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MEMORANDUM

Date: October 6, 2020
To: Ginna Johnson, Deputy Chief, Design and Project Management
From: Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner
Subject: **City of Newton Comments on DCR's Lower Falls Shared-Use Trail Feasibility Study**

Introduction

Thank you for taking on this very important effort to complete the long-term vision of increased public access to marvelous natural resources and a completed trail connection between "Two Bridges" and the I-95 Overpass on Quinobequin Road. And thank you for including Newton in the planning process; we are eager to work closely with you throughout the planning, design, permitting, and construction phases.

We are particularly appreciative of and eager to see the following aspects of your plan come to fruition:

- Increased public access to the natural areas along the river
- Increased public access to the Cordingly Dam and Hunnewell Fyffe Footbridge
- Expanded natural footpaths
- Bike paths identified on both sides of Rt. 16
- Four crosswalks on Rt. 16.
- A crosswalk to the island on Quinobequin Road that will eliminate the need for multiple road crossings.

Specific Suggestions for Consideration

- Engage in master planning for the possible transition of Leo J Martin from an 18-hole golf course to a smaller golf course, improved ski track, and expanded natural areas for public recreation before planning for footpaths and shared use paths in the area.
- Redouble efforts to install a shared-use trail along the disputed portion of the rail alignment.
- Consider alternative alignment/designs for the natural footpath and shared use path.
 - Consider constructing only a natural footpath through the pines along Pine Grove Avenue (as shown in **red dotted line**, below).
 - Direct cyclists to Saint Mary's Street (as shown in **green dashed line**, below). A broad paved path parallel to Pine Grove Ave could require the removal of some mature trees and would alter the serene feel of the area.
 - Consider an extension of the natural footpath along the Charles (in conjunction with reduction of the fairway), something like that shown in **purple dotted line**, below.
- Utilize existing infrastructure to free up money for new connections and accessibility.
 - Consider utilizing the existing Walnut Street bridge; when the bridge is redesigned, bicycles can be better accommodated.
 - Consider improving bike/ped access on the existing bridge that connects Leo J Martin to Wellesley.
 - Consider the Hunnewell Fyffe Footbridge as pedestrian-only access to and from the Wellesley trails.
 - Consider Rt. 16 to be the alignment of a fully accessible trail.
 - Re-assess the feasibility of improving and extending the pedestrian trail along the Wellesley side of the river and crossing over on the aqueduct bridge to the Newton side and constructing a walkway under the I-95 overpass (the **dark grey dashed line**, below). Such a trail segment would be much more pleasant and safer for pedestrians than the proposed alignment along Quinobequin Rd.

- Newton would like to work closely with DCR to ensure optimal local connections to this important regional resource through the installation of wayfinding signs (**orange stars**) and route markers (**brown dashed lines**).



- Consider implementing some improvement projects in the near term:
 - Install lights under I-90.
 - Restripe Quinobequin Road for enhanced bike/ped safety.
 - Enhance the aesthetics and signage of the access to the trestle bridge on Rt. 16 in Wellesley.
 - Enhance signage to better advertise public access opportunities such as: the trestle bridge Leo J. Martin, the trails in Wellesley, and the Hunnewell Fyffe Footbridge.