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Town of Maynard
Board of Selectman
195 Main Street
Maynard, MA 01754

June 30, 2013

Re: Project File No. 604531-Acton and Maynard Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT)

Dear Board of Selectman:

Please find enclosed a letter that was sent to Thomas Broderick of MassDOT regarding my concerns for the ARRT proposal in Maynard. As stated in this letter, I request that the enclosed documents are read into the minutes of the Town of Maynard Board of Selectman meeting. Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,

Rebecca M. Chafel, DVM

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Thomas F. Broderick
Chief Engineer
MassDOT-Highway Division
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116-3973

June 18, 2013

Re: Project File No. 604531-Acton and Maynard Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT)

Dear Mr. Broderick:

On June 13, 2013, I attended the public hearing on the design proposal for the Acton and Maynard section of the ARRT. I am an avid bike rider and I support the Rail Trail mission of providing recreational opportunities for the public. I do however have concerns regarding this project especially as they relate to environmental and safety issues. In this letter, I will also restate some of the questions which were not answered at the hearing, in the hope that these questions can be answered in the near future. I have lived on Boeske Avenue, adjacent to the Maynard Department of Public Works for over twenty years and am very familiar with the area.

The following are my concerns:

- 1) Environmental impact of installing a 20 car parking lot on Winter Street at the entrance to Ice House Landing, Maynard, MA.

The parking lot is proposed for a heavily wooded area which is only 100-150 feet from the wetlands of the Assabet River. I do not understand how the installation of a parking lot and paving can occur within the 200 ft. wetland boundary. There is a downgrade slope from both Boeske Avenue and Winter Street, through to the River's edge. The runoff of water from the paved DPW/Winter Street area onto the dirt of Track Road is already evident now and will be increased bringing the runoff closer to the water's edge should this paving occur. The potential contamination with salt and other debris from the Maynard Department of Public Works (DPW) is a significant risk. In addition, the destruction of these woods which are a vital habitat to many species of animals, including Baltimore Orioles, is both unnecessary and environmentally unsound. One only has to look at the excessive amount of unnecessary destruction recently of the woodlands along Route 2 in Lincoln to be concerned about the potential problems which can occur with clearing for a paved parking lot along Winter Street.

Since the opening of Ice House Landing in 2002, there has been a steady stream of kayakers, canoeists, joggers, walkers, birders, and bike riders using this area. There are currently at least 10 parking spaces at the entrance to Ice House Landing, 4-5 spaces on

the wooded side, and another 5-6 spaces, including a posted handicapped space on the opposite side along an existing building. On busy weekends I have never seen more than 5-6 cars parked down at these spots. The majority of individuals parking here are boaters or walkers. Bike riders (road, touring, and mountain bikers) access this area by bike, not by driving their cars here. The current parking is sufficient and during my 2-3 trips a day down Track Road, I have never encountered anyone suggesting that parking was difficult or insufficient. There is also plenty of existing parking near the start of ARRT at the National Wildlife Refuge should people wish to bike or park and walk down the ARRT. The Maynard DPW is town owned land and there are multiple paved parking areas at the DPW that should be considered for use before destroying woodland habitats. It is perplexing why the proposal allows for 11 Parking spaces in an existing paved maintenance access road off Maple Street in Acton but for some reason 20 spaces are required in Maynard. At the public hearing, there was no answer to the question regarding who would be responsible for plowing this proposed paved parking lot in Maynard.

2) Environmental impact of installing a paved surface to Track Road.

Again, I fail to understand how Track Road can be paved with asphalt as it is within the 200 ft. exclusion zone for wetlands. The paving will greatly affect water runoff into the Assabet River. If the ARRT feels they must alter the dirt road, it must consider utilizing another substrate, such as stone dust, which is ADA compliant.

3) Safety concerns at Rt 117 and Winter Street crossing.

The direct Rail Trail road crossing over the Rt 117 highway with a mere flashing light to stop traffic is dangerous. At the Winter Street proposed crossing of Rt 117, there is a hill summit to the east of this proposed crossing which obscures the visibility of approaching cars heading west on Rt 117. From Winter Street it is difficult to turn left or go straight towards Pine Street because of the speed of the cars coming over that hill. I don't attempt this on a bike or walking and do so with trepidation in a car. The frequent presence of Maynard Police speed traps at Rt 117 near the Mobil Station and the several accidents occurring there are an indication of the problems with traffic, speed, and obeying signals in this area of Rt 117. Has a traffic study of this area of Rt 117 been conducted for this project?

At the public hearing, the reason given by MassDOT for not having a raised bridge or protected crossing of Rt 117 at this point was that it cost too much money. I do not think the State of Massachusetts should put public safety behind monetary concerns. One obvious plan the ARRT and the MassDOT should consider is using the money intended for installation of an unnecessary parking lot and paving, and instead, invest in solving this dangerous Rail Trail crossing at Rt 117 and Winter Street.

4) Safety concerns regarding a parking lot on Winter Street.

If the ARRT and Massachusetts Department of Transport feel that a 20 car parking lot is essential at Ice House Landing, then this would mean that they would expect a significant increase in traffic to use this parking lot, not just along Winter Street, but also along the following roads: Taylor, Sheridan, Driscoll, O'Moore, Espie, White, and Boeske. These

roads are frequently used by individuals in cars to access the DPW, Ice House Landing, and Track Road, instead of driving down Winter Street. These roads, including Winter Street, do not have sidewalks and many children, including my own, walk home from the Maynard Public Schools because they live too close to the schools to be bussed. These roads are also used heavily by bikers, joggers, and walkers with strollers and dogs. There is not sufficient room for two lane traffic on Boeske Avenue, a dirt road, and the added pedestrian or bike traffic makes it necessary for individuals to access lawns or driveways to avoid the cars. Increasing traffic on Boeske Avenue, which is a private dirt road in poor condition, is not in the best interest of public safety.

As pointed out at the public hearing, the speed of the traffic on Winter Street, is far in excess of the posted 20 mph. Trucks are also frequently traveling this road to access the DPW. The point at which the Rail Trail emerges onto Winter Street has a hill summit to the right of the trail exit. This is area is another safety concern due to the of poor visibility for both bikers and approaching traffic.

The placement of the parking lot is also problematic on Saturdays when the DPW is open for brush, metal, and hazardous waste drop off. The line of cars stopped on Winter Street waiting to access the DPW yard is well beyond Sheridan Avenue. On these Saturdays, Winter Street becomes a one lane road due to the line of cars which will block the proposed parking entrance and exit.

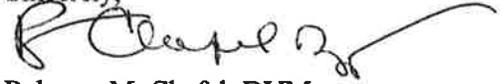
Finally, I am concerned with the lack of investment made into looking at the environmental impact of this project by MassDOT, ARRT, and AECOM Technical Services Inc. Instead of throwing out vague comments such as the following quoted from the public hearing handout-the Rail Trail will be “relieving the roadways of additional vehicles” and “reduced number of vehicles and reduced congestion which will provide an environmental benefit by reducing emissions from these vehicles” it would be beneficial to know facts. When asked how many bikers (or bike lockers) are now accessing the South Acton Station and what increase MassDOT and AECOM expected with this alternative transport via the Rail Trail, it was stated that no one had looked at these numbers. This question should be addressed as the Rail Trail will have environmental impact. Also, under the Environmental Impact Section of the public hearing handout, the only impact noted is minor grading impacts to upland slopes and culverts. There is no mention of the destruction of woodlands in Maynard for a proposed paved parking lot and paving so close to wetlands. Nor is there mention of the “aesthetic concrete boardwalk” that is actually placed in the wetlands in Acton. It is not clear to me from the public hearing comments, the handout, or the proposal itself that the environment is a major concern to the organizations involved in planning the Acton/Maynard Rail Trail.

As I mentioned previously, I do support the ARRT mission of providing a multi-use recreational Rail Trail for the general public. However, I am very concerned with lack of data gathering and environmental and safety consideration that has occurred when designing the Maynard section of the trail. It is imperative that this stunning section of trail from Rt 117 to the National Wildlife Refuge be preserved as close to its natural character as possible. The preservation of this area of trail will in turn serve to protect the Assabet River, something we all work hard to do. In addition, in the current ARRT proposal, the safety designs of the road crossings in Maynard, particularly the Winter Street/Rt 117 crossing, must be improved in order to ensure public safety.

Thank you for considering my comments. Should you need additional information, including photographs of the areas in question, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I also request that this document be read into the minutes of the June 13, 2013 MassDOT public hearing, the Town of Maynard Conservation Commission minutes, and the Town of Maynard Board of Selectman minutes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca M. Chafel", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rebecca M. Chafel, DVM

Cc: Senator James Eldridge
Representative Kate Hogan
Congresswoman Niki Tsongas
Town of Maynard, Conservation Commission
Town of Maynard, Board of Selectman