holistic Watershed-Based Plan

- EPA 9-Element Watershed Plan
- Stormwater infrastructure mapping
- Upland watershed stewardship
- Collaborating across town boundaries with other stewards of the watershed

Technical Analysis

- Create up-to-date flood maps that show current and future flooding
- Assess climate vulnerabilities and flood mitigation opportunities in upland areas
- Identify affordable housing opportunities

Engagement

- Town boards - Landowners - Indigenous Land Stewards - Dunphy School
- Greenway Design Charette & community visioning
- Resident involvement in flood solutions
- Backyard workshops to build climate resilience
- Interactive web-based mapping tool with watershed data

Resilience Building

- Community engagement in the project from start to finish
- Public participation in the design of the Mill River Greenway
- Landowner participation in climate-resilient land management strategies throughout the watershed

Regulatory Review

- Review town bylaws and regulations for ways to increase flood protection
- Recommend resiliency standards for bylaws and regulations
- Coordination with ongoing town Comprehensive Planning process



Climate Smart Landscapes at Home and Work



A five-part workshop series introducing Williamsburg residents to strategies for addressing climate impacts at the residential scale.

This series is part of the Upper Mill River Watershed Planning for Flood Resilience project funded through the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program.

Hosted at Meekins Library, Williamsburg, MA

All workshops will run from 9 to 10:30am

Breakfast treats and coffee will be provided!

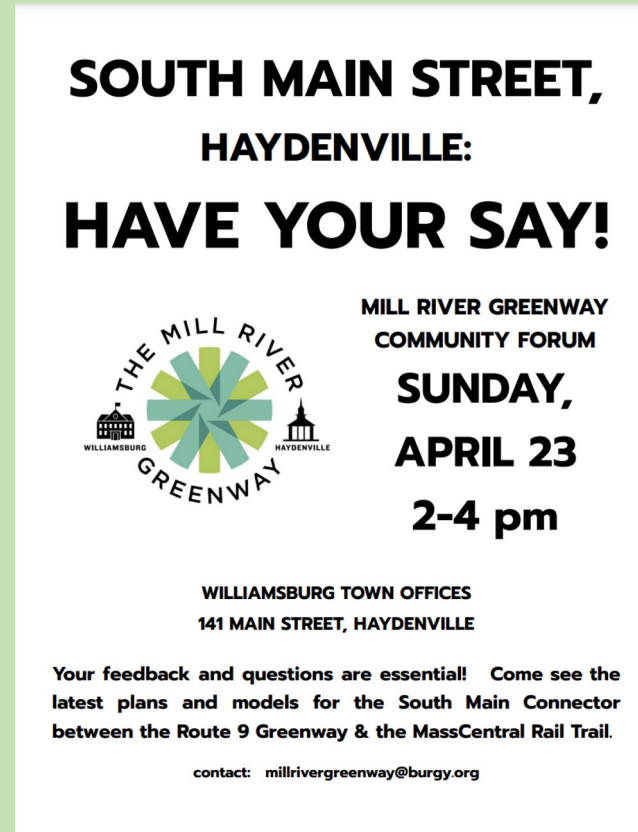
- ♦ **Saturday, March 30: 'Mapping Stormflows at Home and Work'**
Presented by Courtney Morehouse, *Member of the Upper Mill River Watershed Project Team*
- ♦ **Saturday, April 6: 'Soak Up the Rain: It's All About the Soil'**
Presented by Patty Gambarini and W. Kyle Finnell, *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*
- ♦ **Saturday, April 13: 'Harvesting Rainwater: Cisterns and Rain Barrels'**
Presented by Patty Gambarini and W. Kyle Finnell, *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*
- ♦ **Saturday, April 27: 'Soak Up the Rain: Rain Gardens and Bioswales'**
Presented by Rachel Lindsay, *Regenerative Design Group*
- ♦ **Saturday, May 4: 'Soak Up the Rain: Porous Paving'**
Presented by Rachel Loeffler, *Berkshire Design Group*

Registration is encouraged!

*To learn more and pre-register, scan the QR code or visit:
www.hilltownlandtrust.org/get-involved/events*

www.hilltownlandtrust.org

12 COMMUNITY FORUMS



2013 May

2016 April

2017 April

2017 Revelation Day

2019 April

2019 MVP Planning process

2021 Children Imagine the Greenway (with ATD)

2022 April

2022 Burgy 250th

2023 April

2023 October

2024 April



MRGC FUNDING SUMMARY to date

GRANTS

\$48,000	2015 Rec Trails Program, DCR
\$47,000	2017 Rec Trails Program, DCR
\$100,000	2018 Rec Trails Program, DCR
\$100,000	2021 MassTrails Program, DCR
\$247,600	2022 MassTrails Program, DCR
\$204,000	2024 MassTrails (pending)

\$65,000 2017 Town Meeting 2017 (Rte 9 Corridor Survey)

\$9,999	2017 Healthy Hampshire/Mass in Motion
\$30,000	2020 MA Attorney General settlement funds
\$19,000	2019 MVP Planning Grant
\$682,000	2023 MVP Action Grant

\$30,000	2014 State Transportation Bond funds
\$500,000	2023 Complete Streets
\$2.39M	2020 State T-Bond funds (awarded)

DONATIONS

\$2,300	2017 Valley Gives Day
\$17,000	2017 Donations from local businesses
\$8,000	2018 Jim Locke memorial gifts
\$7,800	2018 Skinnerville Park donations

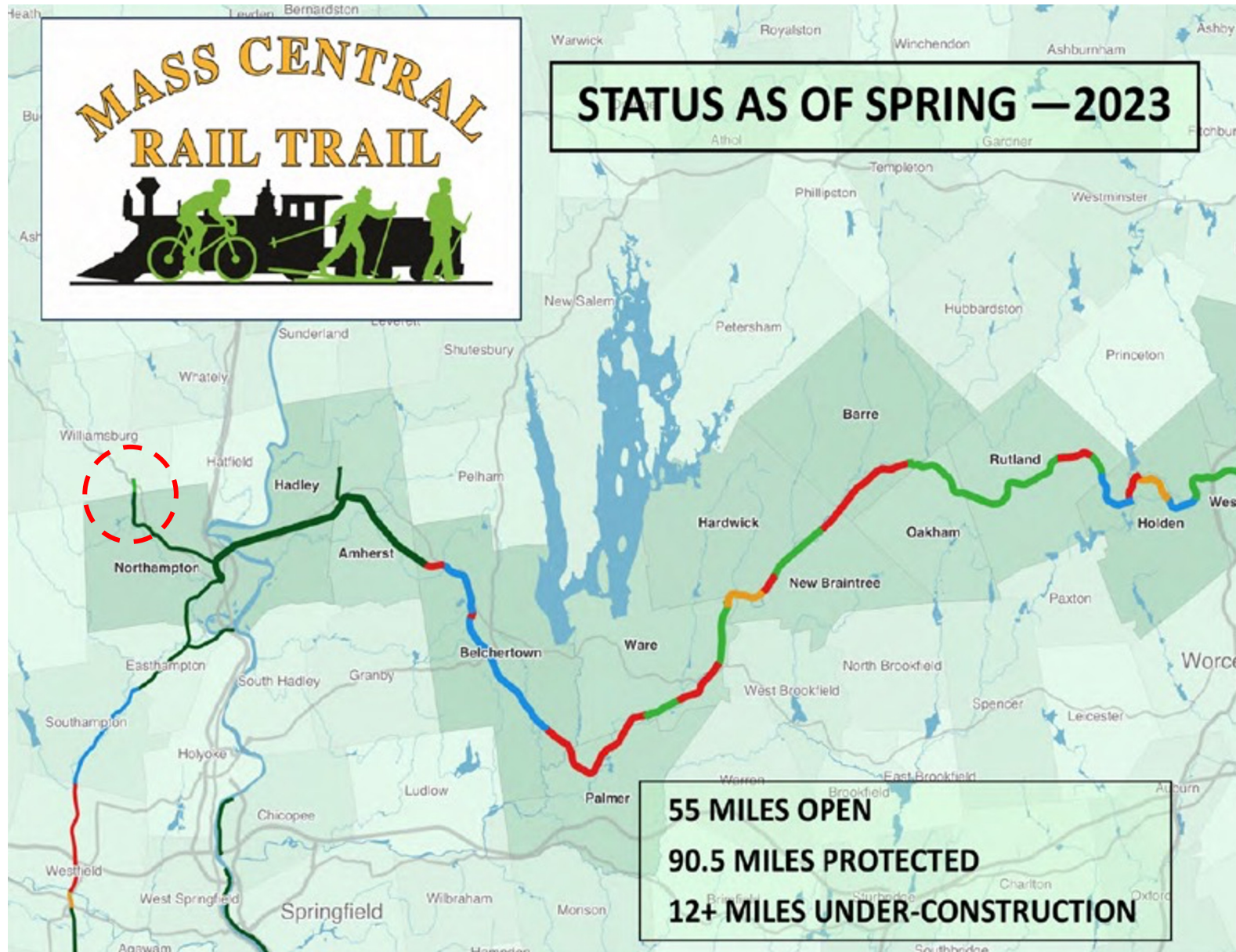
SMITH COLLEGE DESIGN CLINIC 2015-2022
(in kind value \$15,000 per year x 5 years)

SELECT BOARD INVOLVEMENT

95	Agenda items/appearances
42	Unanimous votes

TOTAL FUNDS TO DATE: **\$1.85M grants & donations**
\$65,000 town funds (Route 9 Corridor Survey)
\$2.39M T-BOND awarded

Williamsburg Mill River Greenway: MassCentral Rail Trail Link



The 2.5 mile WMRG connects to the MCRT from South Main Street Connector via the Dismount at the Haydenville/ Northampton Town Line.



100-Mile Mass Central Rail Trail to Boston

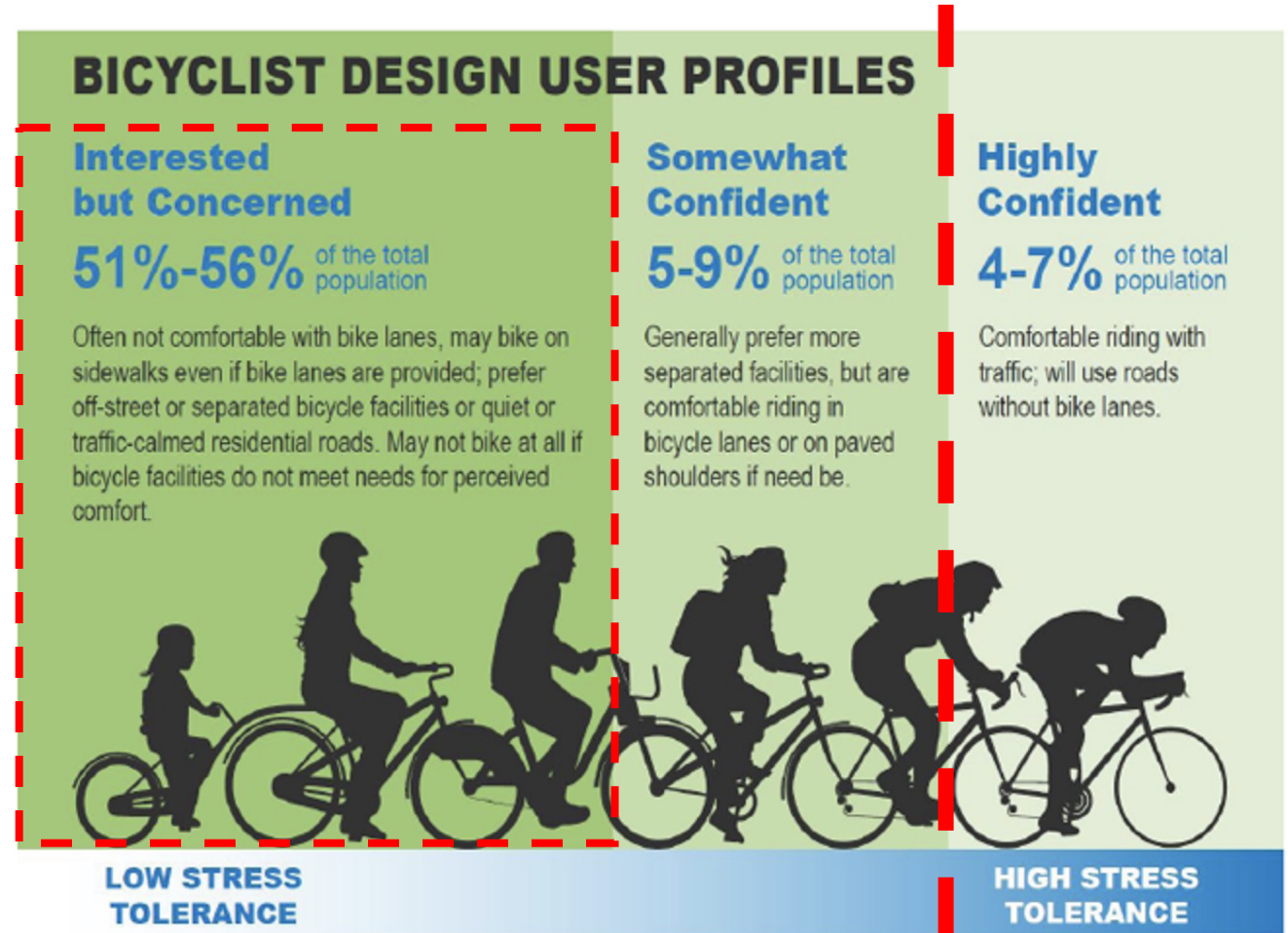


Bicyclist Design User Profiles: Accommodations

- The Shared Use Path must accommodate **bicyclists who are 'Risk Averse'** and who have low stress tolerance. →
- It must also accommodate **all non-cyclists.**

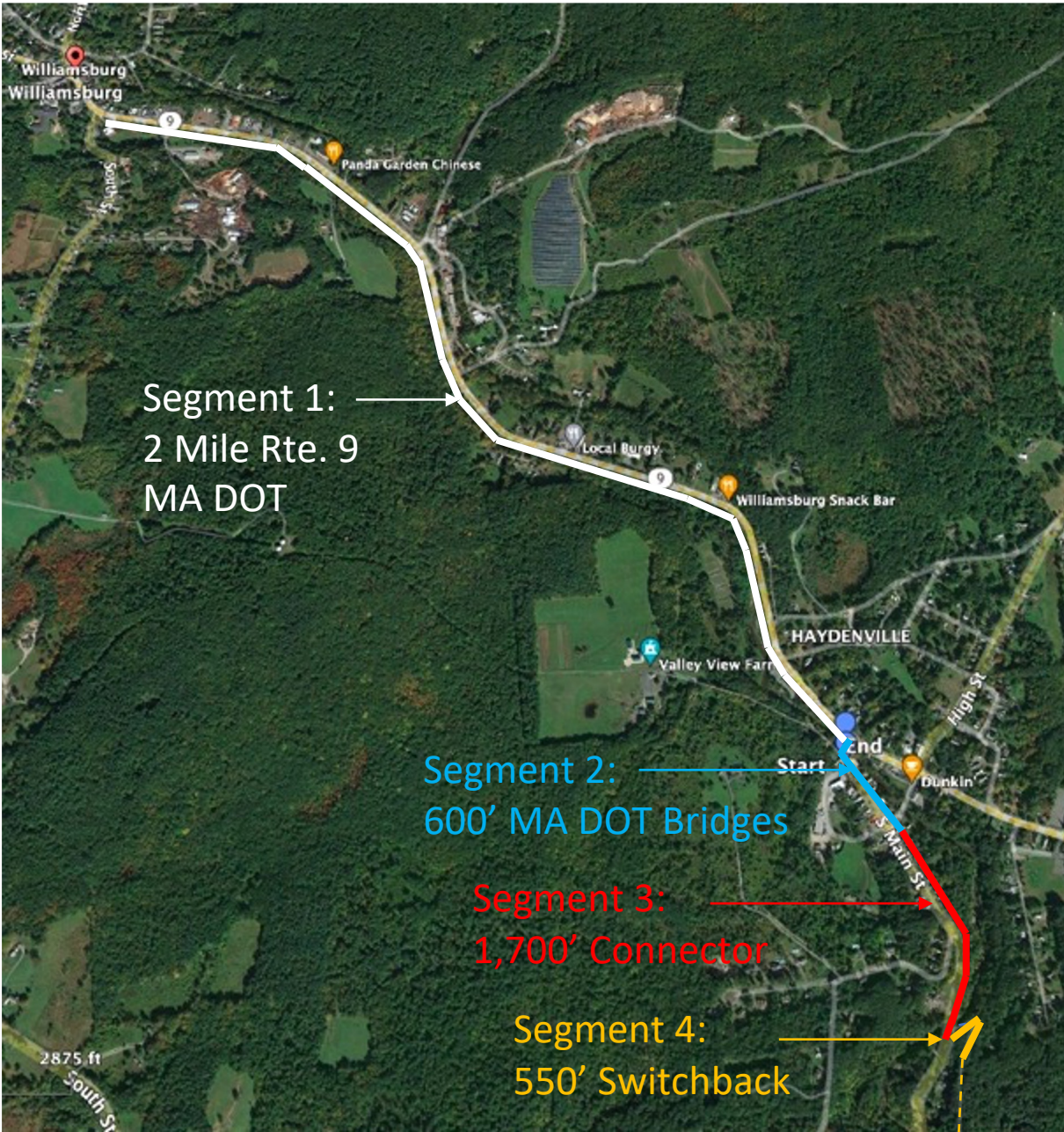


“A Common Path for the Whole Community.”





Four Segments of the Burgy Mill River Greenway



Segment 1: ———→
2 Mile Rte. 9
MA DOT

Segment 2: ———→
600' MA DOT Bridges

Segment 3: ———→
1,700' Connector

Segment 4: ———→
550' Switchback

1: MassDOT (Route 9)

2: MassDOT (Bridges)

3: Transportation Bond

4: Complete Streets/
MassTrails (*pending*)

MRGC Design Deck

South Main Abutters presentation



TIMELINE and NEXT STEPS

South Main Connector and MCRT Dismount: (T-Bond & other grants)

May 2 Select Board forum debrief

May 16 Proposed date for vote (not confirmed)

→ *If SUP – go to bid this fall, construct Spring 2025*

→ *If Bike Boulevard – not clear*

Route 9 Mill River Greenway (on 2028 TIP) (Transportation Improvement Program)

25% Design Public Hearing best case scenario Spring/Summer 2025

Construction Prep June 2028

Groundbreaking Spring 2029



STAY CONNECTED!

millrivergreenway@burgy.org

