

Foot Traffic Safety Committee Piscataquog South Branch Footbridge Update September 10th, 2016



An idea glimpsed over a decade ago as part of New Boston's future has become cement and steel as the new South Branch Pedestrian Bridge project takes shape on the banks of the Piscataquog River near the Library. The bridge will provide a safe and attractive path for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling between two important locations, the Town Center, including stores, church, town offices, firehouse and school, and the South Village including the Library, Post Offices and businesses. It also will be part of the Rail Trail linking New Boston to Goffstown and Manchester.

The New Boston Foot Traffic Safety Committee (FTSC) Bridge Committee is in charge of all aspects of this project, which grew from ideas discussed at the "New Boston Speaks" community meeting in 2004. The first bridge, supported by Town vote, received a federal grant of \$300,000 but ran into fatal location difficulties. New-Boston-owned land was not located on both sides of the river anywhere along the section of the South Branch between the Mont Vernon Road Route 13 Bridge and The Molly Tavern. Repeated attempts to acquire real estate or an easement were unsuccessful; the federal grant program lapsed, and after a decade the project was closed.

In early 2014, a 20-acre parcel of land on the east side of the Piscataquog, opposite Town Library land on the west side was acquired by a group of Four Investors interested in the footbridge project. They subdivided a 3-acre lot along the river from the parcel and donated it to the Town. This lot became part of the Mill Pond Conservation land, making the bridge possible. The lot also opened up access to conservation trails from the river to the cemetery.

The Selectmen appointed the FTSC in 2014. Members are Gail Parker, Chair, Dan Garrity, Jay Marden, Bill Morrissey, Randy Parker, Betsy Whitman and Chip Young. The FTSC Bridge Committee immediately approved two major policies: First: No part of the river or its banks or water shall be impacted or touched by the project. Specifying a 110-foot bridge allowed for an overlap at each end away from the river bank. The precast concrete foundations are firmly anchored into the gravel soil. Second: No federal, state or town taxpayer monies shall be solicited or spent on the project. The second rule has enabled the FTSC to move ahead without government restraints on suppliers and how the project should be managed. This effectively reduced the cost from \$450,000 (first bridge estimate) to \$150,000.

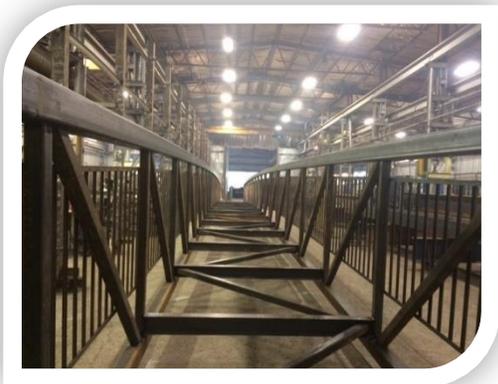
An active fundraising committee staffed by Dick Backus, Patti Garrity, Paul Keiner, Sandi Van Scoyoc, Mary Weiss, Candy Woodbury, and FTSC members gathered support and donations from the New Boston community, including businesses and organizations. Several major donations kicked off the bridge fund, which reached its \$169,500 goal in 11 months. The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation awarded a \$5,000 grant to the project. Non-cash contributions included signage from FastSigns of Manchester and stump disposal by Craig Heafield. Additional funds are being earmarked for further pathways and bridge maintenance.

Initial work included surveying and DES permitting by local contractor Todd Land Use Consultants, and access road clearing and construction by D&S Excavating on the West (Library) side of the river.





The site is now ready to receive the bridge structure itself, which will be coming from Algonquin Bridge LLC in Ontario, Canada, about 50 miles northwest of Toronto. There was a slight delay in fabrication due to an engineering change that reinforced the original bridge to meet maximum pedestrian and equestrian requirements. Delivery is expected later this month; two trucks will transport the 55-foot sections. A crane will be brought from Able Crane Service in Merrimack to unload and assemble the sections and then lift the bridge into place across the river. Daniels Construction has responsibility for coordinating and supervising the installation.



Final work on the bridge area includes resizing the roadway and staging area on the West side to a pedestrian path accessible by emergency vehicles, and replanting trees and bushes in the shore land protection area, per the DES permit for the project. Lyn Lombard and Candy Woodbury are in charge of the plantings. A new major trail from the Library through the Memorial, across the canal, to the bridge area, is also being planned by the Bridge Committee as a shortcut to the Library and the rest of the South Village.

The official Bridge Opening Ceremony will be held early in October. The bridge will be officially presented to the Selectmen; and there will be a donor group photo and ribbon cutting, along with tours of the various trails on the Library and Conservation properties, music and refreshments. The exact date depends on the bridge installation and will be announced later.

**FTSC Chair
Gail
Parker**

