

How was the current Northern Scenic Greenway (NSG) route selected?

From 2018- 2021, the state's regional planning agency, SRPEDD, in conjunction with the SCBA and adjacent municipalities, conducted a feasibility study to assess the possible routes. See the final report here: [Closing the Gap](#). This assessment process included input from community members and city/town officials. Consensus was achieved based on geographic feasibility, cost, safety, user preferences, and timeline. In 2024, New Bedford, Dartmouth, and Westport jointly endorsed the proposed NSG route, north of Route 195.

Why were other routes not selected?

South Dartmouth has too many obstacles - wetland, bridge, and right-of-way - for a separated path. Cyclists currently benefit from its relatively low traffic and on-road markings. **On-road facilities do not provide the level of comfort of a shared-use path.**

Route 6 is a heavily trafficked regional artery, unattractive to pedestrians and cyclists, even though it is currently used by them. As Route 6 safety and infrastructure improvements are made, protected lanes will be incorporated, and the South Coast Bikeway Alliance will advocate for them. The NSG will offer a safe, non-commercial alternative.

The railroad that runs parallel to Route 195 traverses significant wetlands, and environmental mitigation would be cost-prohibitive. The rail is currently in use and not available for development as a rail trail. Additionally, public safety is a concern given the route's isolated nature.

The northern woodland route, which incorporated gravel roads through protected areas, was investigated beginning in 2013, when the rail-with-trail option was opposed by public safety officials and the rail line owner. A strong coalition of environmental and trail advocates will be needed to pursue such a route, and this route is unlikely to receive public transportation dollars.

When will the NSG be completed?

The timeline for this project is uncertain, given the remaining steps in the public infrastructure planning and implementation processes. The goal of the current step (preliminary design) is to understand the opportunities and challenges, then prepare to

address them. Once this is complete, each municipality will take responsibility for final design and construction.

What are the objectives and criteria for this “preliminary design” phase?

Consultant engineers are instructed to preserve and enhance the historic, scenic, and rural character of the route while addressing the safety of residents, commuters, and recreational users who walk, run, and bicycle.

Who will benefit?

The project is a public infrastructure project dedicated to safer transportation and recreation. While those who live nearby have the easiest access, proximity to South Coast rail should increase regional use. Property values typically increase with off-road trails.

More cycling and walking on the network of public ways serves the public interest in health, recreation, social connectivity, enjoyment of nature and culture. Private abutter rights must and will be respected.

How does the project impact abutters?

This preliminary design and engineering project will further examine the existing conditions along the 9.8-mile route and determine the potential of a roadside shared-use path within the public road layout, which does not extend into private property. The project will consider the natural, historic, and environmentally sensitive areas and include public and abutter engagement throughout the process.

Why is this project proposed?

Cycling and walking on many country roads has declined significantly due to dangers posed by people in cars (speed, size, volume, distracted driving, and drug/alcohol use.)

Preliminary Design Is the stage where everything is considered to determine the kind of a change necessary to optimize everyone’s goals for the use of the public way.

The South Coast Bikeway is on the DOT state priority trails list. What are “Priority Trails?”

The MassTrails Priority Trails Network is the prioritized vision for a comprehensive, connected, statewide network of multi-use trails and greenways in every region of our state. The Priority Trails were derived from the 2008 Bay State Greenway (BSG) map which was introduced as part of the initial Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan.

[MassTrails Priority Trails Network Vision](#) serves as a guide for funding and development of trails through state grants. “Where off-road facilities do not exist, high-comfort on-road infrastructure is proposed such as separated bike lanes with sidewalks or side paths.”

The MassTrails Team —a partnership involving MassDOT, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and local municipalities meets regularly to coordinate and and prioritize off-road, ADA-accessible, shared-use paths. The paths are “linear parks” and commuter routes.

Construction of the Northern Scenic Greenway is eligible for state funding. Why does the state construct biking facilities?

Massachusetts funds bike paths to increase exercise and recreational opportunities, boost local economies, reduce motor vehicle emissions and improve public health. By connecting neighborhoods and downtowns, these shared-use paths encourage active commuting, provide safe recreational spaces, and attract tourism.

Excerpt from 2024 Press release:

[MassDOT Celebrates MA Being Ranked 2nd in the Nation for Bicycling | Mass.gov](#)

"According to Massachusetts Transportation Secretary and CEO Monica Tibbits-Nutt. “Bicycling offers amazing physical and mental health benefits, and it helps make the transportation sector greener and cleaner...”

Massachusetts was one of the first states to adopt the Complete Streets approach to building transportation infrastructure to accommodate everyone, regardless of their mode of travel. In 2012, the Commonwealth began with the Healthy Transportation Policy directive, which requires all state-funded or designed transportation projects to increase bicycling, transit, and walking options. ...MassDOT continues to support.... programs like Safe Routes to School, Shared Streets and Spaces, Complete Streets, and MassTrails, which have all helped to prioritize investments in municipalities to create safer, multimodal travel.”