



## **Coastal Trails Coalition, Inc. 2025 Progress Report**

Coastal Trails Coalition, Inc. (CTC) is a non-profit corporation whose primary mission is to assist in developing the Coastal Trails Network, a 30-mile network of rail trails, shared use paths and bike lanes connecting the communities of Amesbury, Newbury, Newburyport and Salisbury. Formed in 2004 with the support of the Essex National Heritage Commission, the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program, and the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, CTC continues to be a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) all-volunteer organization. Donations to CTC are tax deductible as charitable donations. CTC invests 100% of donations, grants and membership contributions in the trail network.

Local residents and visitors of all ages use the network to get to work and school, to trains and buses, and for exercise, dog-walking, family exploration and physical rehabilitation. The trails have become an integral part of peoples' lives and neighborhoods. As the network has expanded and become interconnected, more locations are easily accessible from the trails, attracting even more users. Trail counts show that on a pleasant day, around 2,000 people walk and cycle along the riverfront sections of the Clipper City Rail Trail, up to 1,200 use Salisbury's Marsh Trail and up to 800 enjoy Amesbury's Riverwalk.

CTC will continue to work with our State Senators and Representatives, the four local communities, and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to complete the trail network.

### **CTC-ASSISTED TRAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT COMPLETED IN 2025**

During 2025 CTC provided \$12,811 of matching funds to help the Town of Salisbury obtain a \$94,450 MassTrails grant to pave the shared use path through Lion's Park that connects the Town's Senior Center and Municipal Parking Lot on US Route 1 to Salisbury's rail trails and the rest of the trail network. The grant funds also paid for resurfacing the west end of Salisbury's Ghost Trail.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO MASSDOT AND THE MVMPO**

We continue to appreciate the vital and constructive role that MassDOT's Highway Division and the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO) play in developing the Coastal Trails Network.

In years past MassDOT took responsibility for designing and constructing the Salisbury Rail Trail Connector under the Gillis Bridge, the I-95 Whittier Bridge shared use path and the Amesbury-Salisbury Trail Connector. MassDOT also covered a significant shortfall in design funding for the Border to Boston Trail (B2B Trail) project, including the extension of Salisbury's Old Eastern Marsh Trail to the MA-NH state line and 7.2 miles of rail trails in Byfield, Georgetown and Boxford.

MassDOT also made signage and striping improvements to the Gillis Bridge buffered bike lanes which allow bicyclists to travel safely between Salisbury's Old Eastern Marsh Trail and Newburyport's Clipper City Rail Trail. Limiting vehicle travel on the bridge to a single lane in each direction has also greatly enhanced the safety of the existing sidewalk for the many pedestrians crossing the bridge.

The MVMPO is a committee that allocates federal and state funds to highway, bridge, transit and trail projects in the Merrimack Valley region under its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It is comprised of representatives of the State Secretary of Transportation, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority as well as representatives of certain Merrimack Valley cities and towns. Over the years the MVMPO has provided construction funding for the Clipper City Rail Trail in Newburyport, Salisbury's Old Eastern Marsh Trail and Amesbury's

Riverwalk. Its current TIP has funding to build the B2B Trail from Byfield to Boxford and Amesbury's Carriagetown Connector.

## **FUTURE NETWORK IMPROVEMENTS IN PROGRESS**

### **Carriagetown Connector**

CTC is working with City of Amesbury officials on developing the Carriagetown Connector link from Amesbury's Riverwalk to Elm Street and the Ghost Trail. This will be the final trail connection between Amesbury and the rest of the Coastal Trails Network. In 2020 CTC gave Amesbury a \$15,000 grant to hire engineers to prepare the plans and cost estimates needed to qualify the project for federal and state highway construction funding. CTC also granted \$20,000 to Amesbury to provide matching funds for a MassTrails grant to support designing, engineering and permitting the project. MassDOT will hold a public hearing on the design of the trail early in 2026. The MVMPO has programmed \$2,639,748 of construction funding in its 2027 TIP and construction should be completed in 2028.

### **Border-to-Boston (B2B) Trail: *Byfield to Boxford Section in Design; Construction Funding Programmed for 2.2-mile Georgetown-Boxford Trail and 3.2-mile Byfield-Georgetown Trail***

Salisbury's Old Eastern Marsh Trail and a section of Newburyport's Clipper City Rail Trail are part of the B2B Trail that extends from Salisbury to Boston. Design work is continuing on the section of the B2B Trail from Newburyport and Newbury to Boxford. The design currently includes a new 7.2-mile rail trail from Byfield through Georgetown and Boxford to Topsfield that will be constructed in three segments. During 2026 the Town of Newbury will be conducting a feasibility study of the B2B link between Byfield Center and Newburyport's Clipper City Rail Trail.

Funding for B2B Trail design originally included \$718,000 of federal highway funds, supplemented by \$343,000 of state highway funds and \$192,000 of local matching funds from Salisbury, Newbury, Georgetown and Boxford. CTC contributed \$5,000 toward Salisbury's \$59,000 match and \$6,000 toward Newbury's \$12,000 match. CTC also raised \$44,000 of additional funds for Salisbury's match from Newburyport Bank, Institution for Savings Charitable Foundation, TD Bank Foundation, SPS New England and CTC Board members to support design of the trail in Salisbury. During 2017 the projected cost of the design was reevaluated and a shortfall of \$1.5 million was identified. Recognizing the long-term value of the project, MassDOT agreed to cover the shortfall and work on the design continued, but environmental issues resulted in further increases in costs. During 2022 U.S. Congressman Seth Moulton and the Essex National Heritage Commission obtained a Federal earmark for additional B2B design funding that should be sufficient to get the remainder of the project ready for construction.

The MVMPO has programmed \$5.3 million to construct the 2.2-mile segment of the B2B Trail from Georgetown Center into Boxford in FFY 2027 and \$6.6 million to construct the 3.2-mile segment from Byfield to Georgetown Center in FFY 2028. Design of a 1.8-mile segment in Boxford is also underway, but construction funding has not yet been programmed for it. When completed, these B2B trails will become part of the East Coast Greenway, a developing multi-use trail that will run from Maine to Florida.

### **Proposed Shared Use Paths**

CTC is advocating for and supporting the development of new shared use paths (SUP) along important local routes like Lafayette Road, Beach Road and North End Boulevard in Salisbury, Hale Street in Newburyport and Scotland Road in Newbury. The first of these, a 2.4-mile SUP alongside Lafayette Road (US Route 1) from Salisbury Square north to the MA/NH border, will be completed next year. MassDOT has included an SUP in its preliminary design for reconstruction of North End Boulevard (Route 1A) on Salisbury Beach. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is working on a feasibility study of improved bike-ped accommodations along Beach Road (Route 1A) in Salisbury. CTC has committed to make a \$10,000 grant to the City of Newburyport to provide part of the funding needed to plan an SUP alongside Hale Street. In addition, an SUP along Scotland Road is one of the options being considered in Newbury's feasibility study of the trail link between Byfield Center and Newburyport. Completing these new shared pathways will make walking and biking throughout the region much safer and more enjoyable.

## **CTC ADMINISTERS ADOPT-A-TRAIL AND ADOPT-A-BENCH PROGRAMS**

With CTC's leadership both Salisbury and Amesbury have implemented Adopt-a-Trail programs. The two towns' trails now have mileposts every 1/10th mile along a total of over six miles of trails. Each post has a sign showing its location and most include a local sponsor's name and logo. The sponsoring businesses make annual contributions to CTC toward maintaining and improving the trails. The mileposts allow trail users who need emergency help to give their exact location when they call 911. People feel safer and first responders can get to the scene quickly when help is needed.

CTC and the Town of Salisbury have also implemented an Adopt-a-Bench program that raises funds to install benches and other improvements on Salisbury's trails.

## **CTC TRAIL MAINTENANCE**

CTC continues to recruit and coordinate volunteers to help maintain and improve the Coastal Trails Network. This includes regular summertime mowing and trimming, fall leaf clearing, and snow removal on parts of the Marsh Trail and the Garrison Trail. CTC's maintenance also includes occasional tasks like removing dangerous trees, clearing fallen trees and branches, repairing fences, replacing vandalized and deteriorated signs, graffiti removal and brush clearing.

## **CTC PROVIDES FUNDS TO SUPPORT TRAIL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT**

CTC uses its funds to assist in developing and improving our trails. During 2025 CTC made the following major expenditures and financial commitments.

- a \$5,000 grant to the Town of Salisbury to serve as matching funds for a MassTrails grant to pave a trail connection from the Marsh Trail through Lion's Park to the Hilton Senior Center and US Route 1 and to resurface part of the Ghost Trail.
- a \$5,000 grant to the City of Newburyport to help fund a new bike share program with CTC pledges for additional \$2,500 grants for the program in 2026 and 2027.
- \$9,000 of Salisbury and Amesbury Adopt-a-Trail funds to maintain and improve the trails. Improvements included funding for the trail paving and resurfacing project in Salisbury, removing dangerous trees on the Amesbury and Salisbury trails, purchasing and installing new trail entrance signs on the Ghost Trail and new speed limit signs on the Marsh Trail, and reimbursing volunteers for mowing and plowing expenses and the cost of materials for trail maintenance.

## **2026 CTC BOARD MEETINGS**

The public is cordially invited to our monthly board meetings. All meetings are on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Most meetings are held remotely. Please send an email to [info@coastaltrails.org](mailto:info@coastaltrails.org) if you would like to join an upcoming meeting. You can keep up to date on events and trail news by signing up for our newsletter on our web site. You can also share your comments and questions on our Facebook Page.

Coastal Trails Coalition  
P.O. Box 1016  
Newburyport, MA 01950  
[www.coastaltrails.org](http://www.coastaltrails.org)

January 2026