

Public gets first taste of Winni Trail on walk

By TIM CAMERATO | May 15, 2014

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TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN

BRATT CHAIRMAN Ron Mitchell, right, shows Corina Cisneros, left, and others the future path of the Winni Trail on Tuesday.

BELMONT — The route that will one day become the home of the Winni Trail's first phase might seem like a rough trek through the woods today, but BRATT Committee members are hoping that construction will turn those woods into a recreational trail that people can enjoy while walking and biking through the Lakes Region.

Members of the Belmont Recreation and Alternative Transportation Team took the public on a tour to show what will one day become the trail's first phase, a 1.8-mile track, on

Tuesday evening.

Winni Trail Walk

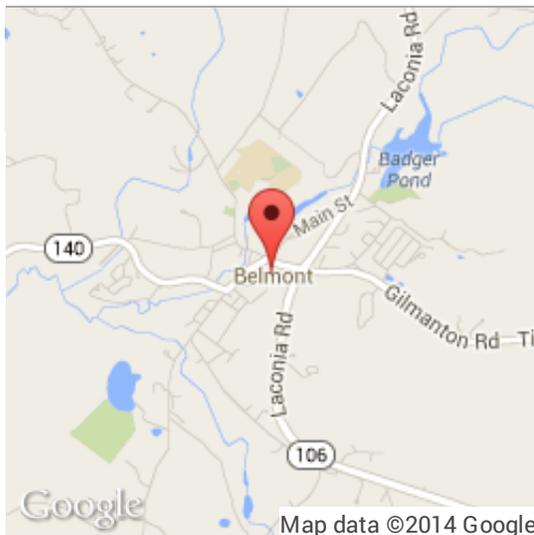


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First proposed in 2000, the Winnisquam Scenic Trail received approval during the March 11 Town Meeting to raise \$142,050 for the trail. Of that money, \$64,050 is coming from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, \$25,000 from the New Hampshire Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program, and \$53,000 from the BRATT Capital Reserve Fund.

BRATT Chairman Ron Mitchell said the first phase will run from the Laconia city line along a stretch of sidewalk on Route 3 built by the state. As it nears Leslie E. Roberts Drive, the trail will cross between two trees and turn into the woods along land that was once slated to become an extension of the Route 3 Bypass.

The trail then turns down towards the former B&M Railroad tracks and across an easement provided by Sun Lake Village, running along a rail corridor before turning at Osborne's Agway.



Mitchell said the original plan was to run the trail along the tracks, but steep grades and property issues prevented that from happening. He said construction is slated to begin this fall, followed by the trail's opening.

Today, a rough outline of the route has been marked with red tape as it passes through forested land behind the Belknap Mall and Old State Road. As hikers walked through on Tuesday, stone walls, tall trees, and beautiful glens ran along the trail's edge.

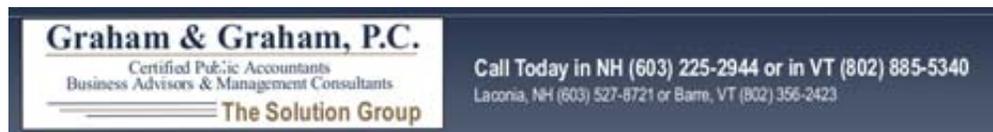
BRATT member Donna Hepp said the trail isn't just a recreational opportunity; it is something that will help the community. She said businesses could set up alongside the trail to sell beverages and food to those using it.

Hepp said it will be good to have a trail where people can enjoy walking or cycling.

"It just makes you feel good to be outside," Hepp said.

Mitchell said he doesn't think the trail clearing work will take too much effort. He said an excavator could easily cut through the forest to clear a path.

Mitchell said they're still working on gaining easements for the trail. Once that's done, he said, they'll begin posting bids and start construction in the fall.



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