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Rail trail project delayed; no April TM vote

By DAN TOMASELLO

LYNNFIELD — The proposed Lynnfield-Wakefield rail trail has been delayed due to technical issues.

According to Recreational Path Committee Chairwoman Janet Long, the timeline for completing the "preliminary engineering design study has been delayed

due to technical issues including planning for the Reedy Meadow portion of the project and weather related delays."

"We didn't anticipate the delays in completing the engineering work, which was scheduled to be completed in December," said Long. "It was an overly ambitious deadline, but it fell apart."

Long met recently with Lynnfield Town Administrator Jim Boudreau, Wakefield Town Administrator Steve Maio, Town Counsel Tom Mullen and Wakefield Rail Trail Committee member Dot Halprin to discuss the project. Long said the purpose of the meeting was to get Boudreau up to speed on the project as well as discuss the project's "next steps" with Wakefield officials.

After the meeting took place, the Recreational Path Committee decided not to submit a warrant ar-

title for Town Meeting on April 27 to accept a 99-year lease from the MBTA for the sole purpose of building the rail trail.

Long said the Recreational Path Committee currently has no plans to submit a warrant article for October Town Meeting to accept a lease from the MBTA. She said the soonest a warrant article will be submitted is for the April 2016 session of Town Meeting but Long said that deadline is not set in stone.

"I can't say for sure if it will be next April," Long added.

Long said the Recreational Path Committee wants townspeople to weigh-in on the preliminary design study report before the committee asks voters to approve a warrant article.

"We want people to have an opportunity to see the report, comment on it and make recommendations for modifications," said Long. "We need to make sure the contractors are delivering a prod-

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uct the town wants."

The proposed rail trail project began in 2004 when the Rail Trail Committee was formed. Lynnfield and Wakefield were awarded a \$30,000 grant for a feasibility study for the project in 2006,

which was completed in 2007. The feasibility study assessed existing conditions, evaluated the projects' impacts, design and construction issues.

The project entails constructing a multi-use trail from an existing

rail bed leased from the MBTA. The trail would begin in Wakefield at the Main Street and Bennett Street intersection, cross into Lynnfield and extend up to the Peabody city line. The trail would be approximately 4.4 miles long.

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Approximately 1.9 miles of the trail would be located in Wakefield and 2.5 miles would be located in Lynnfield. A small portion of the trail would cut through Reedy Meadow.

The rail trail project includes bikeway construction, access points at selected locations, parking areas, safety improvements at roadway crossings, new signs, pavement markings and pavement and landscape improvements. The proposed Wakefield access points for the trail are at the Galvin Middle School and the Water and Vernon streets intersection. The proposed Lynnfield access points are at Lynnfield Middle School and Lynnfield High School.

WorldTech Engineering was selected to conduct an engineering design study through a joint bid process by the two towns. World Tech officials estimated last year the project would cost about \$6 million, which would be funded by state and federal transportation grants.

The proposed rail trail project has sparked a great deal of debate in town. A group called The Citizens of Lynnfield Against the Rail Trail opposes the project because of safety, financial and environmental concerns. The group also fears that the project will have a negative effect on property values