



Upper Charles Trail becomes local hot spot

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GHS

Posted Aug 29, 2008 @ 10:53 PM



A year after opening to the public, the Upper Charles Rail Trail is becoming a very popular place.

Walkers and bikers can often be found out on the trail when the weather is nice and some are quick to sing its praises.

"We are very happy that the trail is here," said Milford resident Fred Simmons recently. "We have seen a lot of people out here throughout the summer."

The 3 1/2-mile trail begins near Fino Field and ends at Deer Street after the Interstate 495 overpass.

Simmons and his wife Jean were walking along the path near Louisa Lake, which is an especially popular and picturesque part of the trail.

The Louisa Lake area can serve as a starting point or a rest area for those using the trail. Picnic tables are scattered around the lake for those who just want to relax.

Jim and Kristen Casey of Hopedale visit the trail about once a month.

"We love that it is so close by," said Kristen. "We typically spend most of our time in this area (by Louisa Lake)."

"We see all sorts of animals and flowers when we walk," said Casey. "It is usually nice and quiet and it is a great place to take the kids."

At first, one of the the concerns was the safety of children on the path. Some residents were worried that it could attract drug use and crime.

However, Milford Police Chief Thomas O'Loughlin has said that did not materialize. "The present trail is really a jewel in this community," said O'Loughlin in a public hearing held to discuss the trail. "There is really no safety concerns on the trail itself. We really have not had any issues from a law enforcement or policing perspective."

"We would love to see the trail expanded," Simmons said. "It can serve as an alternate way to get to a neighboring town."

An expansion is in the works, with Phase 2 of the project picking up where where Phase I left off, going from Deer Street to Hopkinton, and from Medway Road to Holliston. Completion is slated for 2010.

Phase III will connect all of the trails together, making one big 20-mile loop.

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