

Rail trail work set to begin in Milford

By Danielle Ameden/Daily News staff

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MILFORD — Construction of Phase II of Milford's Upper Charles Rail Trail is due to get under way in mid-October and be finished in 2011.

Reno DeLuzio, chairman of the trail committee, said the schedule was set last week at a preconstruction conference at the Massachusetts Highway Department's Worcester office.

The \$3.5 million project, funded by a Transportation Improvement Program grant, involves building three miles of trail, in two segments, running to the Hopkinton and Holliston town lines, with a spur shooting from the Senior Center to the Main Street Dunkin' Donuts.

"They could start initial work any day, but the first thing they have to do is prepare an environmental plan," DeLuzio said.

There is a wood turtle habitat area in the section going to Hopkinton, and per specifications, contractor P.A. Landers needs an approved plan to protect the endangered population, DeLuzio said.

"There's a plan in place to address that," said Town Engineer Mike Santora, who was at last week's meeting.

"We think mid-October activity should start and they're going to be working probably on all sections simultaneously," DeLuzio said.

The Hanover contractor will start with cutting down brush and trees along the old Penn Central rail bed, DeLuzio said.

"Most of the time people won't even know they're in the woods," DeLuzio said.

"It's not really a complicated project," Santora said. "In fact, this one I think should be easier than Phase I. This one is mostly on an existing rail bed so we have the base for where it's going to be laid out."

DeLuzio said he will send out letters to abutters notifying them the work will be getting started.

The project is on track to be wrapped up by September 2011, as the contractor will have to work around two winter seasons.

"If things go well, it obviously could be 18 months instead of the 24," DeLuzio said.

Phase I of the trail, finished in 2007, has entrances at the commuter parking lot across from Sacred Heart Church and next to the Main Street Dunkin' Donuts, which meet and lead to the paper Deer Street off Cedar Street, just north of Interstate 495's Exit 20.

There are two parts to Phase II, with one picking up at Deer Street and running toward Hopkinton, and the other going from Rte. 109 toward Holliston, and then the spur down to the senior center.

"If Phase II is as good as Phase I, I look forward to it," said Town Administrator Louis Celozzi. "It's been a tremendous addition to the community."

DeLuzio is expected to give selectmen an update on the project Monday.

"Reno and the committee have done a terrific job," Celozzi said.

The trail is planned to eventually be part of a 20-mile loop that connects the communities of Milford, Hopkinton, Ashland, Sherborn and Holliston. A piece that would connect the Milford sections, downtown, is slated for Phase III, but the timetable is uncertain as the town has not yet decided whether to build an alternate road to downtown along the same section of rail.

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