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Center for Economic Development
<http://www.umass.edu/ced/>

The Economic Impacts of the Restoration of Schell Bridge

Prepared for:

The Friends of Schell Bridge
P.O. Box 27
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed restoration of the Schell Memorial Bridge as a pedestrian and bikeway connector would have a significant positive economic impact on the community of Northfield and Franklin County, Massachusetts.

Under conservative assumptions of construction and new visitor expenditures, a rehabilitated Schell Memorial Bridge would have a total annual economic impact close to \$15 million dollars over its first 10 years of operation. Roughly 57% of these impacts would come from the roughly 13,000 additional visitors coming to Franklin County each year. The rest would come from construction, ongoing maintenance, and the expansion and upgrading of recreational trails connecting to the bridge site.



Source: Bruce Kahn© 2006

We also see considerable potential for the Schell bridge to attract even more visitors if successfully coupled with extensive marketing and promotion, and deliberate actions to tie the bridge to other heritage and recreational destinations. On its own, the rehabilitation of a single bridge is unlikely to act as a significant catalyst to the regional economy. This is because recreational and heritage tourists are rarely attracted to a single amenity, but rather are attracted to the entire portfolio of complementary amenities in a region. Our estimates only assume a modest degree of marketing. Concerted efforts to promote the bridge as part of a multi-state recreational and heritage network and site for cultural and community events would greatly well increase – perhaps even doubling – the number of annual visitors.

The proposed restoration of the Schell Memorial Bridge is also likely to provide additional benefits to the economic vitality of the community that are not easily quantified. These include:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- As a centerpiece for a larger vision of recreation and heritage tourism development in the region, new or expanded businesses adapting to meet additional tourism demand can increase profitability, expand local employment and increase local tax revenues.

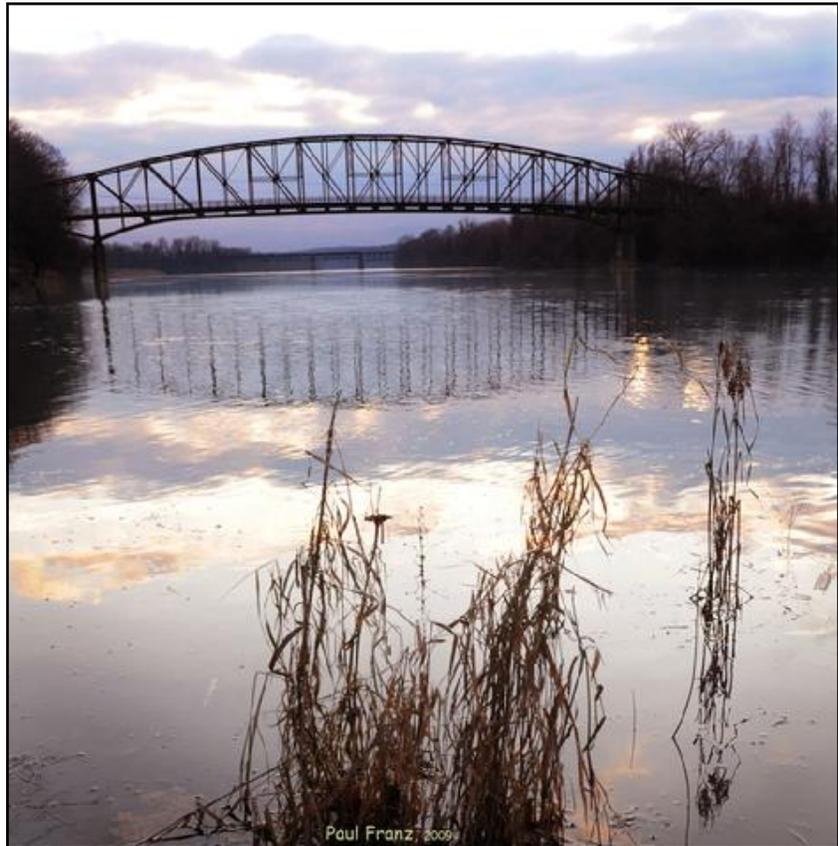


Source: Shane Ellison

- A restored bridge will enhance the quality of life and “sense of place” for the town and region, which in turn supports economic development as scenic and recreational amenities increasingly promote Northfield as an attractive location to work and live.
- The arrival of the C.S. Lewis College will boast additional recreational amenities and linkages to regional bike routes, enhancing their ability to recruit students and encouraging visitors to extend their stay.
- Northfield will have enhanced physical and visual connections to the Connecticut River and a stronger “River Town” brand to market the town and region to non-local visitors.
- With the bridge and adjacent riverside park as a scenic venue for public gatherings, the economic impact of festivals and community events will be increased through the spending of additional non-local attendees at existing events and opportunities to host new bridge-related races, events or multi-day festivals.
- Recent empirical studies and survey reports indicate that real property values appreciate at a faster rate near trails and greenways when compared to other land values in rural areas.
- The collaboration required between local governments and regional bodies, non-profit organizations, and private sector stakeholders serves to strengthen opportunities for future regional partnerships for economic development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report could not have been completed without the active support and cooperation of many people from the Northfield and greater Franklin County community. The Center for Economic Development at University of Massachusetts-Amherst would especially like to thank Marie Ferre, Carol Lebo, Stephen Martin, Joanne McGee, Craig Della Penna, Barbara Richardson, Susan Ross, Don Simms, Janice Starmer, Alexander Stewart, Heather Tower, Steve Tower, Jean Wagener, Jerrold Wagener of Friends of Schell Bridge; Joan and Steve Stoia of the Centennial House Bed & Breakfast; Craig Miller of Waterfield Design Group; Steve Allison of Northfield Mt. Hermon School; Tara Germond of Southwest Regional Planning Commission; Kendall Gifford of Windham Regional Commission; Beth Giannini and Stacy Meltzer of Franklin Regional Council of Governments; Peg Saulnier of the Franklin County Visitors Center; Ann Hamilton of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce; Sam Richardson of Northfield Trails Association; Chris Ethier of Bicycle World; Bob Perry of Bikes Unlimited; Beth Bazler of Northfield Mountain Recreation Area; Josh Lehman of Massachusetts Department of Transportation; Julie Petty and Judith Lawler of the Bridge of Flowers Committee; Ron Kilburn of the Swanton Historical Society, Swanton, VT; Robert McCullough of the Vermont Historic Bridge Program; Tim Chock of Brattleboro Bikes; Joshua Surette of the Appalachian Mountain Club; Michael Renaud of Renaud Brothers Inc.; Dr. Alan J. Lutenecker, P.E. of the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at UMass-Amherst; Robin McKeon; and David Thomas.



Source: Paul Franz © 2009

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INTRODUCTION

STUDY OVERVIEW

In the Fall of 2010, the Friends of Schell Bridge commissioned the University of Massachusetts Amherst Center for Economic Development to estimate the full economic impacts of the restoration of the Schell Memorial Bridge for recreational and pedestrian use.

The economic impacts of the bridge revitalization are measured in terms of job creation and increased output (measured in dollars, equivalent to additional sales) in Franklin County. In addition, this study outlines less quantifiable, yet important, benefits from a rehabilitated bridge as a part of an expanded recreational trail system, including an enhanced “sense of place” and the provision of recreational amenities that can attract businesses and entrepreneurs to Northfield. Lastly, we include a series of case studies describing the outcomes of similar bridge revitalizations in other communities, so that these may provide guidance to the continued development of the Schell Bridge project.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Schell Memorial Bridge is a 512 ft. 3-span steel cantilever Pennsylvania-type through truss bridge. It was originally opened in 1904 to connect east and west Northfield, but was closed in 1985 due to the advanced deterioration of its steel truss members. It is located in the town of Northfield, a predominantly rural community of roughly 3,300 citizens located in the northern portion of

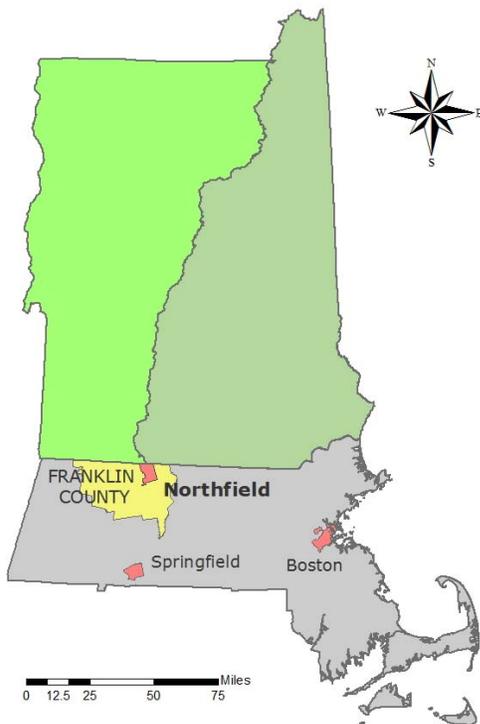
The UMASS Amherst Center for Economic Development

The Center for Economic Development at University of Massachusetts-Amherst is a research and community-oriented technical assistance center that is partially funded by the [Economic Development Administration](#), U.S. Department of Commerce. The Center is housed in the [Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning](#).

The Center's role is to provide technical assistance to communities and other not-for-profit entities interested in promoting economic development, to undertake critical community-based and regional studies, to disseminate information on the state of the economy, and to enhance local and multi-community capacity for strategic planning and development.

For more information on the Center for Economic Development please visit www.umass.edu/ced/ or call Dr. Henry Renski at 413-545-3796.

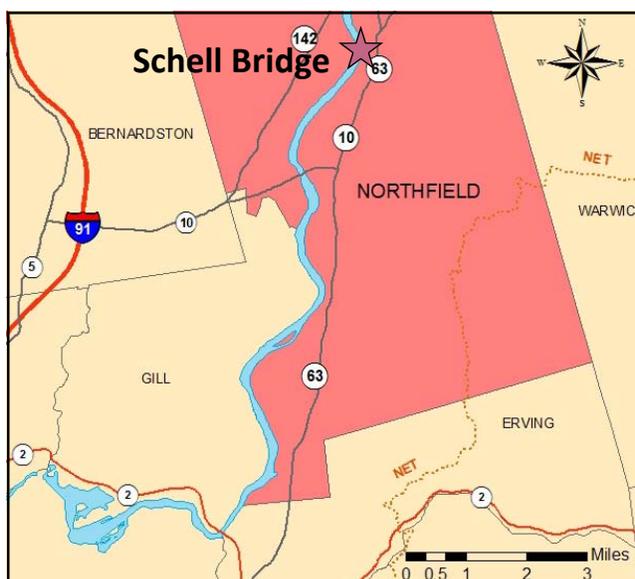
Figure 1
Location of Northfield and Franklin County



Franklin County, Massachusetts abutting Vermont and New Hampshire to the north (Figure 1).

The location of and unique character of the Schell Bridge make it an ideal candidate for converted use as a recreational trail and as a key element in advancing Franklin County as a destination for heritage tourists and outdoor recreational enthusiasts. The bridge is situated approximately 85 and 50 miles from the population centers of Boston, MA and Springfield, MA, respectively, and 6-miles east of Interstate 91. The bridge spans the width of the Connecticut River, which bisects the town of Northfield, and connects to both Rt. 63 and Rt. 142, popular north-south cycling routes that constitute on-road sections of the Franklin County Bikeway (Figure 2). The bikeway has been greatly expanded in recent years and increasingly used as a regional system of on and off-road bike routes for recreational and commuting purposes that connects population centers as well as historic, cultural and natural attractions in greater Franklin County.

Figure 2
Site location of the Schell Memorial Bridge



The bridge is also located along a section of the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway, a state designated scenic corridor that follows the river and adjacent agricultural lands. From the southern portions, the byway travels up through the rural Franklin County communities of Sunderland, Montague and Erving before continuing north through the historic cen-

INTRODUCTION

ter of Northfield along Rt. 63 to the New Hampshire border. Across the river, Rt. 142 provides a direct bikeway connection to nearby population center of Brattleboro, VT.

In addition to the river corridor, a section of the recently designated New England National Scenic Trail (NET), a long-distance trail designed for day-hikers and multi-day use, also traverses the ridges in the eastern portion of Northfield as the trail travels over 220 miles through 39 communities in Connecticut and Massachusetts to the New Hampshire state line. The bridge lies approximately 3 miles west of the closest point on the NET which is currently accessed from the center of Northfield via Alexander Hill Rd, though a more direct trail from the NET to the village and river is being investigated by the Northfield Open Space Committee.

Also significant is the location of the access road to the bridge, roughly 1-mile north of the historic Northfield center and also directly across from the former Northfield campus of the Northfield Mt. Hermon School. The C.S. Lewis College, a four-year private institution projecting estimates of 300-400 enrolled students and 40-50 faculty members, is currently slated to open on this campus in the fall of 2012. The future college will be situated in close proximity to the bridge and has plans for a campus that promotes bicycle use and bicycle-share programs.

Source: HAER © 1990



ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS – A PRIMER

Economic impact analysis is a technique for measuring the net effects of new spending and investment on a regional economy's employment, wages and business output (i.e. sales). This is done by estimating the amount of net new spending in the region as a direct result of a project (the direct effects). In the case of the bridge restoration project, the direct economic impacts come from two main sources: (1) additional spending in the region from the construction and ongoing maintenance of the bridge as well as construction related to the extension or upgrade of recreational trails connecting to the bridge, and (2) increased visitor spending at area retailers, restaurants, lodging establishments and other services.

Beyond the initial influx of new funds, new direct spending in the region then goes on to have secondary (or indirect) economic impacts. Indirect impacts are generated from the exchange of these additional revenues among area businesses and their workers. For example, a portion of the increased visitor spending on area hotels goes to the employees of the hotel and toward the purchase of products and services from other local businesses. These local workers and businesses, in turn, use a portion of their increased revenues to buy other goods and services from local vendors. The portion of increased revenue used to purchase goods and services from outside the region are considered "leakage" and do not continue to generate additional economic activity within the region. The direct investment combined with the exchange of money among local vendors and workers make up the total economic impact. The ratio of the direct to total economic impact is referred to as the multiplier effect. The total economic impacts and multipliers were generated using the IMPLAN economic modeling system.

ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

THE STUDY AREA – FRANKLIN COUNTY

Our study area for generating economic impacts is Franklin County, Massachusetts. Franklin County encompasses 26 municipalities in the upper Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts, sharing a northern border with Vermont and New Hampshire. With a total population of 71,353, Franklin is considered the most rural county in the state. The town of Northfield is located in the northeastern portion of the county, sharing borders with the town of Warwick to the east, Erving to the south and Gill and Bernardston to the west.

While much of the interest in the revitalization of the Schell Bridge is focused on its capacity to act as a catalyst for the revitalization of Northfield, the economic model used to generate total impacts can only be developed for counties or multi-county regions. A slightly larger study region is also warranted recognizing that local economic transactions are rarely constrained to municipal boundaries.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Economic impact analysis measures impacts only of net new spending in the region that result as a direct consequence of the project. Spending that would have reasonably occurred in the absence of the bridge revitalization is not included. For example, economic impact analysis does not include spending by visitors who would have likely come to the region even if the bridge had not been repaired and reopened – only the spending that comes from new visitors. Spending by area residents who utilize the bridge are also not included. We have to assume they would have spent this money within the area even if the bridge did not exist. This is a somewhat conservative assumption, given that some area residents would have forgone recreational travel outside the region if they had better recreational opportunities available locally. Likewise, the economic impacts from construction spending count only if such funds originate from outside the study region. Matching funds raised from local sources, such

ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

as local voluntary donations, cannot be counted toward the economic impacts of the project.

Lastly, economic impact analysis is capable only of estimating impacts that are directly quantifiable in dollars. It is not capable of estimating impacts from less tangible outcomes, such as contributing to a region's sense of place, historical value, or the improved wellness of area residents. Over the long-term the place-building aspects of revitalization and historical preservation projects can have considerable value in helping a community attract new businesses and residents – especially when conducted as part of a broader community revitalization strategy. Although we cannot quantify such long-term impacts, we acknowledge some of their impacts by considering other studies and discussing similar areas.

CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES AND IMPACTS

SUMMARY

The rehabilitation of the Schell Bridge will have direct local economic impacts as a result of the additional spending on the renovation and on-going maintenance of the bridge, as well as through the likely expansion and upgrade of local trail networks. We estimate this construction to have a total impact on the Franklin County economy of approximately \$6.4 million. It would also temporarily add 58.5 new full-time equivalent (FTE) construction jobs to the county for the duration of the construction period.

Table 1
Summary of Construction Expenditures and Impacts

Category	Total	Spent in Franklin County
Renovation & reconstruction	\$7,500,000	\$4,050,000
Maintenance & repair (10 years)*	\$60,000	\$32,400
Trail upgrades/expansion	\$300,000	\$270,000
Total	\$7,860,000	\$4,352,000
Output Multiplier		1.47
Total Output Impacts		\$6,393,129
Total Employment Impacts (FTE)		58.5

ESTIMATING CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES

The bulk of the construction impacts will be generated through the one-time spending on the initial rehabilitation of the bridge required to restore it to a condition suitable for recreational use. A detailed cost estimate of restoration options has yet to be conducted. However, preliminary estimates suggest a total rehabilitation cost in the order of \$7.5 million.** This estimate includes repair of the steel truss, lead paint abatement and repainting, replacement of the

* Estimated annual maintenance costs are based upon discussions with local contractors and civil engineering professionals specializing in historic bridges.

** We arrived at this estimate based upon a review of information from a 2006 Massachusetts Department of Transportation presentation, a 2007 charrette conducted by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., and discussions with local contractors.

CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES AND IMPACTS

decking, bearing and abutment repair, etc.

We assume that the majority of the funding for initial rehabilitation will be covered through federal and state sources – both considered external to the Franklin county study region. Federal transportation and economic development grants typically require a 20% match. Of this 20%, we assume that 10% (i.e. 2% of the total costs, or \$150,000) will come from local sources such as from donations and local fundraising efforts. The remaining \$7.35 million are the direct effects of construction spending.¹



Source: Joseph Marchello © 2006

A second consideration is how much of the construction funds will go to local contractors, and thus continue on to generate indirect economic impacts within Franklin County. Estimating the local capture rate for construction spending can be tricky, because even contractors located outside of the region often sub-contract with local companies or workers. Discussions with representatives of the construction trades and bridge work suggest that while Franklin County may lack companies that specialize in this type of restoration, there are companies in nearby counties that do. Furthermore, these specialists often subcontract portions of the work to local construction firms and may directly hire local labor to work on the job. Based on these discussions we assumed a local capture rate of 60%. The actual percentage may be higher, however we choose to err on the side of a more conservative estimate.

In addition to initial construction outlays, we consider recurring impacts from the ongoing maintenance of the bridge over its first ten years of operation. Discussions with area construction companies, UMASS Amherst engineering faculty and other experts in the preservation of historic rail bridges reveal

CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES AND IMPACTS

that ongoing maintenance and repair costs are highly variable. They depend greatly upon how the bridge is designed, whether the surface is salted in the winter, the type of paints, metals and other building materials, etc. Yet most agree that in normal circumstances ongoing maintenance costs are not extensive. Based upon these discussions, we assume that annual maintenance expenses at \$6,000 per year, estimated over a ten year period. Lacking any additional information, we assume that funds to support ongoing maintenance and repair will follow the standard 10% local match formula, with the remaining 90% financed through non-local sources. We also assume that 60% of the repair work will be secured by local contractors and will involve local laborers. The Friends of Schell Bridge propose establishing an endowment to provide for ongoing bridge maintenance and repair costs.

The final category of direct construction expenditures comes from the likely expansion or upgrade of the existing trail networks. The Northfield open space committee is currently moving forward with plans to extend a soft-surface trail of .7 miles at an estimated cost of \$15,000 per mile. Because this project is being pursued whether or not Schell Bridge is re-opened the economic impacts from this expansion are not due purely to the re-opened bridge and are not included in our estimates. However, discussions with local officials and other interested parties suggest that the reopening of the bridge would likely increase demands to upgrade this trail to a hardened surface suitable for recreational bicycling and expanding the network to 10 miles total on both sides of the river. The cost associated with these upgrades are estimated at \$300,000, of which all but 10% we assume will come from sources outside Franklin County. Because this type of expansion and repair work is not highly specialized, we assume that all contracts will go to local vendors.

SUMMARY

The ongoing economic impacts of the revitalized Schell Bridge will largely come from attracting new visitors to the region. Visitor impacts are more difficult to quantify than construction impacts. There is no way to tell for certain how many people will come to visit Schell Bridge once reopened – let alone where they come from, how long they stay, or how much they spend while in the area. At best, we can only estimate what the impacts would be under a reasonable scenario of anticipated use.

We estimate that the reopening of the bridge will attract roughly 13,154 additional visitors per year of which 25% will be overnight visitors. This includes both new visitors as well as existing visitors who decided to extend their stay by an additional night. Spending by Franklin County residents are not included under the standard assumption that they would have occurred within the area even if the bridge were not reopened.

The total net economic impact from these additional guests will be just over \$843,000 per year – enough revenue to generate ten new full-time jobs in Franklin County. **Within ten years, the nearly \$8.43 million dollars in anticipated new revenue would more than offset initial construction costs.**

Table 2
Summary of Annual Visitor Impacts

<u>Category</u>	<u>Day-trippers</u>	<u>Over-nighters</u>	<u>Total</u>
Number of Visitors	9,954	3,200	13,154
Ave daily spending per visitor	\$20	\$120	\$44
Total Annual Expenditures	\$199,088	\$384,000	\$583,088
<u>Output Multiplier</u>	<u>1.43</u>	<u>1.45</u>	<u>1.44</u>
Total Output Impacts	\$285,513	\$556,624	\$843,137
Total Employment Impacts (FTE)	3.7	6.5	10.2

We view this as a rather conservative estimate that assumes only a modest level of marketing. With additional marketing, promotion and planning is reasonable to expect the bridge could likely draw thousands more visitors per year, possibly doubling these estimates. Such efforts may include tie ins to marketing campaigns promoting Franklin county as a destination for heritage and recreational tourists; high-profile events such as fairs and festivals; directly promoting the bridge and trail networks to bike and river tour guides, organizers of road races, trail runs and other events, and developing the riverbanks adjoining the bridge as open space available for recreational use.

nation for heritage and recreational tourists; high-profile events such as fairs and festivals; directly promoting the bridge and trail networks to bike and river tour guides, organizers of road races, trail runs and other events, and developing the riverbanks adjoining the bridge as open space available for recreational use.

VISITOR IMPACTS

ESTIMATING VISITOR COUNTS

We arrived at our estimates by identifying different categories of visitors and developing reasonable usage scenarios for each. These include bicyclists, hikers, paddlers and boaters, cross-county skiers, heritage and religious tourists, and other visitors that pick up a brochure or see the bridge on a drive and decide to stop. We derived these estimates through a review of hotel occupancy rates, daily traffic counts, recreational boating studies, and through discussions with area business owners (such as hotels, restaurants, bike shops, river guides, etc.), planners, town residents, as well as representatives of the local tourism industry and recreation-based organizations.

We also reviewed visitation studies from similar bridge and trail projects. For example, the Ghost Town Trail in southwest Pennsylvania estimates roughly 4,500 visitors from outside of the region per year and the Raystown Lake Mountain Biking Trail in western Pennsylvania estimates roughly 10,000 out-of-town user per year based on user surveys conducted by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The proposed Highbridge Rail Trail in Virginia estimates over 18,000 non-local visitors, the vast majority (90%) of whom are day-trippers based on a recently conducted economic impact analysis. The Bridge of Flowers in nearby Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts provides an exemplary case of the potential economic opportunities from bridge revitalization projects. It had roughly 34,000 entries in its visitors log in 2009, 54% of whom were from another state or country. The actual number of visitors to the Bridge of Flowers is likely to be much higher, as many people do not sign the registry. Although those that do sign are more likely to be from away.

Our baseline estimate of 13,154 visitors falls within the parameters suggested by similar sites. Even so, the draw for heritage and recreational tourism is very site and context specific and the success or failure of other projects only provides a rough barometer of possible outcomes. Many factors determine the usage of the bridge and trail projects: proximity to major population centers, current usage of existing trails and bikeways in the region, and the general economic climate that can influence travel decisions. The impacts of such projects are also condi-

tioned by the existence of complementary amenities and activities that increase the attractiveness of the region as a whole.

ESTIMATING VISITORS EXPENDITURES

Estimating the economic impacts of visitors requires creating an expenditure ‘profile’ of the average spending of day and overnight visitors. The most common spending categories include food and beverages (restaurants, cafes and stores), gasoline and other travel expenses, sporting equipment rentals and fees, and other miscellaneous purchases. Furthermore, overnight visitors would pay lodging either at an area hotel, bed and breakfast, or campground.

The average daily expenditures shown in Table 3 were constructed as an amalgam of estimates taken from other studies combined with information provided by area business owners about average purchase amounts of existing visitors. It is important to remember that these averages also include visitors that do not spend money in the category. For example, visitors renting a bike will clearly spend more than \$3.50 on a rental. However, relatively few visitors rent bikes making the per visitor spending in this category fairly low.

Table 3
Estimates of Visitor Expenditures

Category	Average daily expenditures per visitor		Total Annual Expenditures	
	Daytrippers	Overnighters	Daytrippers	Overnighters
Lodging	\$0	\$70	\$0	\$224,000
Food, Restaurants	\$7.50	\$25	\$74,658	\$80,000
Sporting equipment rentals/fees	\$3.50	\$5	\$34,840	\$16,000
Gas/travel	\$5	\$10	\$49,772	\$32,000
Misc. retail/services	\$4	\$10	\$39,818	\$32,000
Total	\$20	\$120	\$199,088	\$384,000

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A rehabilitated Schell Memorial Bridge that connects to existing bikeways as a historic, cultural and recreational attraction can deliver quantifiable direct and indirect economic benefits to the Northfield community as well as the greater Franklin County and Tri-State (MA-NH-VT) regions. There are also economic impacts that are not as easily quantified, yet should be taken into account when considering the bridge's economic development potential.

RECREATION AND HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Although the scenic qualities of the historic bridge and the recreational opportunities a connected trail system provides can have significant economic impact on the town and region, there is also more the community can do to build upon the economic potential of the added local attractions. In addition to tourism promotion strategies, additional businesses can be recruited or established to meet the demand created by trail recreation and heritage tourism. The more local businesses offering these demanded goods and services, the greater the local economic impact. Existing businesses can benefit by expanding or tailoring their products and services to target this growing market. The overall impacts when considering potential for business expansion include jobs created, increased tax revenues and a more diversified and flexible local economy.³

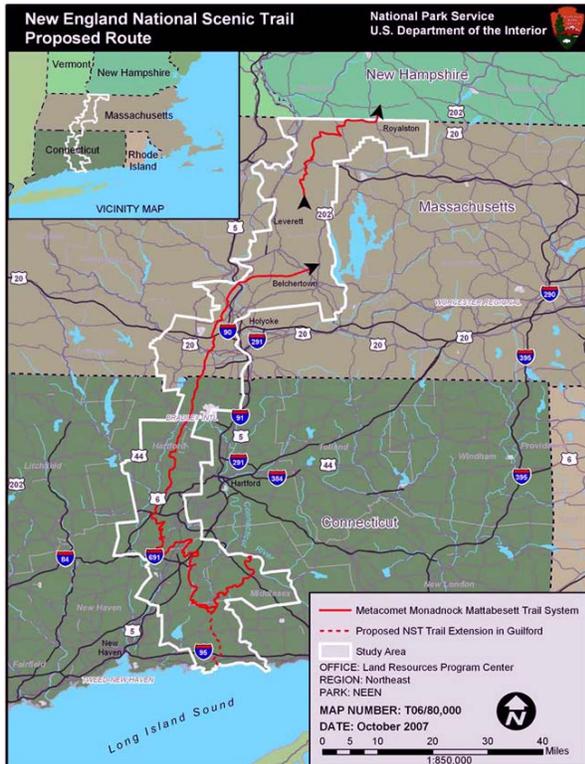
Potential visitor spending scenarios from the first section of this report are based on the spending opportunities provided by the existing businesses in Northfield and surrounding towns. Additional local business ventures as referenced above could also become increasingly viable when combining local spending with an added visitor market such as: additional lodging options, a

Bicycle Tourism Industry in the U.S.

The Adventure Travel Trade Association has cited bicycle tourism as a growing industry in the U.S., generating \$89 billion annually. Economic impact studies at the state level have shown significant results as well. In January 2010, researchers at the University of Wisconsin calculated that out-of-state visitors traveling to the state for cycling trips generated \$532 million in economic activity.²

Local bicycle shop owners and tour operators in the Pioneer Valley have noted similar trends with increased interest in groups visiting from nearby metropolitan areas and out-of-state, leading organized bicycle tours that visit Historic Deerfield, stop for lunch at the Montague Bookmill, and travel to other area attractions to highlight the unique and authentic sites along the bike routes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Source: National Park Service

The NET (red) travels within 3-miles of Northfield's center and a fairly direct trail is currently being investigated to connect the NET to the town

bike shop or rental service, kayak or canoe rentals, an outdoor recreation outfitter, or a pub or tavern offering live music, for a few examples.

Also notable is the growing popularity of the New England National Scenic Trail (NET) and the plans for a system of shelters and added trail infrastructure that attract and provide additional capacity for long-distance hikers and multi-day users. As seen with communities along or adjacent to more established and heavily used long-distance hiking trails – such as the Appalachian Trail, which crosses through the Berkshires in its Massachusetts section, or the Long Trail which travels the length of Vermont from its southern border up to Canada – many hikers on multi-day trips often stop if traveling through or even travel out of their way to experience a day or overnight stay in town if preferred amenities are available. This also offers a potential market for shuttle services or short-stay hiker hostels, which encourages hikers to visit and

spend more time and money enjoying the attractions and patronizing businesses in trilside communities

These types of visitors and outdoor recreation enthusiasts tend to seek out unique experiences and attractions that highlight the character and history of the nearby rural communities and word-of-mouth or trail guidebooks often direct visitors to these authentic and distinctive places. These trends and preferences in recreational travel increases the importance of having, preserving and providing access to historic and scenic assets, such as the Schell Bridge, that project a community's heritage to outside visitors.

Continued on p. 17

CASE STUDY: DAMASCUS, VA & THE VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL

Damascus is a rural town of 1,100 in the southwest corner of Virginia that lies at the crossroads of multiple local, regional and nationally designated recreational and heritage trails that attract visitors from across the nation. In particular, The Virginia Creeper Trail (VCT), a converted 34-mile rail trail highlighted by 47 scenic wooden railroad trestles, has served as a boon to the local economy



Source: Warren County Report Newspaper © 2008

and a centerpiece in tourism development strategies. Its growing popularity with out-of-town visitors is supporting bike rental, sales and shuttle services as well as other tourism related service, hospitality, recreational and retail businesses in Damascus and surrounding towns.⁴

The VCT has received significant state and federal funding as well as assistance from the U.S. Forest Service in its development, maintenance and upgrades due to its proximity to state parks and federally managed lands. The connecting towns of Damascus and Abington have also played significant leadership roles in trail development working with federal and state officials in securing funding and capitalizing on economic opportunities.⁵

In the small town of Damascus, the expansion of trail-related tourism has meant the difference be-

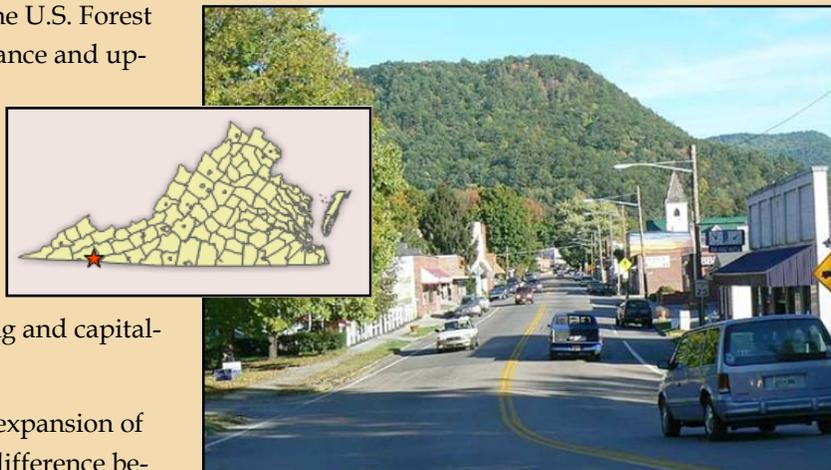
tween a community struggling with population loss and vacant storefronts and a town that now has multiple bed and breakfasts, six restaurants,

two outfitters, a coffee-shop and scarce empty retail space as businesses catering to outdoor recreation enthusiasts have opened for hiking, fishing, biking, horseback riding and hunting.⁶

Local fiscal impacts attributed

to trails and tourism development include:

- Local business tax revenues increased 56% in 5 years – from \$23,000 in 2003 to \$45,000 in 2005, then jumping to \$52,000 in 2008 when most towns were experiencing a downturn.
- Food and lodging tax also jumped from \$42,000 in 2001/2002 to \$104,150 in 2007/2008.⁷

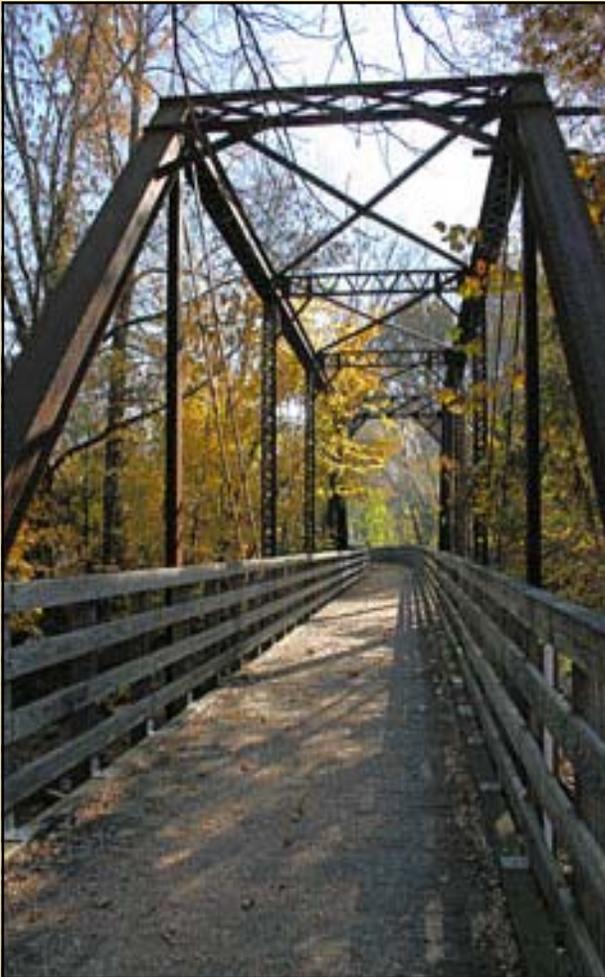


Source: www.damascus.org

CASE STUDY: DAMASCUS, VA & THE VIRGINIA CREEPER TRAIL



Source: www.adventuredamascus.com



Source: Watauga Lake Magazine © 2008

According to a 2004 visitor survey and economic impact analysis:

- The VCT had roughly 130,000 users a year, 60,000 coming from outside the region. Its high volume is reflective to its connection to other major trails, national parks, and the abundance of other regional amenities.
- Trail users, including local users and out-of-town visitors, spent about \$2.5 million per year.
- Of this amount, non-local visitors spent \$1.2 million directly in the Washington and Grayson County economies, supporting close to 36 jobs.⁸

Also important to the local economy is the Appalachian Trail, which crosses directly through Damascus' downtown. The town is host to an annual Trail Days event, a three-day festival each May that attracts tens of thousands of visitors and hiking enthusiasts from around the country. Known as the "friendliest town on the trail," Damascus has seen many successes in using its existing historic and natural assets to diversify into recreation and tourism-based industries. The trails have not only transformed the commercial district, but have also become a source of community pride and identity. Equally important to the residents and out-of-town visitors is the success in balancing economic growth with preservation of the small-town character and surrounding scenic natural landscapes.



Source: www.damascus.org

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

ENHANCED “QUALITY OF LIFE” AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Beyond the economic opportunities that tourism generates, local scenic and recreational amenities are also considered important assets in retaining existing or attracting new businesses, entrepreneurs and residents by enhancing a community’s quality of life and unique sense of place. These types of amenities include recreational trails, greenway corridors and historic aspects of the built landscape. A restored Schell Bridge, developed trail system and potential addition of riverside public open space adjacent to the bridge could play a key role in further enhancing Northfield’s desirability as a place to live and work.

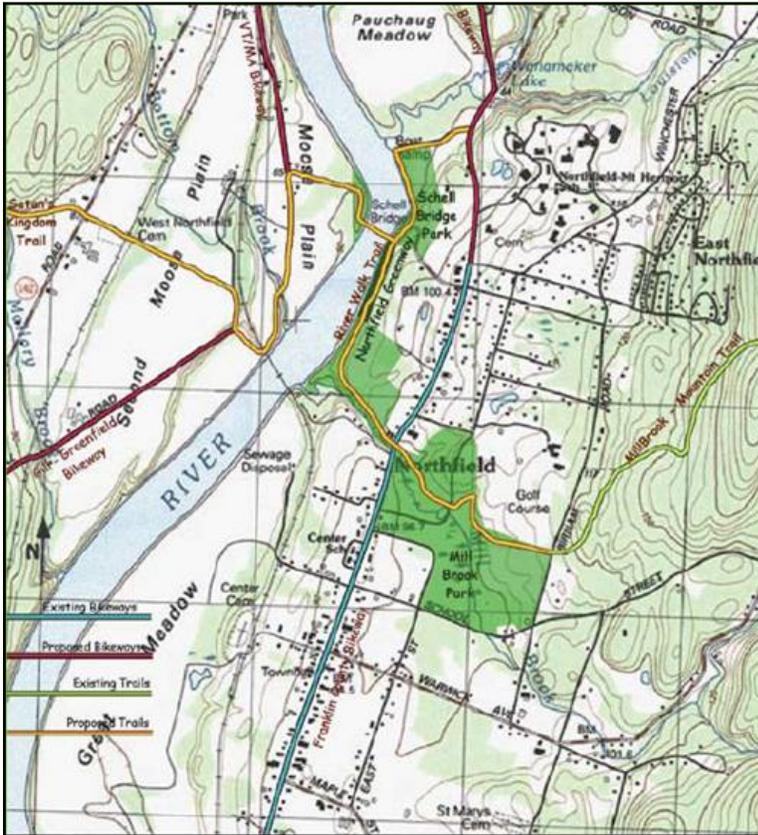
This is particularly important for “free agents” who operate small businesses, often from home, or workers who are able to relocate and telecommute. In many of these cases, business location or place of residence are chosen based more on lifestyle preferences and the availability of local scenic and recreation amenities than proximity to employment centers. Although these home businesses do generate economic activity and increase local tax revenues on a smaller scale, in some cases these small businesses will expand, increase local employment and move into commercial spaces, strengthening and diversifying a town’s business district and tax base.⁹

COLLEGE CAMPUS AMENITIES AND LINKAGES

Another important consideration is the anticipated establishment of C.S. Lewis College, a four-year private institution of higher education, which is tentatively scheduled to enroll students for the fall semester of 2012. The College plans to locate on the Northfield campus of Northfield Mt. Hermon School with a gateway to the campus located directly across Main St. from the current bridge access road, roughly 0.5mi from the Schell Bridge itself. Promoting bicycle use both by designing a bicycle-friendly campus and offering a free campus bike-share program for students and faculty are currently included in plans for the College.

Nearby recreational amenities have become increasingly important to colleges

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Source: Friends of Schell Bridge

and universities in rural areas in recruiting students and promoting the quality of campus life. Providing easy access to the Franklin County Bikeway routes across the river and serving as a link to the more popular loop rides (as opposed to out-and-back), a restored bridge would greatly enhance the recreational amenities the College could advertise to potential students and College visitors. Located well-within walking distance, the bridge could also be promoted as a historic attraction and scenic viewpoint for student pedestrian use. The improved connectivity between the campus and off-campus community amenities would also encourage more students, faculty, staff and college visitors to come downtown for food, shopping, or entertainment.

STRENGTHENING NORTHFIELD'S CONNECTION TO THE RIVER

Northfield has the distinction of being the only town in Massachusetts bisected by the Connecticut River, an important scenic asset and recreational opportunity for Northfield and Franklin County. Northfield's tourism group capitalizes on this and promotes the community as a "River Town," though the physical and visual connections between the town's business district, public spaces and actual river access and viewpoints could be strengthened in order to more effectively highlight the river as an asset and project this "brand" to visitors.

The town's historic main street, including most of its businesses and public buildings, lies on the eastern side of the river

Continued on p. 21

CASE STUDY: THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE



Source: Jason Pratt © 2007

As an example of the growing industry of bicycle tourism and multi-day biking trips, the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP)—a 132-mile rail-trail system of biking and hiking trails—has had significant impacts on trail towns and businesses located near or along the trail according to a recently conducted



Source: www.laurelhighlands.org

study. The GAP travels a route across from McKeesport, PA to Cumberland, MD, where the corridor connects to the C&O Canal Towpath creating a 318-mile long non-motorized, multi-state route from McKeesport to Washington, D.C. Trail advocates have also been working with Amtrak, whose Capitol Limited passenger line mirrors the bike route, to allow riders to roll on and roll off at trail town stops for increased tourism opportunities and trail access from the D.C. and Pittsburgh areas.¹⁰

The GAP, which received \$17.5 million in federal Transportation Enhancement funds with \$24 million in non-federal matching funds, was pushed to completion by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, a group of seven trail organizations who have joined together for coordinated funding, promotion and marketing efforts in partnership with the Pennsyl-

CASE STUDY: THE GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

vania Department of Transportation.¹¹

The GAP findings from a 2008 survey of 117 businesses in trailside communities include:

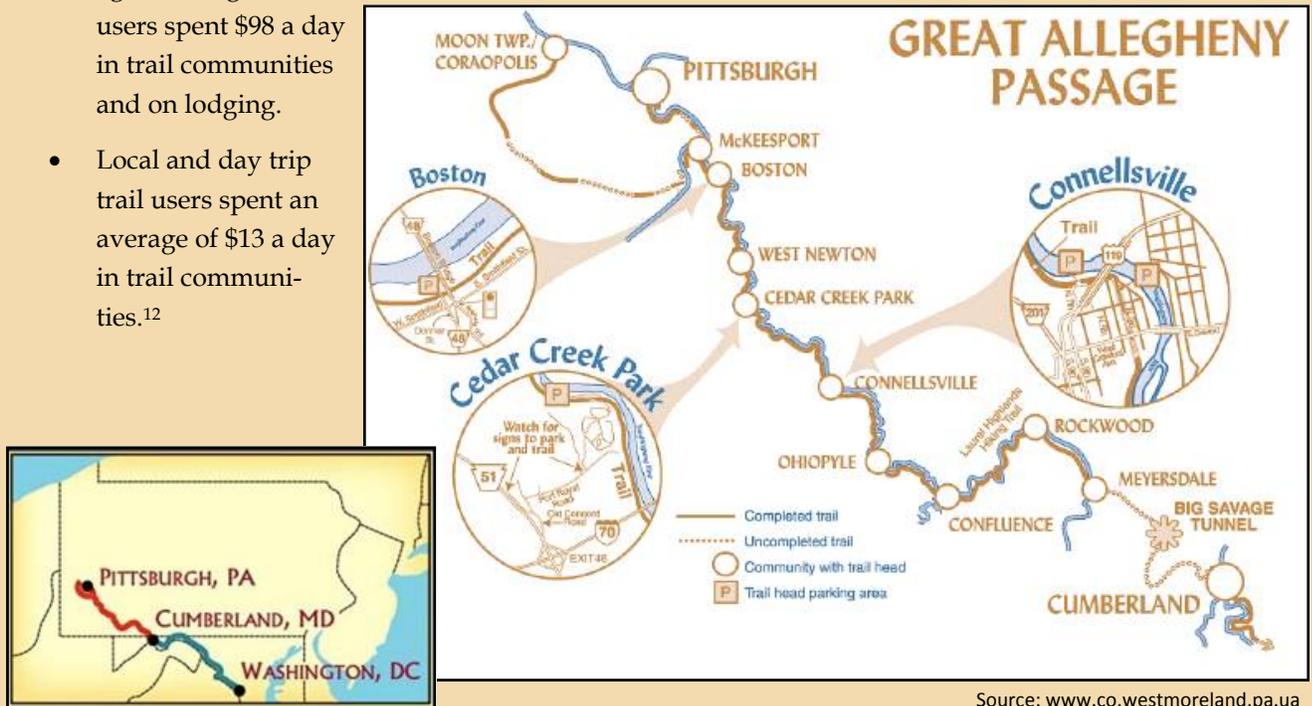
- Two-thirds of businesses surveyed reported that they experienced at least some increase in gross revenue because of their proximity to the trail.
- Over one-quarter of all businesses surveyed mentioned that they have or plan to either expand their operations or hire additional staff because of trail impacts.
- The most popular expansions/additions to facilities and/or services were increasing advertising efforts, offering shuttle service for customers, providing bike parking/accommodations and increasing staff.

Findings from a trail user survey include:

- Four in ten trail users surveyed planned an overnight stay as part of their trip. On average, overnight trail users spent \$98 a day in trail communities and on lodging.
- Local and day trip trail users spent an average of \$13 a day in trail communities.¹²

In addition to coordinated regional marketing of lodging, food options, tours, shuttling and multi-day trip packages, the Allegheny Trail Alliance also participates in an ongoing partnership with trailside communities through a “Trail Town Program.” This economic development initiative promotes the long-term economic viability of communities connected to the Great Allegheny Passage, coordinating business development efforts that encourage and capitalize on the trail-based heritage and recreation tourism market. The program’s goals include the retention, expansion and increased profitability of existing businesses, recruitment of additional sustainable businesses and integration of the concept of a visitor-friendly environment into local community planning.¹³

“When you’re a small town, you don’t know if there is any economic future,” said George Sam of “Trail Town” West Newton, PA, “But when you bring a trail in that brings people from all over the world, all of a sudden we have direction. We can be more than we are, we have assets to share.”¹⁴



Source: www.co.westmoreland.pa.ua

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

and is buffered from the riverbank by roughly a half mile strip of agricultural lands and private residences. Current river access points and motorized/non-motorized boat launches are limited and two of the three are located too far from the center of town for pedestrian access. The river can also be briefly viewed from the Rt. 10 bridge crossing a few miles south of town, but the high traffic volume, cement barriers, uneasy pedestrian environment all detract from the river views and prohibit opportunities for sitting, bird-watching, painting, or generally enjoying the scenery.



Source: Northfield Open Space Committee

In this sense, a restored Schell Bridge provides an opportunity to strengthen the town's visual and physical connection to the river for residents, potential college students and visitors. Proposals to develop a small riverside park and public open space adjacent the eastern access point of the bridge as well as riverside trails connecting to the bridge on both river banks further solidify the role the bridge would play as an anchor attraction. It would serve as a critical link to both the river and the trails and wildlife areas in the western portion of Northfield.

The Northfield section of the Connecticut River is also a destination for recreational boaters and a popular route for day and multi-day paddling trips that note the Schell Bridge as a scenic point of interest. With a restored bridge, the ability of boaters in the river to view cyclists and pedestrians using the bridge and vice-versa would attract additional visitors, entice existing visitors for a longer stay, and ultimately increase visitor spending.

BRIDGE-RELATED EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

A key element to developing recreation and heritage tourism, particularly in attracting non-local visitors, is through hosting festivals. While Northfield is

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Canalside Rail Trail Bridge, Montague and South Deerfield, MA

Completed in 2007, the Canalside Rail Trail follows a 3.8-mile rail right-of-way from East Deerfield to downtown Turners Falls, MA and is a popular off-road section of the Franklin County Bikeway. A highlight of the multi-use path is a restored three-span metal truss bridge that provides cyclists and pedestrians with a scenic, car-free Connecticut River crossing. The Canalside Rail Trail Bridge was originally built in 1880, though two spans were washed away by the flood of 1936 and replaced in that same year. The bridge restoration's construction contract was valued at \$1.8 million and was funded primarily by the Federal Highway Administration's Surface Transportation Program.¹⁵



Canalside Rail Trail Bridge, Source: Commons.wikimedia.org

The rail trail and bridge are commonly highlighted as scenic, recreational amenities and points of community pride by web sites and brochures of Turners Falls organizations aimed at promoting the area to businesses and residents. In 2010, Yankee Magazine named the Canalside Rail Trail the Best Urban Bike Path in New England.¹⁶

currently host to a variety of annual events including Day of History (May), the annual "Ride for the Schell" event (May), ArtsFest (Aug.) Special Day in Northfield (Dec.), and a number of regional bicycle rides/race routes travel through Northfield's north-south routes, a restored bridge and adjacent riverside park could enhance and increase the economic impact of these types of festivals and community events by:

- Attracting additional local and out-of-town attendees to existing festivals
- Providing a new and scenic venue and public open space for larger festivals, additional community events, or recreational races
- Expanding one-day events to multi-day festivals with the bridge and bridge-related events as additional attractions
- Enhancing scenic qualities and serving as an anchor (start and/or finish line) of potential recreational races including running, cycling, x-country skiing, boating or multi-event triathlons
- Serving as a link to community events on opposite banks of the river

In rural areas, the surrounding scenic natural and built landscape of the festival site can greatly enhance the festival as a regional attraction. Northfield is in a unique position to stage a multi-day festival or event as increased tourism development takes place with the bridge as a centerpiece. In addition to

Continued on p. 25

CASE STUDY: SWANTON, VT GIVES BRIDGE NEW LIFE

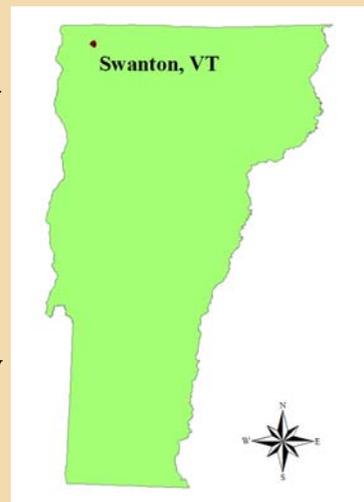


Source: Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, 2007

The town of Swanton, VT, in conjunction with the Vermont Historic Bridge Program, recently gave new life to a Pennsylvania steel truss bridge originally built in 1902 that was located in another Vermont community where a new traffic bridge had rendered it obsolete in 1994. In 2009 the historic structure was relocated to the former site of a wooden covered bridge across the Missisquoi River that burned in 1987 and connected to a 1mi rail trail as part of a “Fit & Healthy Vermont” initiative. The bridge links the trail with a former railroad depot that had been restored as a transportation museum. From April 15 to May 5 the following year, a counter tallied an average of 65 uses per day with a one-day peak of 124 uses. This grant-funded project recently garnered the town a “Corridors and Commons” award from the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Council and the VT Chapter of the American Society of Land-

scape Architects, recognizing Swanton as having linked its key community sites and amenities through publicly accessible corridors.¹⁷

Though the \$3.8 million relocation and rehabilitation costs were covered by the state of Vermont¹⁸, the bridge is now under ownership of the town of Swanton. Project administrator Ron Kilburn of Swanton noted, however, that the rehabilitation process involved a high-quality paint job that came with a 25-year guarantee and that the town organizes regular community clean-up crews to clear vegetation and prevent dete-

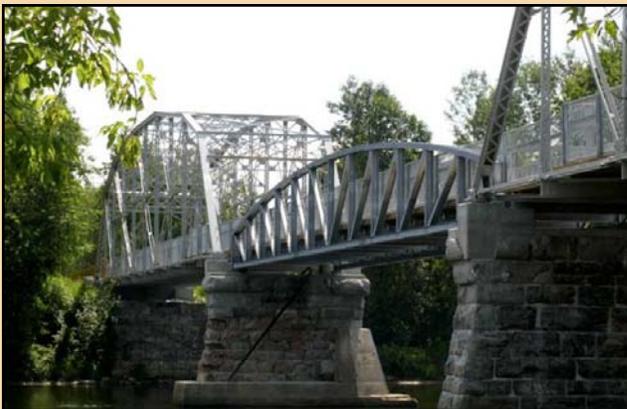


CASE STUDY: SWANTON, VT GIVES BRIDGE NEW LIFE

rioration. With the bridge only in low-impact pedestrian and bicycle use, the town does not anticipate unmanageable costs to maintain the structure.

The section of the Missisquoi River that travels through Swanton is also a part of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, an increasingly popular 740-mile water route established in 2006 that traverses waterways of the northern forest regions of New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. With a stopover and portage point located below the bridge, it has served as a connection between hikers, runners, cyclists, boaters, and heritage tourists, highlighting the multiple recreational resources Swanton has to offer outdoor enthusiasts.¹⁹

While economic impacts of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, the regional northern VT bikeways that connect to Swanton, or the 1-mile local "pilot" recreational path have yet to be measured, with the bridge as its centerpiece the trail is cited as a popular and award-winning attraction for both Swanton residents and out-of-towners since opening last year.



Source: Northeast River Forecast Center, 2009

Vermont Historic Bridge Program

State transportation agencies have been taking increasing notice of their state's inventory of historic bridges in recent years and have instituted programs focused on bridge preservation. The Vermont Historic Bridge Program, for example, was instituted in 1998 in recognition of historic bridges' distinct value to the state and "how much they can contribute to the scenic qualities of their settings."

The program includes a historic metal truss bridge preservation plan and has seen numerous rehabilitations for both highway use and pedestrian/bikeway adaptive reuse over the past decade. Though 90% of all historic bridges in Vermont are town-owned, the Historic Bridge Program stipulates that the VT Agency of Transportation will assume responsibility for relocating and rehabilitating all historic bridges that can no longer serve highway uses at their existing locations, including:

- Identification of new locations and new owners, including the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, for bridges that will be adapted to alternative transportation uses;
- Providing engineering services for relocation and rehabilitation plans;
- Providing annual appropriations to fund the relocation, restoration, and adaptation of bridges enrolled in the Program to alternative transportation uses.²⁰

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

its location near main transportation routes, valuable assets include:

- A wealth of scenic beauty and recreational opportunities
- International historical significance for religious tourism and national historic significance for events related to the French and Indian and King Philips' Wars
- An agricultural tradition
- A base of local artists, artisans and musicians
- Plans for establishment of a four-year, private college
- Many nearby cycling and running clubs that could be potential partners in hosting events, leading to increased visibility and participation

Small-scale bridge-related events that are relatively easy to stage and increasingly popular, including running races or bicycle rides, could increase the awareness and recognition of the bridge while also creating brand recognition for additional high-profile heritage tourism events.

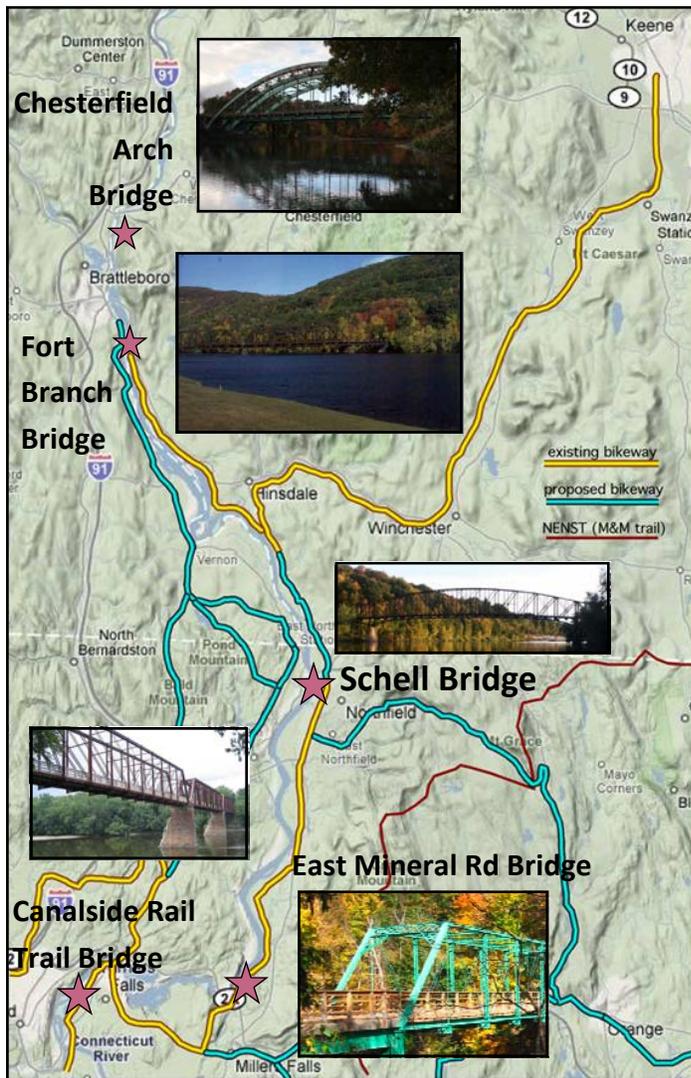
Several festivals in Franklin County have been successful in drawing large crowds of out-of-town visitors, bringing significant outside spending into the region. The Garlic and Arts Festival held on a hillside at Seeds of Solidarity Farm in the town of Orange, for example, has grown to over 10,000 attendees in 2010.²¹ The Green River Fest, a large multi-day gathering on Greenfield Community College's campus with a tradition of hot air balloon rides and a line-up of multiple touring musical acts, attracted over 13,000 attendees in 2009.²²

STRENGTHENED REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Schell Bridge could serve as critical link not only in the Franklin County Bikeway network, but also in the Tri-State Trails initiative, which includes plans to enhance and expand on a larger system of interstate bike trails between towns and attractions in MA, VT and NH. Considering the Schell Bridge as a critical piece in this larger system of bike trails and potential bicycle tourism strategies adds larger regional significance and projected economic impacts to

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Tri State Trails and Bridges: Map of existing and proposed bikeways in the Tri-State region (MA-NH-VT) and relative locations of both previously rehabilitated bridges and bridges with tentative plans for adaptive reuse.



Source: Map by Friends of Schell Bridge, with additional images from Southwest Regional Planning Commission added by K.McKee

the project. The long-term vision for the bridge include bikeway connections to the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Northampton as well as the Ashuelot Rail Trail in NH and West River Bikeway in VT.²³

A number of other bridges across the Connecticut within riding distance of the Schell Bridge are also being considered for adaptive reuse for pedestrians and bicycle travel including the Arch Bridge connecting Chesterfield, NH to Brattleboro, VT and the Fort Branch Bridge (aka "Trestle Bridge") connecting Brattleboro to an existing rail-trail in New Hampshire. The recently rehabilitated Canalside Rail Trail Bridge spanning the Connecticut between South Deerfield, MA and Montague, MA and the East Mineral Road Bridge spanning the Millers River are also within reasonable riding distance of the Schell Bridge. These multiple river crossings would provide unique opportunities for recreational cyclists and organized rides as well. As a brief example of the economic potential of linkages between multiple historic bridges, the Covered Bridges Half-

Marathon held in the towns of Woodstock and Quechee, VT every June attracts roughly 2,300 participants from across the nation with a \$45 registration fee on top of lodging and food expenditures. The popularity of this event is largely attributed to increasing trends towards heritage tourism and the unique appeal of historic bridges set against a scenic New England landscape.²⁷

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CASE STUDY: CLARKTON BRIDGE & TOBACCO HERITAGE TRAIL



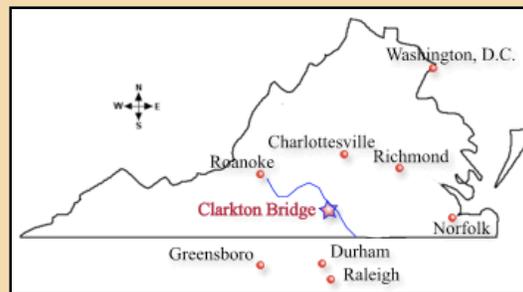
Source: www.clarktonbridge.com

The recently rehabilitated Clarkton Bridge is a steel truss bridge originally constructed in 1902, spanning 673 ft across the scenic Staunton River between Charlotte and Halifax Counties in southwest Virginia. Closed to traffic in 1998, it was slated for demolition between 2001 and 2003 and ultimately reopened to the public for pedestrian and bicycle use in 2005.

Similar to plans for the Schell Memorial Bridge in Northfield, the Clarkton Bridge has been integrated into a 159-mile regional network of trails for hiking, bicycling and horseback riding. The bridge, while always having been a key aesthetic attraction in a scenic river corridor, now plays a role in connecting on-road segments of the Tobacco Heritage Trail, a new regional trail network that connects historic and recreation sites throughout

five southwest Virginia counties. The bridge is also a stop-off point for canoes and kayaks with a boat landing below the bridge and a popular viewing platform as part of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail as well.

“At this point, the most important story is the remarkable partnership that came together across so many organizations over so many years,” Clarkton Bridge Alliance’s P.K. Pettus noted, “The local



CASE STUDY: CLARKTON BRIDGE & TOBACCO HERITAGE TRAIL



Local Cub Scouts cut ribbon signifying opening of Clarkton Bridge.
Source: Keith Strange, Gazette Virginian, 2005

partner, regional and statewide and national organizations, especially the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and state and federal agencies and our local governments, each one of them played a role that was really important in saving this bridge.”²⁴

The efforts of the Clarkton Bridge Alliance brought state recognition to the bridge in 2005 in winning a Scenic Virginia award for “Best Preservation of a Scenic Viewshed.” The award was presented for rallying a coalition to save the bridge and celebrating its importance as a regional resource for heritage tourism, nature tourism, and outdoor recreation.²⁵



Norwottuck Rail Trail Bridge,
Source: Commons.wikimedia.org

Norwottuck Rail Trail User Survey

The Norwottuck Rail Trail is a popular multi-use path constructed along an abandoned rail line that travels through the communities of Belchertown, Amherst, Hadley and Northampton in Hampshire County, MA. The most dramatic viewpoints along the 10.2-mile trail occur as one travels over the Connecticut River between Hadley and Northampton on the 1,492 ft-long former Boston and Maine Railroad bridge. The eight-span, steel lattice truss bridge was originally built in 1887 and rehabilitated for bicycle use by MassHighway in 1992.

Though no economic impact studies have been conducted in relation to the Norwottuck Rail Trail, in 2002 a user survey was conducted along the trail on a Thursday and a Saturday to provide user counts and characteristics of trail users and behavior. Findings from this survey included:

- A total of 791 individuals were observed using the trail on Thursday and 2,094 users were observed using the trail on Saturday.
- 55% of those surveyed on Saturday were using the trail for a primary purpose of recreation.
- 47% of trail users traveled from outside of Hampshire County to visit the trail (10% from out-of-state).²⁶

Though these findings are specific to the Norwottuck Rail Trail, these user characteristics can be

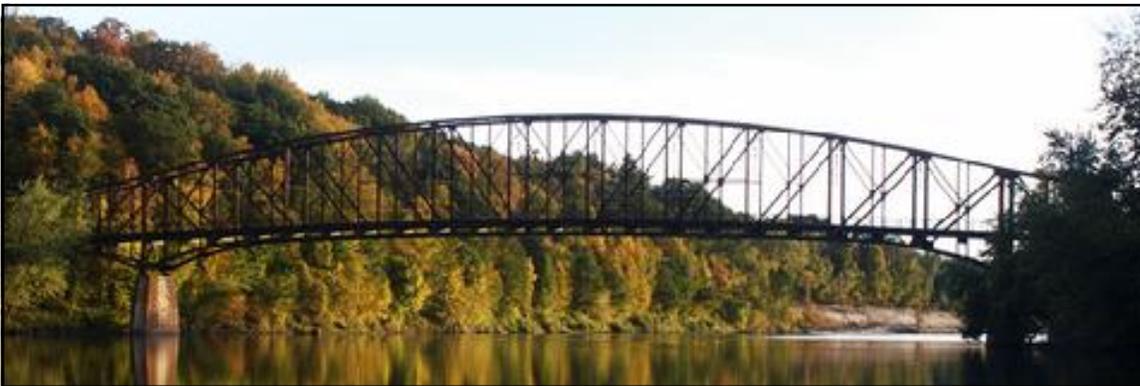
interpreted to reflect larger trends in recreational trail usage in the Pioneer Valley.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Setting a precedent of regional collaboration between local governments and regional bodies, non-profit organizations, and private sector stakeholders serves to strengthen opportunities for future regional partnerships for economic development initiatives. Potential partners in saving, restoring and maintaining the Schell Memorial Bridge as a pedestrian and bikeway connector include: local leadership, neighboring towns, FirstLight Power (which provides easements on riverfront property), the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), statewide organizations and offices, regional planning bodies in southeast VT and southwest NH, and also attract the attention of various historic preservation, conservation and recreational trail advocacy groups into the region.

THE EFFECTS OF TRAILS ON REAL PROPERTY VALUES

Recent empirical studies from various communities across the nation and in Canada indicate that the presence of trails and greenways can have positive impacts on real property values and the overall desirability of an area. Over the past few decades consumers have increasingly put a higher premium on interaction with nature through inclusion of open space and nature paths within their communities.



Source: Bruce Kahn © 2006

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Some specific results include:

- In Boulder, Colorado, housing prices declined by \$4.20 for each foot of distance that a property was located further to a trail or greenbelt, up to 3,200 ft. In one neighborhood, this figure was \$10.20 for each foot of distance (controlling for variables such as housing age, number of rooms, square footage of home, lot size, and distance from urban center.)
- Homes located near the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, Washington were found to sell for six percent more than comparable homes not located near the trail.
- Nearly 70% of real estate agents surveyed used the Bruce Trail, a bike trail in Ontario, Canada, as a selling feature when advertising property near the trail.²⁸

PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS OF TRAILS

Another consideration in the package of benefits that trails can deliver to a community and region is the economic impact of improved public health and the physical wellness of residents. Though the number of local users of the bridge and connected trail system are not estimated in this report, local trail usage and physical activity through walking, biking or x-country skiing would likely increase with the development of additional trails and recreational amenities. Numerous studies have shown both that the presence of trails and greenways in a community increases levels of physical activity and that increased physical activity results can directly lead to lower healthcare costs. A few examples include:

- The Indiana Trails Study found that over 70 percent of trail users across six different trails surveyed reported that they were getting more exercise as a direct result of the trail.²⁹
- According to the Bootheel and Ozark Health Projects survey In Southeastern Missouri, 55 percent of trail users are exercising more now than before they had access to a trail.³⁰

- A National Park Service study compared people who lead sedentary lifestyles to those who exercise regularly. Those who exercised frequently filed 14 percent fewer healthcare claims, spent 30 percent fewer days in the hospital, and had 41 percent fewer claims greater than \$5000.³¹

Though the studies referenced relate specifically to trails, this study also estimates that there would be a larger increase in local trail usage increase with the bridge in place as a pedestrian and bikeway connector, as the bridge would serve to attract trail users with dramatic views of the river below. Local bike shop owners have also noted that loop rides are generally more popular than out-and-back routes and the Schell Bridge connector could create opportunities additional loop rides for recreational and serious riders.

A more direct bikeway connection to Brattleboro, VT via Rt. 142 that the Schell Bridge would provide would also likely cause a slight increase in the number of local commuters using bicycles to travel to work. In addition to health benefits of increased physical activity, increased local usage of alternate forms of transportation instead of cars will lead to improvements in air quality, which has community-wide public health benefits.



Source: www.schellbridge.org

We estimate that the restoration of the Schell Memorial Bridge as a pedestrian and bikeway connector could generate a total economic impact of \$15 million to Franklin County over its first ten year of its operations. Just under half of these impacts (43%) would come from rehabilitation, maintenance and upgrades to existing trails – assuming considerable federal and state support. The remainder would come from additional spending by tourists and other new visitors. Given modest levels of marketing and promotion, we feel that a rehabilitated bridge could attract 13,200 additional visitors per year, spending roughly \$550,000 per year at area attractions, restaurants, stores, gas stations and lodging establishments. This is in addition to the increased use of the bridge and trails by Franklin County residents, who are not included in our estimates.

It is important to emphasize that these are estimates and not firm predictions. There is no certainty when discussing amenities that do not yet exist. Rather our estimates merely offer a realistic scenario of the possible economic impact of the bridge given our assumptions of likely future patronage. We base our assumptions on the best available data collected through multiple data sources, reports, interviews, and our professional judgment.

Given the tentative nature of the data we chose to err on the side of what we feel are fairly conservative estimates of visitation rates and expenditures. More favorable scenarios would take into account extensive marketing and promotion and the development of the bridge as part of a larger network of regional amenities. In combination with other historic, recreational and cultural attractions in the region, the Schell Bridge can serve as a critical link in developing local and regional tourism strategies – laying the foundation for increased multi-day visitors and business development strategies that can stimulate additional economic activity. Benefiting both local residents and visitors, a restored bridge can also foster economic development by helping to preserve a unique “sense of place” and the community character that makes Northfield an attractive place to live, work and visit.

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