

Rail Trail Tunnel Installed Under Route 11 In Potter Place

By Lindy Heim
Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

People were out on Route 11 on June 16 and 17 excitedly watching the construction site on either side of the Northern Rail Trail passing under Route 11 at Potter Place. Over a two-day period, a giant crane hoisted each concrete arch out of the truck queue, then aimed the concrete legs gingerly toward the grooves of the precast foundation below. One at a time, the giant arches were guided home to produce the 78-foot tunnel.

The headers at either end were the last to arrive and the most dramatic, because each has the words "Northern Railroad" in five-inch lettering engraved over the passageway, a tribute to times past and a key component to the tunnel's overall curb appeal.

This construction is a tribute to future times as well. Extra heavy foundations are a part of the plan to accommodate double-stacked freight service to the northeast corridor, should that come to pass. The arches would simply be removed, the 12' tall pedestal foundations extended to just below road grade, and a simple slab concrete bridge placed to increase the vertical clearance by four feet.

Looking back, the Northern Railroad was built in 1847 and acquired by the Boston and Maine railroad in 1887. It offered passenger service until 1965 and freight service until the early 1970s. According to Ed Hiller of the Andover Historical Society, there was no bridge at this location until 1956 when the Route 11 highway bypass around Potter Place was constructed to go over the Boston and Maine tracks and Depot Street. In 1996, the state of New Hampshire bought the railroad right of way, leading to recreational use of the rail bed thereafter.

Route 11 used to follow what is now Cilleyville Road. The old Fourth New Hampshire Turnpike (Route 4), whose construction started in 1800, went along Depot Street, passed the railroad station, and continued north through part of Wilmot towards Danbury.

The new underground passage is a tremendous improvement over the corrugated metal culverts that are so prevalent elsewhere. The 24' span by 6' rise concrete arch



Photos: Lindy Heim (left), Marty McAuliff

of Weaver Brothers in Bow. Beck and Bellucci, a subcontractor of Weaver Brothers, displayed their experience as the bridge crew set the 11 arch units that weighed 35,000 pounds each and the two precast headwalls that weighed 22,000 pounds each.

According to Steve Wolf, the Northern New England Manager for CONTECH, "the primary advantage to a single-span buried arch structure versus the triple-span conventional bridges that were removed is far less maintenance for the DOT bridge crews and resulting savings to New Hampshire taxpayers. Another factor is that a buried arch structure is less susceptible to freezing before the road surface as commonly occurs with a conventional bridge that is exposed to subfreezing temperatures from underneath."

bridge units were engineered and provided by CONTECH Construction Products of New London and pre-cast by Concrete Systems in Hudson. The tunnel has no incline, sufficient ambient light, and is a good width for recreational purposes.

Its functionality and beauty are a tribute to Alex Bernhard, project coordinator for the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail (FNRT), working closely with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT) and with bridge contractor Jeff Bates

FNRT has been working on securing funds since 2004 to resurface and connect this section of the rail trail on up through Danbury to the 10 miles already converted to four-season use to the east and the Grafton County rail trail to the north and west. Construction is expected to begin late this summer.

For more information and how you can help, visit FNRT.org.

One-half delicious barbequed chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, corn-on-the cob, rolls, and strawberry shortcake! • One-half delicious barbequed

11th Annual KSL Chicken Barbecue

Great food, great music!

Sunday, July 11th, 2010 - 4 p.m to 7 p.m.

King Solomon's Lodge - Masonic Hall

Elkins, NH

Reservations Requested
\$13/Meal

Send your check for the
desired number of meals to:

KSL #40

P.O. Box 295

Elkins, NH 03233

Tickets will be reserved for you at the door

Music at the Elkins
Bandstand

The Tammy Jackson Band

4 - 8 p.m.



FOR SALE

Nana & Pa's
Fifth Wheel

1995 Wilderness

With Slider • Sleeps 6
Smoke-free • Pet-free

Good condition

8,000 lbs

\$4,500

526-6270

barbequed chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, corn-on-the cob, rolls, and strawberry shortcake!

chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, corn-on-the cob, rolls, and strawberry shortcake!

One-half delicious barbequed chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, corn-on-the-cob, rolls, and strawberry shortcake!