

North Central MASSACHUSETTS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

To Members of the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization,

The progress of the Twin Cities Rail Trail has been watched closely by the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce and its members since the start of talks surrounding the project years ago. The Chamber knows the tremendous impact that this project will have on the region's economy, tourism industry and local transportation, and while we understand the amount of work needed to go into a project of this scale, the Chamber is concerned to hear that phase 2 of the project involving the final stretch in Fitchburg may be pushed back again, this time for an additional number of years.

One of the biggest challenges that we are working with stakeholders to address in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is economic recovery. The North Central Massachusetts region has been hit especially hard when it comes to the impact on small businesses. It is imperative that the Twin Cities Rail Trail project continues to move ahead without delay so small business owners along the trail can take advantage of the influx of customers that the project will bring to the Twin Cities. The longer that Phase 2 takes to complete, the longer businesses within the revitalized sections of Fitchburg will continue to miss potential revenue, while the downtown area may lose out on that potential investment, hurting potential job creation.

The shutdowns over the past year have had a devastating impact on tourism across the region, and they have also highlighted the importance of outdoor recreation as a driver of tourism. The sooner the rail trail comes online, the sooner the entire North Central Massachusetts region will benefit from visitors near and far who are looking to not only experience the trail, but also take advantage of what area businesses have to offer. At this point, an incomplete trail that ends in the middle of a neighborhood is not something that Fitchburg can market to potential visitors.

Through the Chamber's WorkNorthCentral Initiative, we see firsthand the amount of job opportunity that exists for those looking to work in the region. Those workers depend on reliable means of transportation. A completed rail trail that ends in downtown Fitchburg will also provide a dependable, safe route for people to commute on a daily basis between the Twin Cities. The Phase 2 completion will also provide marketable, easy access to the downtown Fitchburg stop.

The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce strongly urges you to reconsider plans to push back Phase 2 of the Twin Cities Rail Trail Project.

Thank you,



Roy Nascimento, IOM, CCE
President & CEO



Travis Condon
Public Affairs Manager