

February 28, 2024

Edward J. Kennedy
State Senator
First Middlesex District

Dear Senator Kennedy:

This is a request that you ask President Spilka to appoint you to the Middlesex Canal Commission in time for its annual meeting March 21st. The details are below. This is an opportunity for you to do for Lowell as former Senator Richard Moore does with the Blackstone Canal for Worcester.

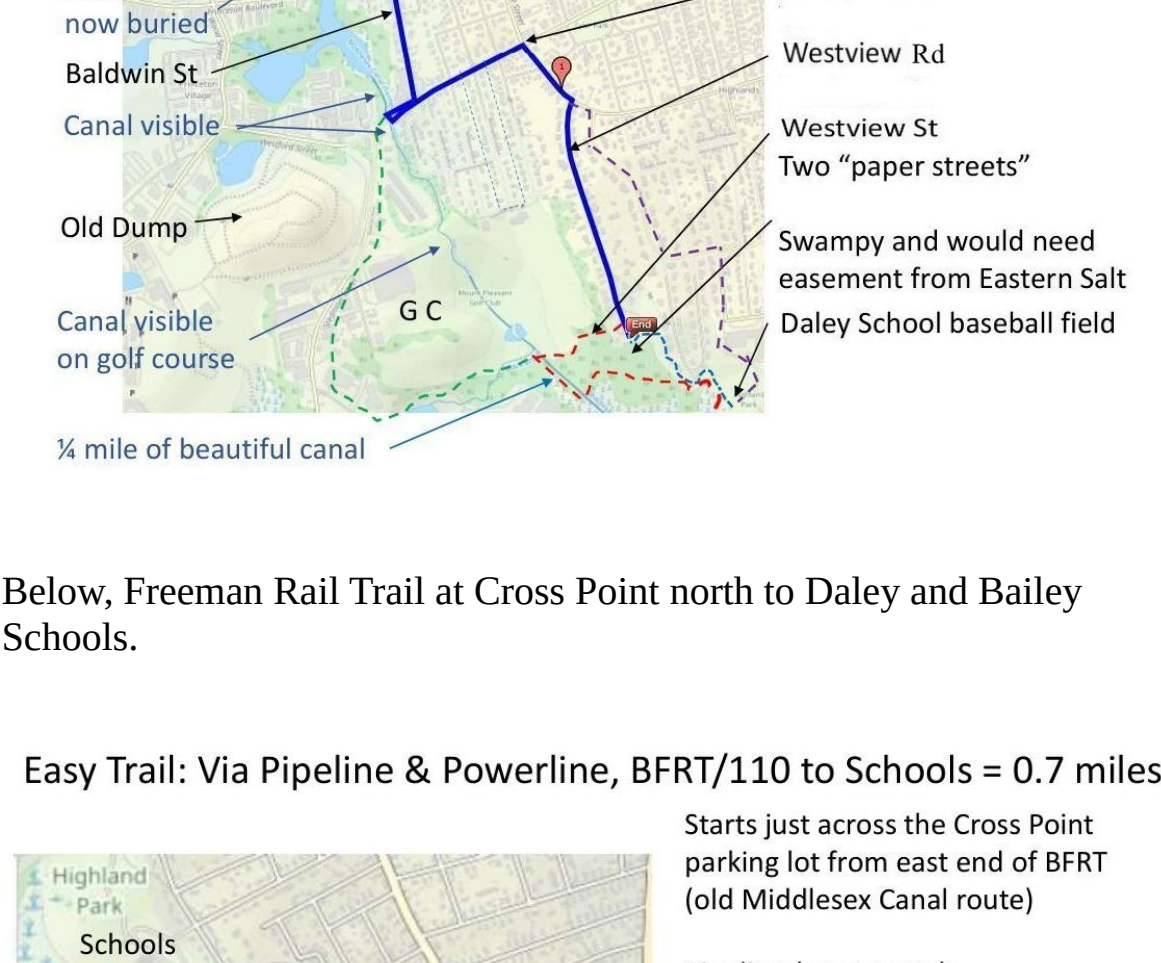
J Breen, president
Middlesex Canal Association

Details.

Last Thursday, 22 February, the Billerica Community Preservation Committee voted to recommend a grant of \$301,000 to the Middlesex Canal Association for the new MC Museum-Visitor Center at the Billerica Falls of the Concord River. The museum will be completed this year, ten years after the 150-year-old wool cloth storehouse at the Falls was given to the Association for adaptive reuse as a museum. The next big project of the Association is turning the towpath of the Middlesex Canal between the Concord and Merrimack Rivers into a multi-use trail.

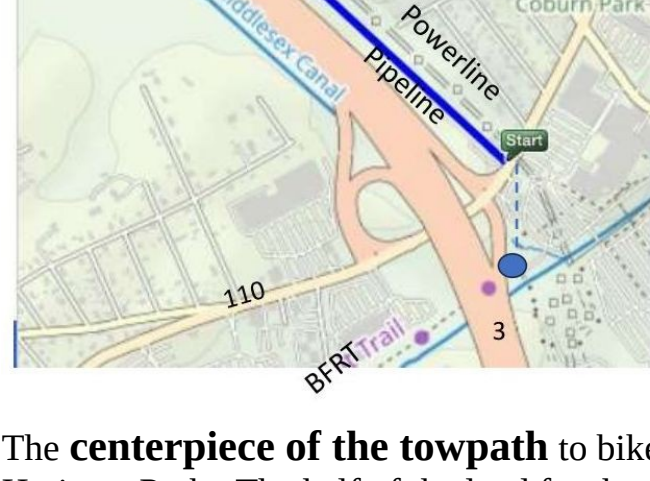
The part in Lowell will begin at the Freeman Rail Trail at Cross Point and end at the Merrimack near the Rourke Bridge.

Northern End Options – Schools to Bridge ~1.7 miles



Below, Freeman Rail Trail at Cross Point north to Daley and Bailey Schools.

Easy Trail: Via Pipeline & Powerline, BFRT/110 to Schools = 0.7 miles



Starts just across the Cross Point parking lot from east end of BFRT (old Middlesex Canal route)

Pipeline (west route):
- OK as is for walking/running or mountain bike
- Six 1-2 foot stream jumps
- Enter from Alpine Butcher

Powerline (east route):
- Flat and level but overgrown
- Enter behind brick pump house

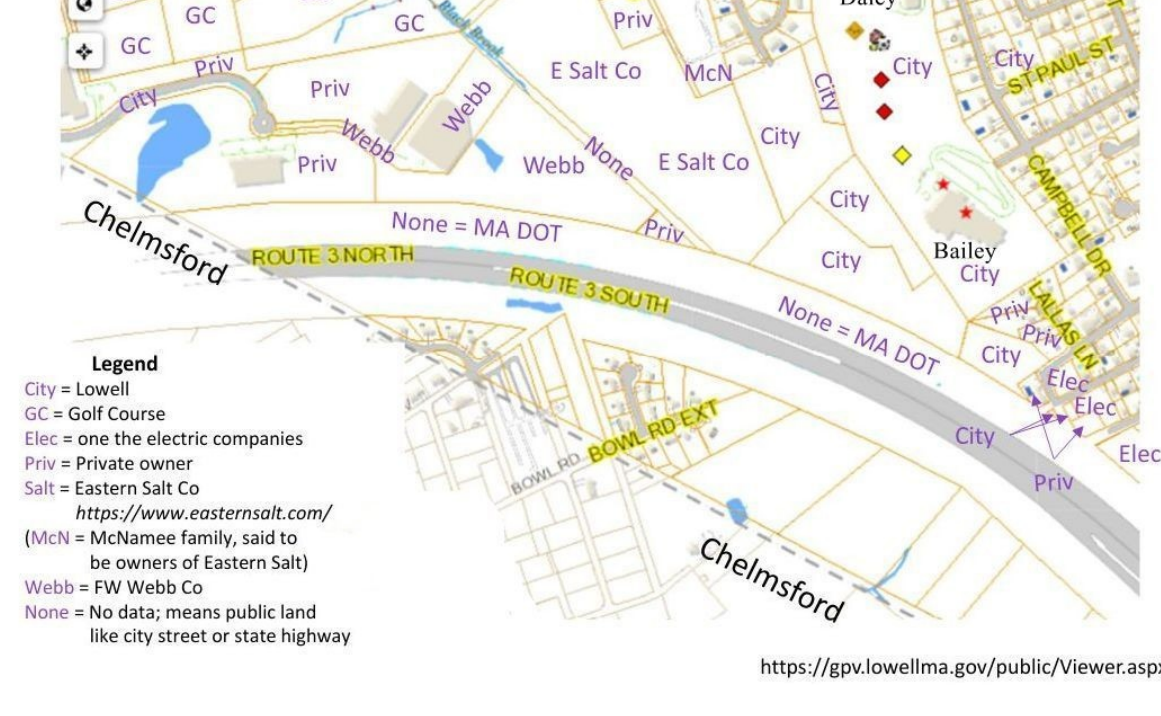
Paths overlap in some places

Either one is almost as good as a railroad right of way to build on
Choice depends on easements and safety rules

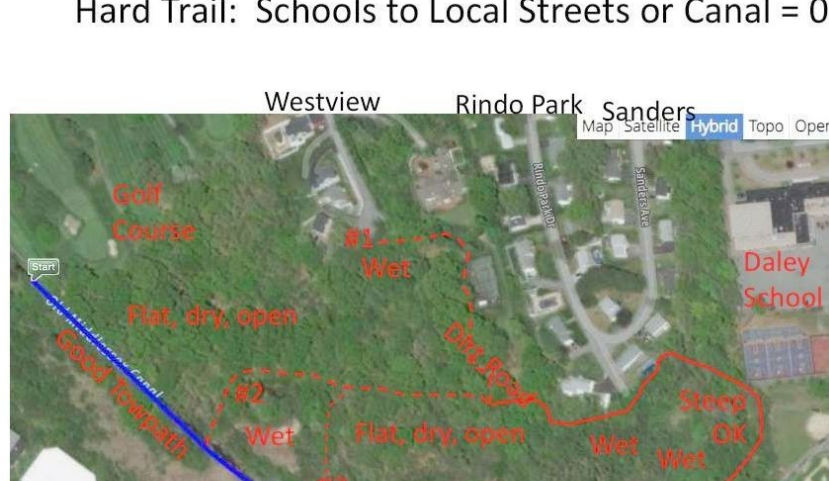
All land owned by City or Electric Co

The **centerpiece of the towpath** to bike path in Lowell is a proposed MC Heritage Park. The half of the land for the park not owned by the city is owned by the Eastern Salt Company, Shelagh Mahoney, president. She lives with her husband, Joseph McNamee, manager of Eastern Salt, at 250 Westview Road.

Land Ownership: Lowell Assessor GIS Map



Below, aerial view of park location. N.B., the 1,600' of watered MC in blue. Hard Trail: Schools to Local Streets or Canal = 0.3 miles



East side - Hard to find a good route that is:
- Above the waterline
- Flat, smooth, and gentle enough for bike path

West side - 3 possible not perfect routes:
- #1 to Westview
- #2 to canal
- #3 side trip to canal

Land owned by:
- City
- Eastern Salt Co
- a few private owners

The State's Middlesex Canal Commission would fund the work using the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and legislative earmarks. Marlies Henderson, of the Friends of Regional Trails and Towpaths (FORTT), has already contacted Lori Trahan, the US Representative for Lowell.

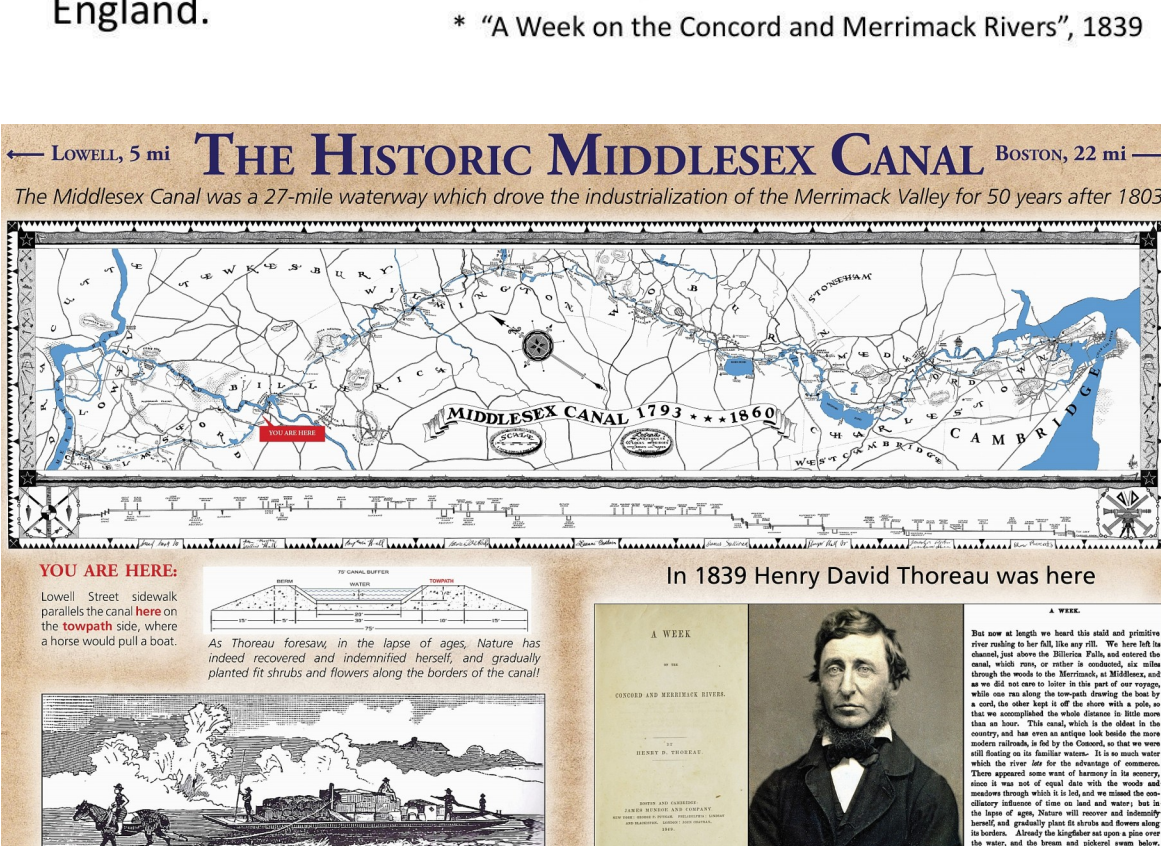


Oct. 31, 2023, Lori Trahan and Marlies Henderson, Freeman Bridge over Rte. 2, Concord, Mass.

Trahan also represents Concord whose famous person, Thoreau, would be memorialized with a Thoreau Towpath exhibit in the proposed MC Heritage Park.

Historic Link to Thoreau

- In 1839 Henry David Thoreau took a dory trip from Concord MA to the Merrimack River and wrote a book * about his travels.
- An ardent naturalist, he preferred the natural Concord River over the new canal, but he noted:
"in the lapse of ages, Nature will recover . . . and gradually plant fit shrubs and flowers along its borders. A already the kingfisher sat upon a pine over the water, and the bream and pickerel swam below. Thus all works pass directly out of the hands of the architect into the hands of Nature, to be perfected."
- One of the best sections of the canal on which Thoreau journeyed in 1839 still exists in Lowell, mellowed back to nature by the passage of two centuries of benign neglect.
- Lowell's proposed MC Heritage Park will memorialize this inspiring author, his trip, and the low cost water transport that made Lowell competitive with Manchester, England. * "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers", 1839



FORTT's Bill Kuttner left a voicemail at Mayor Chau's office in December before a response from Mayor Chau or Daniel Rourke. Bill also reached out to Senator Tarr as follows:



Theodore H. Thomas, Esq
Legislative Director for Senator Bruce Tarr

On Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 09:20:24 PM EST, William Kuttner <bkuttner@alum.mit.edu> wrote:

From: Bill Kuttner <bkuttner@alum.mit.edu>
Subject: Middlesex Canal Commission
Date: February 22, 2024 at 9:18:42 PM EST
To: Theodore. H. Thomas@masenate.gov

Dear Mr. Thomas,

Thank you for meeting with me today about our efforts to revitalize the Middlesex Canal Commission (MCC).

The MCC was established by state statute in 1977. Voting membership includes municipally appointed members from each municipality in the canal corridor, plus a state representative and a senator appointed by the Speaker and Senate President respectively. Terms are for two years. Because of change in legislature composition and district boundaries there has been no participation by lawmakers for several years.

The role of the MCC is to review plans that potentially impact remaining sections of the canal which operated between 1803 and 1853. More importantly, the MCC also works with planning agencies to promote opportunities to preserve, improve, and interpret historic resources in the corridor that relate to the canal. The increased emphasis on the active transportation modes, notably walking and bicycling, has made incorporating historic resources into the planning of path networks both important and timely.

The current municipal MCC members have worked productively with MassDOT, regional, and local planners. However, we strongly believe that a close working relationship with the legislative bodies needs to be reestablished for the historic Middlesex Canal to achieve its full interpretive and active transportation potential.

At one time Senator Tarr's district included parts of the Middlesex Canal and I understood that he held an appointment to the MCC. We have not yet succeeded in persuading one of the senators within the corridor to seek an MCC appointment. Any state lawmaker is eligible to participate in the MCC. Indeed, we view the success of the Blackstone Canal corridor as a model. We love the Middlesex Canal, but ultimately we want to see historic canals revitalized throughout the state.

My specific request is for Senator Tarr to consider rejoining the MCC or possibly recommending MCC membership to another senator. The critical role of legislator participation is to establish strong lines of communication between the MCC and the legislature. The time commitment might involve a staff member meeting with the MCC perhaps three times a year, in addition to routine communication about pertinent planning activity.

Please feel free to request more information about the MCC or current planning efforts in this historic corridor.

Sincerely,
Bill Kuttner
Boston MCC nominee

With the annual meeting of the Middlesex Canal Commission near at March 17, please consider asking President Spilka to appoint you to the MCC and prompting a state representative to seek appointment by Speaker Mariano. Lowell needs to be represented at the March 17 meeting. A city may appoint alternates without limit. An example of a Chelmsford appointment is copied below.

MIDDLESEX CANAL COMMISSION ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 3:15 at the Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitor Center, Faulkner Mills, 71 Faulkner Street, North Billerica, MA.

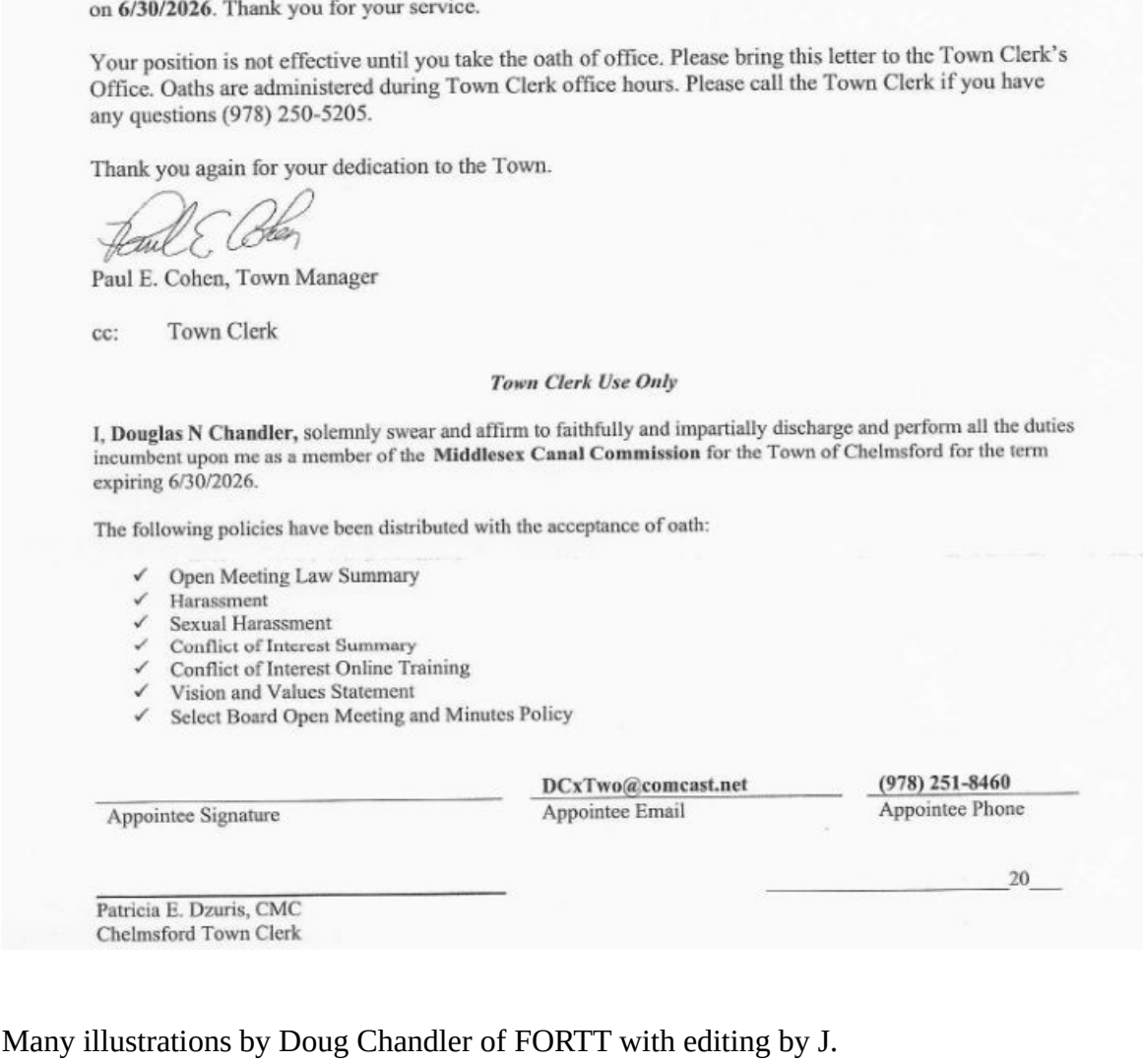
Members or their designees or alternates are requested to attend. Visitors welcome.

DRAFT AGENDA

- (1) Registration and refreshments – 2:15pm
- (2) Introduction, Chairman Len Harmon – 3:15
- (3) Secretary's Report – Thomas Lincoln
- (4) Treasurer's Report – Betty M. Bigwood
- (5) Discussion: Rails, Trails and Towpaths – Andrew Jennings
- (6) Section Activities Reports:
 - a. Lowell
 - b. Chelmsford
 - c. Billerica
 - d. Wilmington
 - e. Woburn
 - f. Winchester
 - g. Medford
 - h. Somerville
 - i. Charlestown
- (7) Current Status of the New Museum – Betty M. Bigwood
- (8) Current Status of the Talbot Dam - J Breen
Cf. "[The Billerica Falls Fishway](#)" *Towpath Topics*, Feb 2024.
- (9) New Business
- (10) Election of Officers
- (11) Adjournment

CITY/TOWN CLERKS : PLEASE POST

C/O NMCOC, Wannalancit Mills, 672 Suffolk St, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854 Tel: 978-454-8021



Many illustrations by Doug Chandler of FORTT with editing by J. End of Details.