



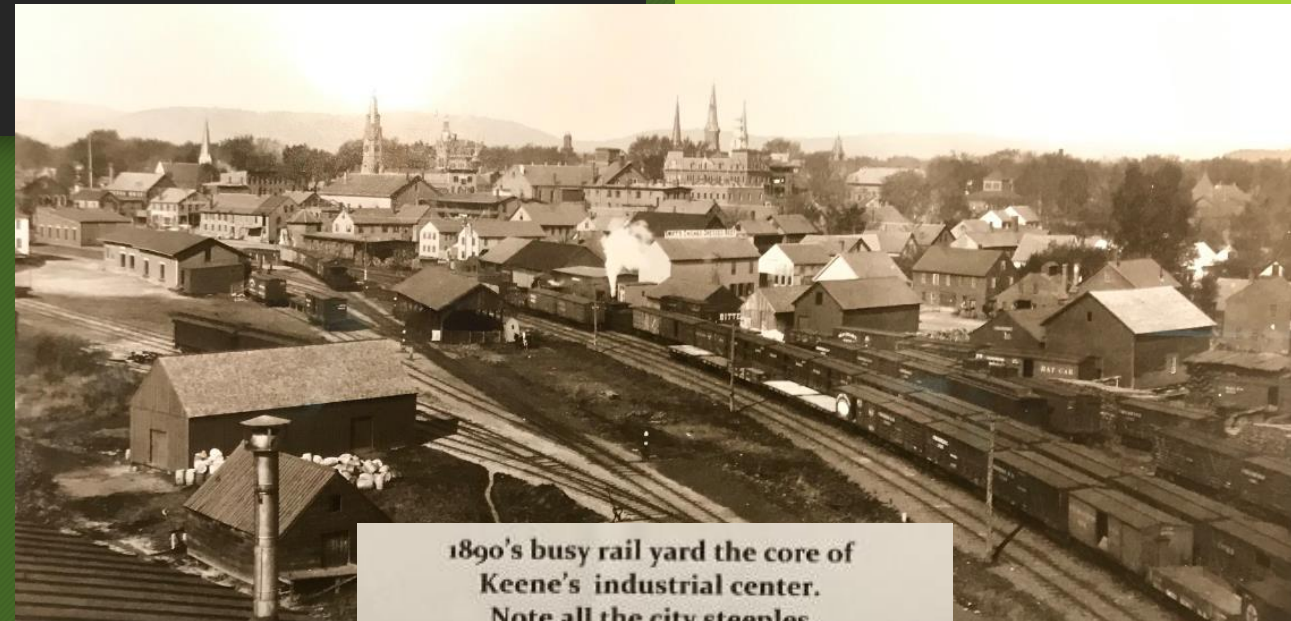
# Monadnock Region Rail Trail “Big Picture”

Monadnock Regional Rail Trail Collaborative

Presented by:

Michael Kowalczyk

William Shoefmann



1890's busy rail yard the core of  
Keene's industrial center.  
Note all the city steeples



# The Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative Role

An informal group made up of representatives of local municipalities, non-profits and volunteers that recognize the value in collaborating on shared goals and interests for improving the regional rail trails



“Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One”, *Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.*

An eastbound B&M passenger train steps smartly across the [Joslin Arch](#). That's the D. R. Cole grist mill visible through the arch, South Keene, ca. 1905. Postcard; B. G. Blodget coll.

# The Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative

## Collaborative Members:

### City of Keene:

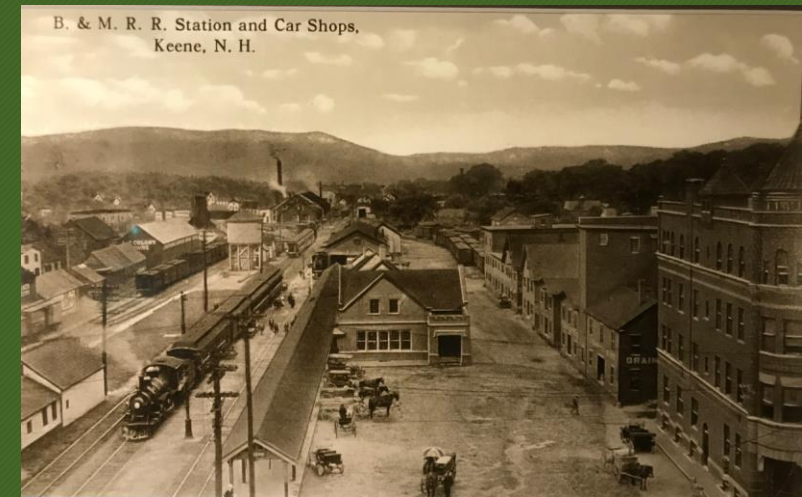
- Parks, Recreation & Facilities
- Public Works - Engineering
- Community Development - KGIS
- Bicycle Pedestrian Pathways Advisory

### Town of Swanzey:

- Director Planning and Economic Development
- Rail Trail Advisory Committee

## Collaborative Supporters:

- Pathways for Keene
- Monadnock Conservancy
- Southwest Regional Planning Commission
- Hinsdale Community Development
- Town of Swanzey Board of Selectmen
- Friends of the West River Trails, Brattleboro, VT



Corner of Gilbo Ave and Main St, Keene,  
Jan 24, 1911



# Monadnock Region Rail Trail Historical Facts

- May 16, 1848 - First operational train in Keene
- Within 3 decades trains carried thousands of passengers and millions of tons of freight in and out of the Monadnock region.
- Abandonment began in the 1960s due to improved highways and roads.
- NHDOT is the owner of over 300 miles of the rail trail corridor.
- NH Bureau of Trails is the administrator of the state-owned rail trails.
- For more history:  
<https://blog.nhstateparks.org/from-railroad-to-rail-trail-a-history-of-the-cheshire-recreational-rail-trail/>

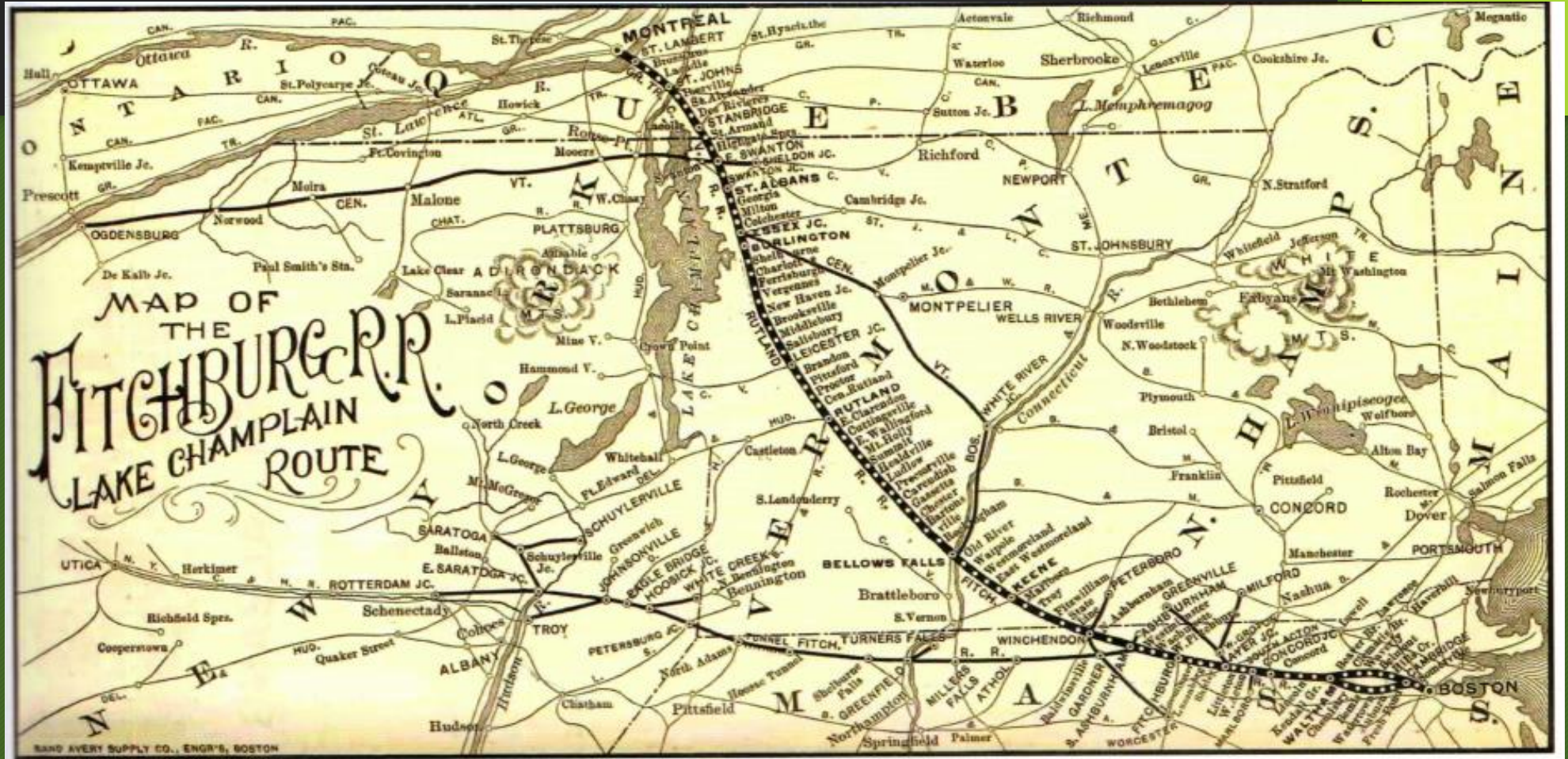


Map showing the steam railroads of the Monadnock Region after all except the Boston & Albany's Ware River Branch had been folded into the B&M system (B&M PTT Sept. 28, 1919).



# Monadnock Region Rail Trail Historical Facts

## Boston to Montreal



Map of the Fitchburg's Lake Champlain Route, incorporating the Cheshire Branch, from Boston to Montreal, Quebec. This route and the road's trademark Hoosac Tunnel Route between Boston and Rotterdam Junction, NY, split at South Ashburnham. Fitchburg PTT, 1898. Fitchburg Hist. Soc.

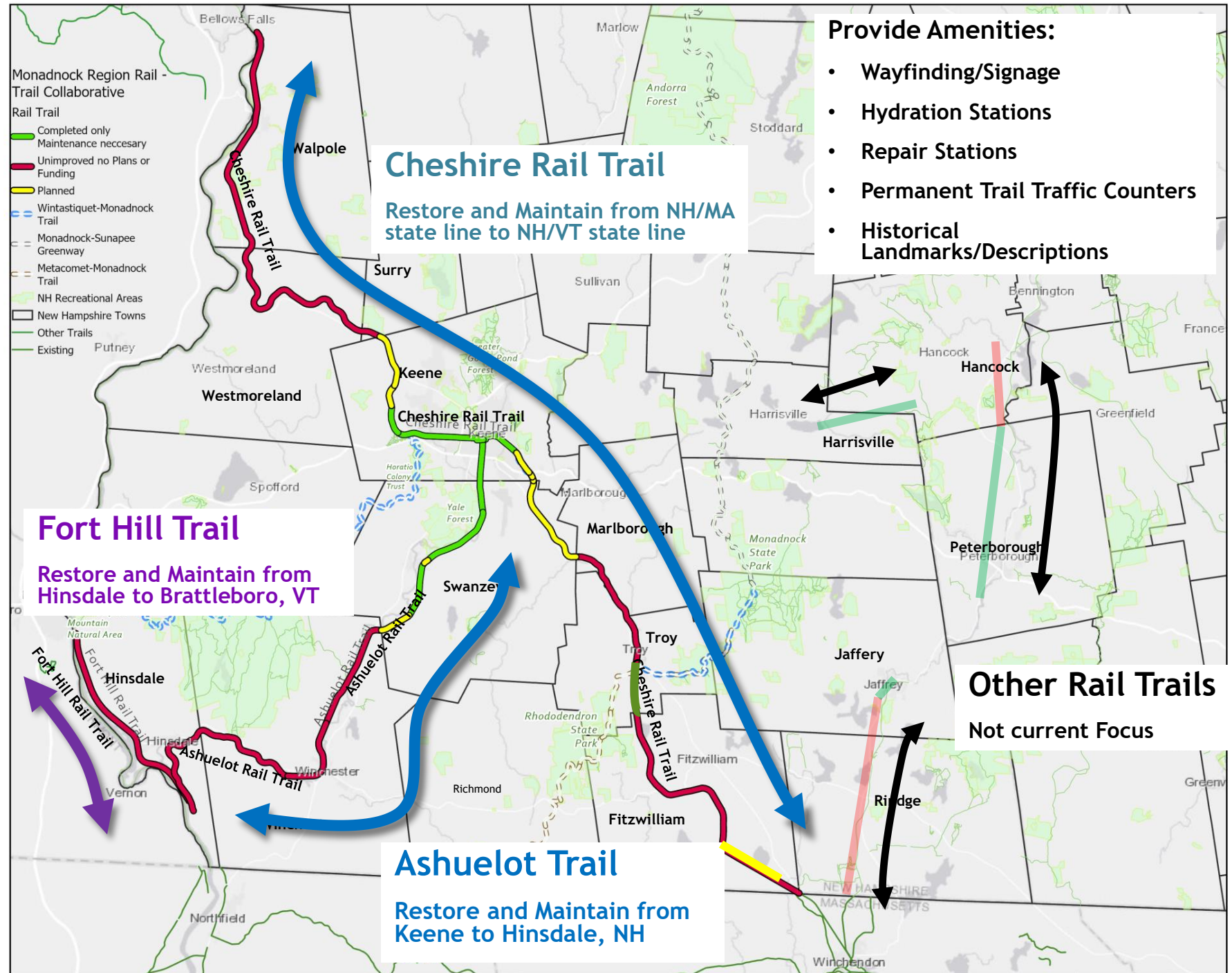


# The Monadnock Region Rail Trails

## The Big Picture Plan



“Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One”, Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.


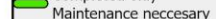
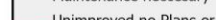
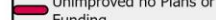


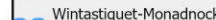
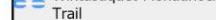
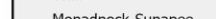
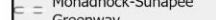
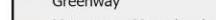










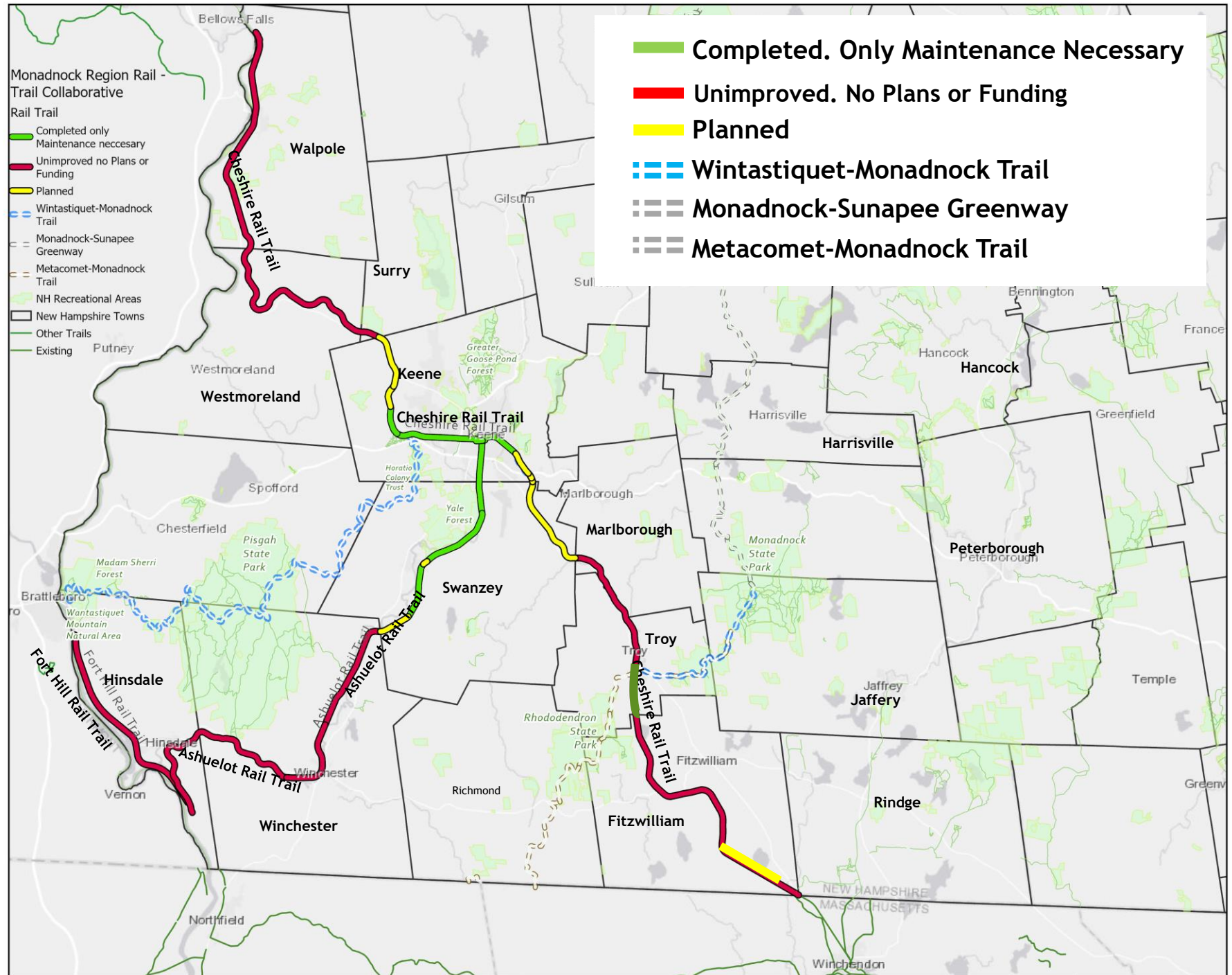
# The Map Legend

Monadnock Region Rail - Trail Collaborative

Rail Trail

-  Completed only
-  Maintenance necessary
-  Unimproved no Plans or Funding
-  Planned
-  Wintastiquet-Monadnock Trail
-  Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway
-  Metacomet-Monadnock Trail
-  NH Recreational Areas
-  New Hampshire Towns
-  Other Trails
-  Existing

-  Completed. Only Maintenance Necessary
-  Unimproved. No Plans or Funding
-  Planned
-  Wintastiquet-Monadnock Trail
-  Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway
-  Metacomet-Monadnock Trail



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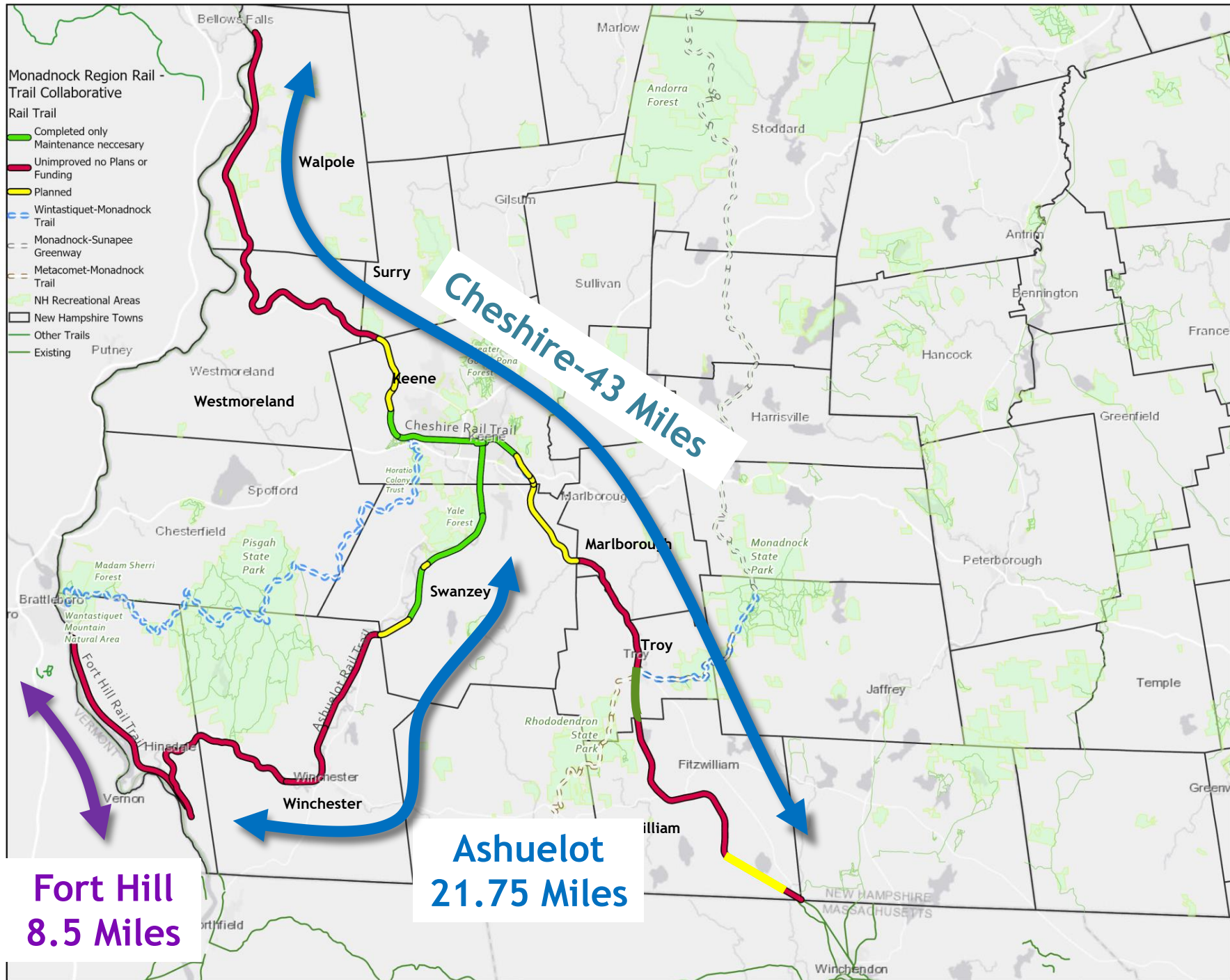


# Trail Lengths

Going South and East.				
LEAVE	No. 1, P. M.	No. 3, A. M.	No. 19, A. M.	No. 5, A. M.
St. Albans,.....	7.00			6.20
White River Jc.	1.30	4.20		12.20
Rutland,.....	12.50			12.01
B. FALLS,.....	3.50	6.35		2.30
Cold River,.....		6.38		
Walpole,.....	4.00	6.45		2.40
Westmoreland,...	4.14	6.58		2.53
E. Westmor'land	4.23	7.07		3.00
KEENE,.....	4.55	7.33	9.00	3.26
So. Keene,.....		7.37	9.08	
Marlborough,....	5.08	7.46	9.28	3.40
Troy, .....	5.17	7.54	9.45	3.49
Fitzwilliam, .....	5.29	8.06	10.17	4.02
State Line,.....		8.18	10.40	
WINCHENDON,....	5.48	8.25	10.55	4.21
N. Ashburnham,	5.56	8.34	11.12	4.30
So. Ashburnh'm,	6.06	8.43	11.35	4.40
Westminster,....	6.16	8.55	11.49	
W. Fitchburg,...	6.22	9.03	11.57	
FITCHBURG,.....	6.30	9.10	12.05	5.05
BOSTON,.....Arrive	8.35	11.05	2.23	7.10
	A. M.	A. M.	P. M.	P. M.

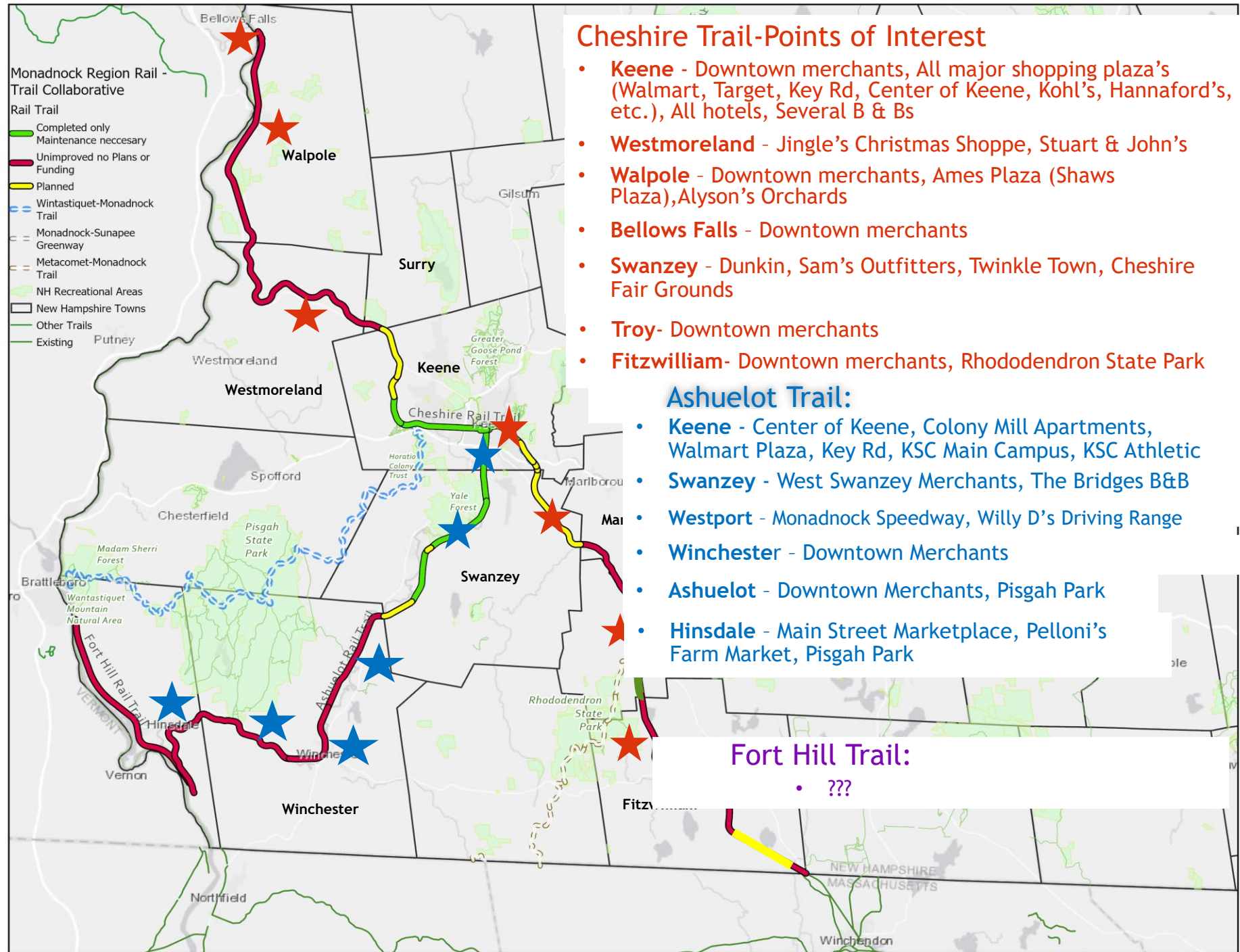
— Does not stop.  
 ‡ Stops only to leave passengers.

Cheshire Public Time Table, May 3, 1875, Basil B McLeod coll.  
 "Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One", Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.





# Points of Interest





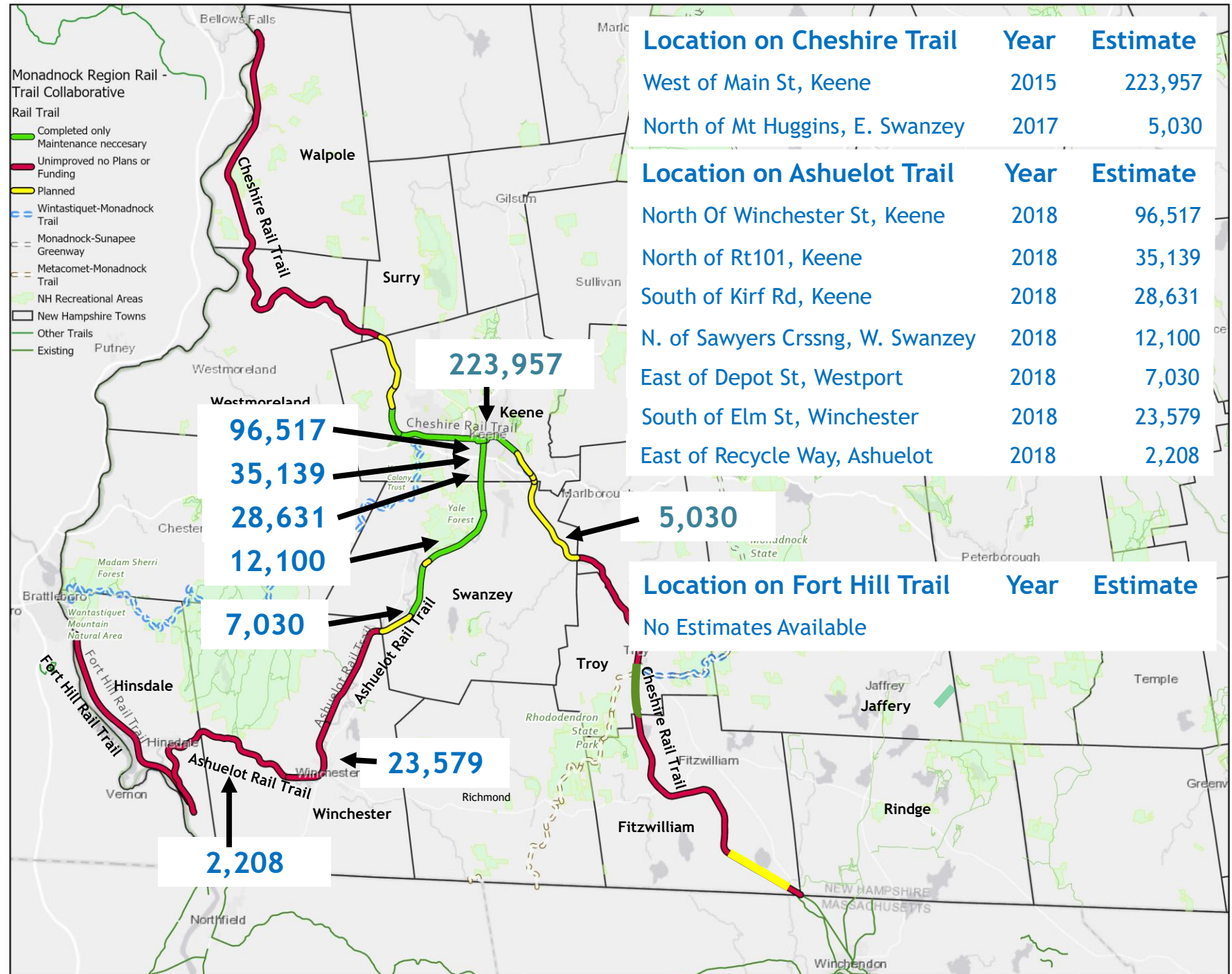
# Annual Traffic Estimates



Built in 1848 on the steep hillside above the Ashuelot River's South Branch and just west of the Webb depot area, this granite arch bridge spans Webb Depot Road in Marlborough on a steep, treacherous curve. The arch has an inside diameter of 15.5 feet at the base, a maximum height of twenty-one feet from the crown of the road to the keystone, and a face-to-face width of 30.5 feet. The beautiful curved wings on either side of the arch exemplify the fine craftsmanship used in its mortarless construction. 2012, R. R. Richards Jr. photo.

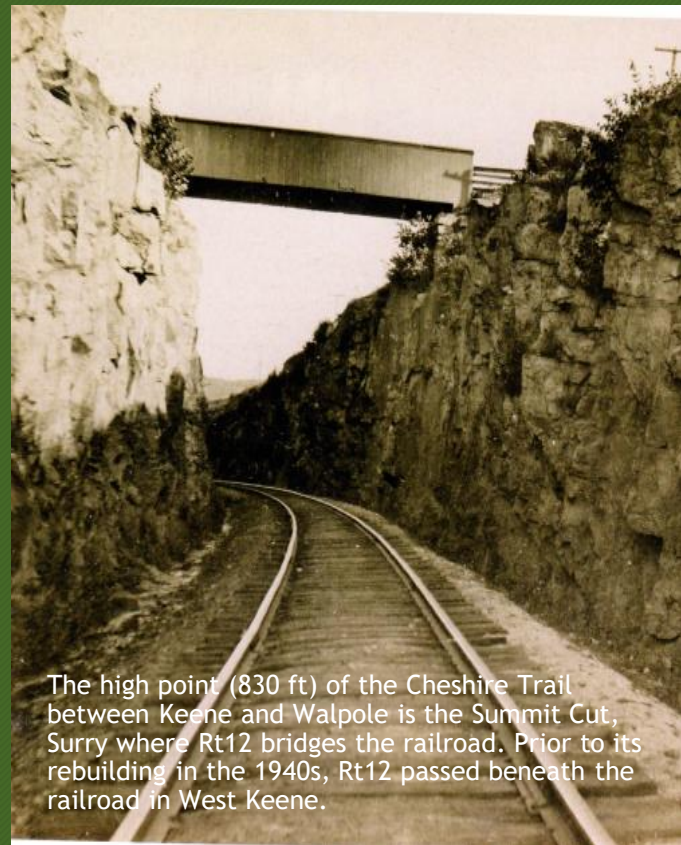
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\* Data Collected by Southwest Regional Planning Commission, Estimates provided by Rails to Trail Conservancy Trail Traffic Calculator

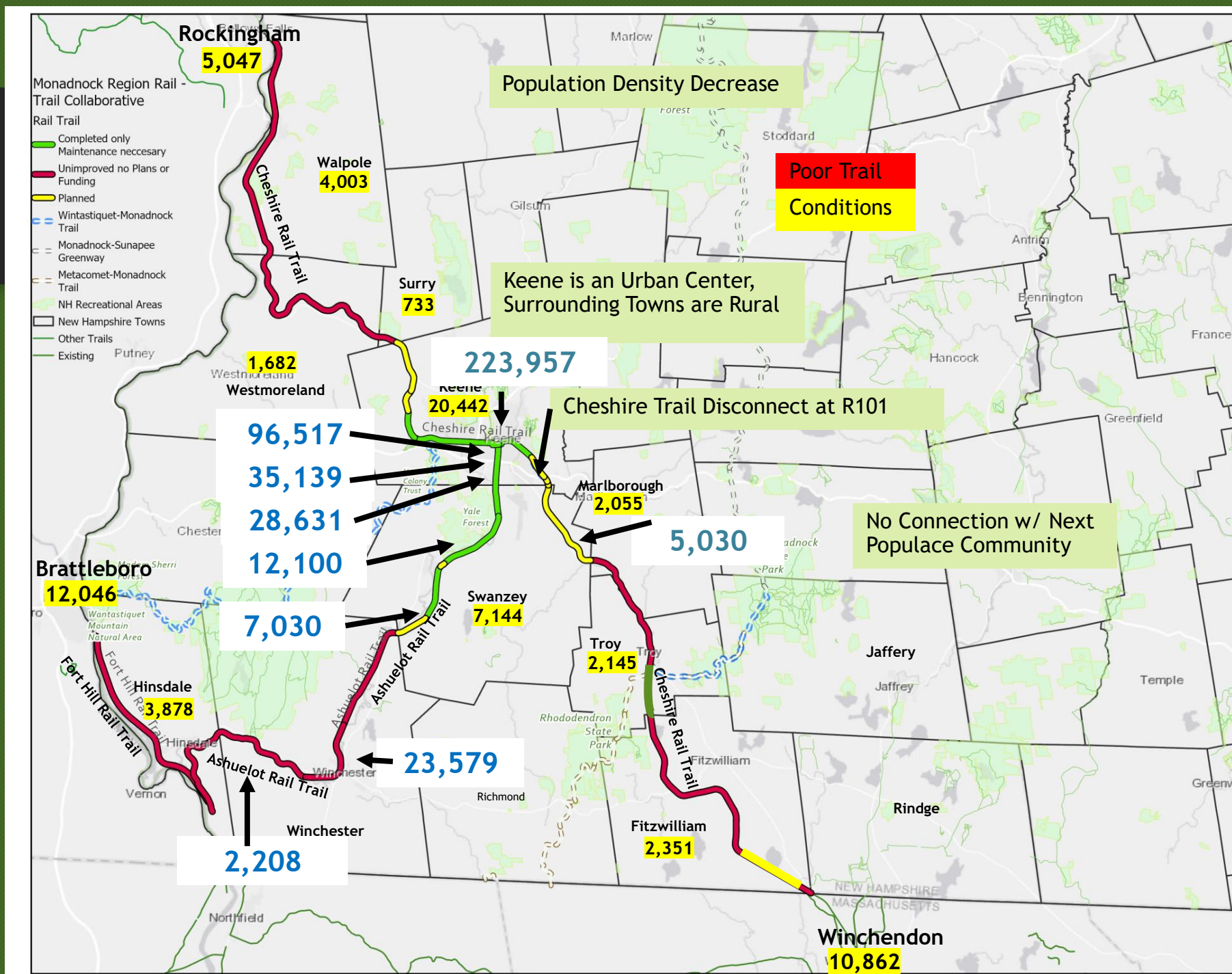




# Why Trail Traffic Declines Outside of Keene?



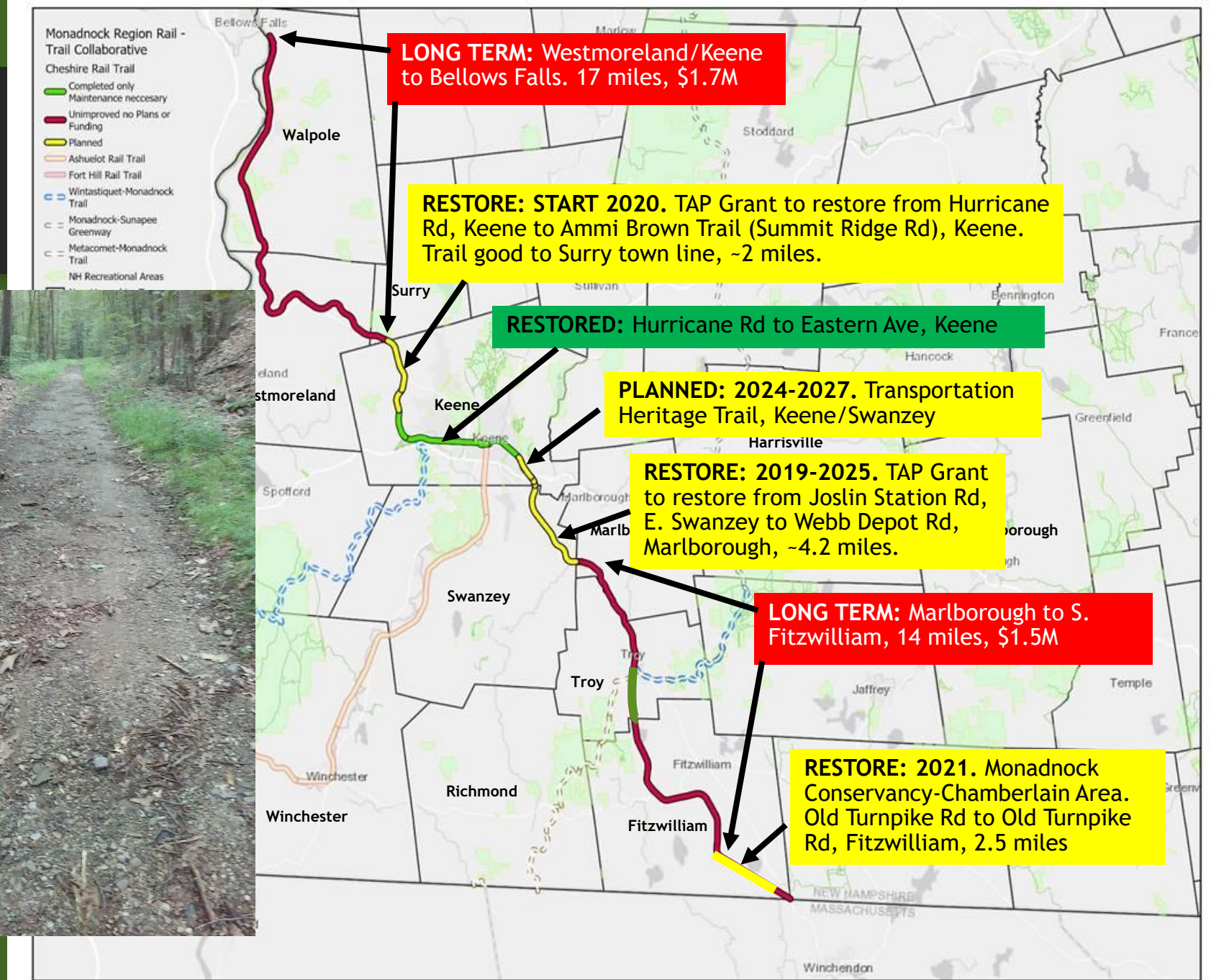
The high point (830 ft) of the Cheshire Trail between Keene and Walpole is the Summit Cut, Surry where Rt12 bridges the railroad. Prior to its rebuilding in the 1940s, Rt12 passed beneath the railroad in West Keene.



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# Current Cheshire Trail Status

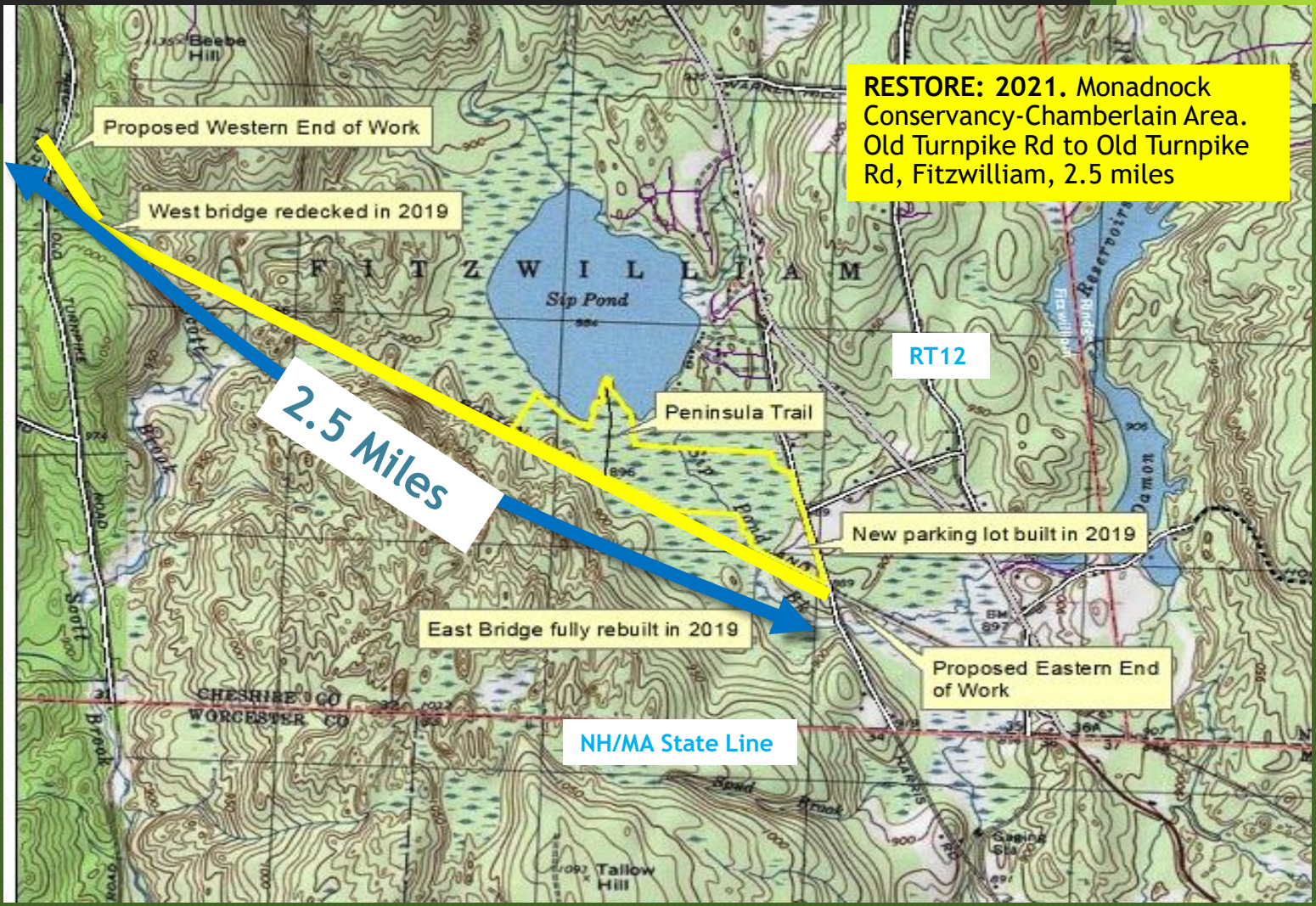


A shipment of blueberries awaits the train to Boston at the east end of the Fitzwilliam station platform. Although other Monadnock Region towns might challenge it, Fitzwilliam was sometimes called "The Blueberry Capital of the World," 1917. Photo from *Fitzwilliam: Profile of a New Hampshire Town (1985:77)*, courtesy Town of Fitzwilliam.

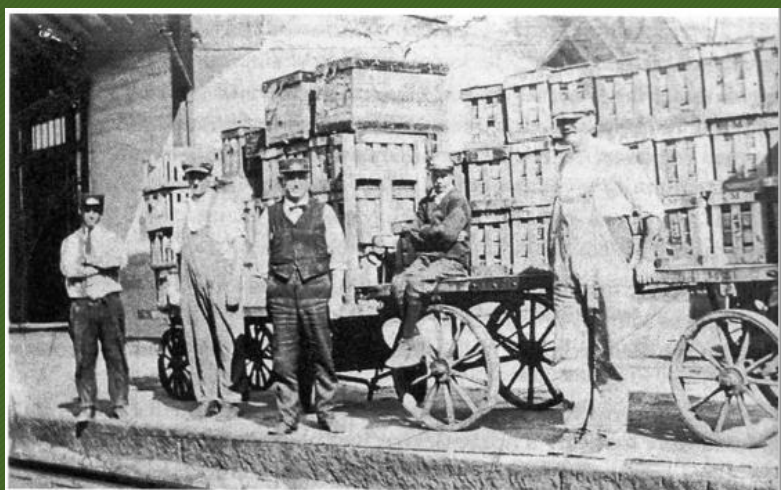


# Chamberlain Project-Fitzwilliam

**RESTORE: 2021.** Monadnock Conservancy-Chamberlain Area. Old Turnpike Rd to Old Turnpike Rd, Fitzwilliam, 2.5 miles



2.5 Miles

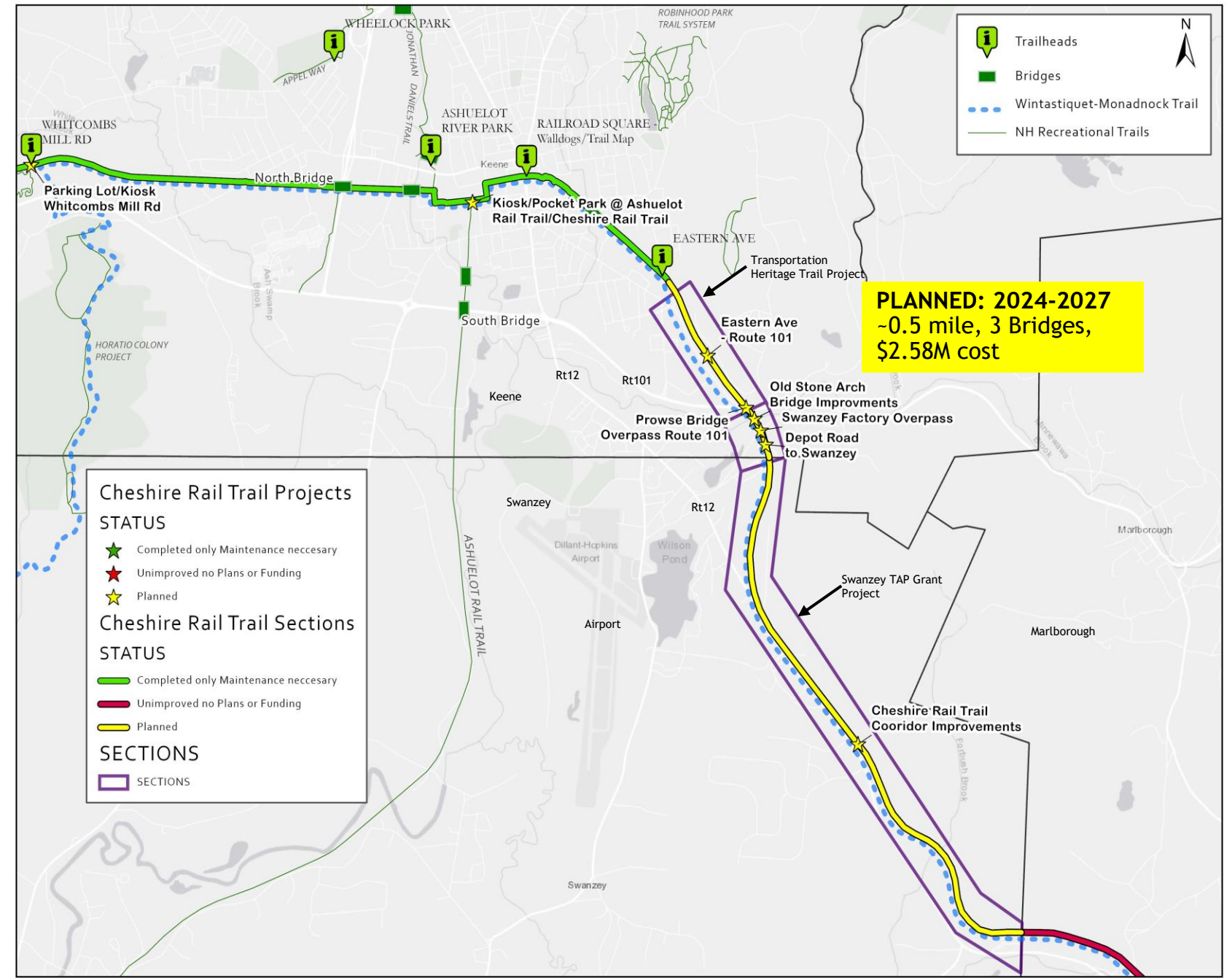


A shipment of blueberries awaits the train to Boston at the east end of the Fitzwilliam station platform. Although other Monadnock Region towns might challenge it, Fitzwilliam was sometimes called "The Blueberry Capital of the World," 1917. Photo from Fitzwilliam: Profile of a New Hampshire Town (1985:77), courtesy Town of Fitzwilliam.

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# Transportation Heritage Trail Project Keene/Swanzey



**PLANNED: 2024-2027**  
~0.5 mile, 3 Bridges,  
\$2.58M cost

**Cheshire Rail Trail Projects STATUS**

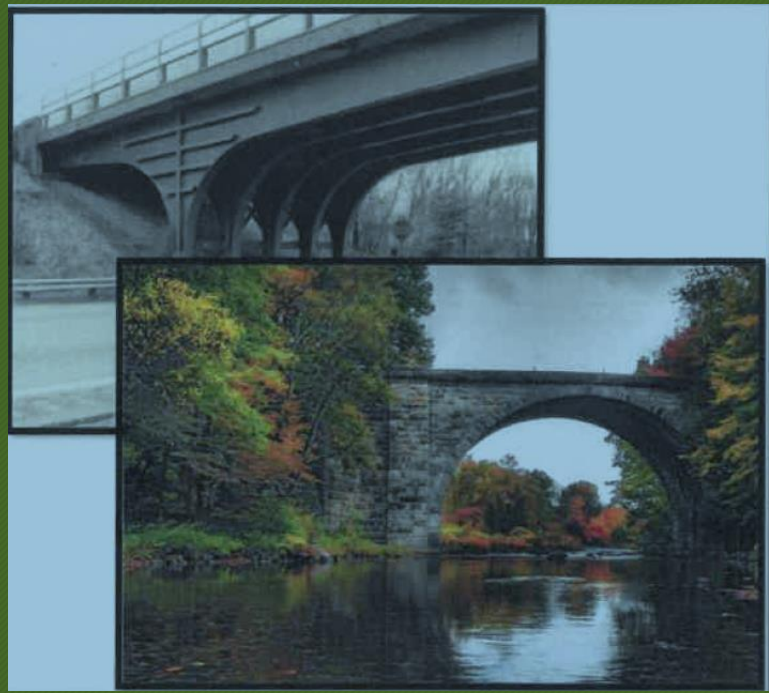
- ★ Completed only Maintenance necessary
- ★ Unimproved no Plans or Funding
- ★ Planned

**Cheshire Rail Trail Sections STATUS**

- Completed only Maintenance necessary
- Unimproved no Plans or Funding
- Planned

**SECTIONS**

- SECTIONS



Prowess Bridge and Stone Arch Bridge





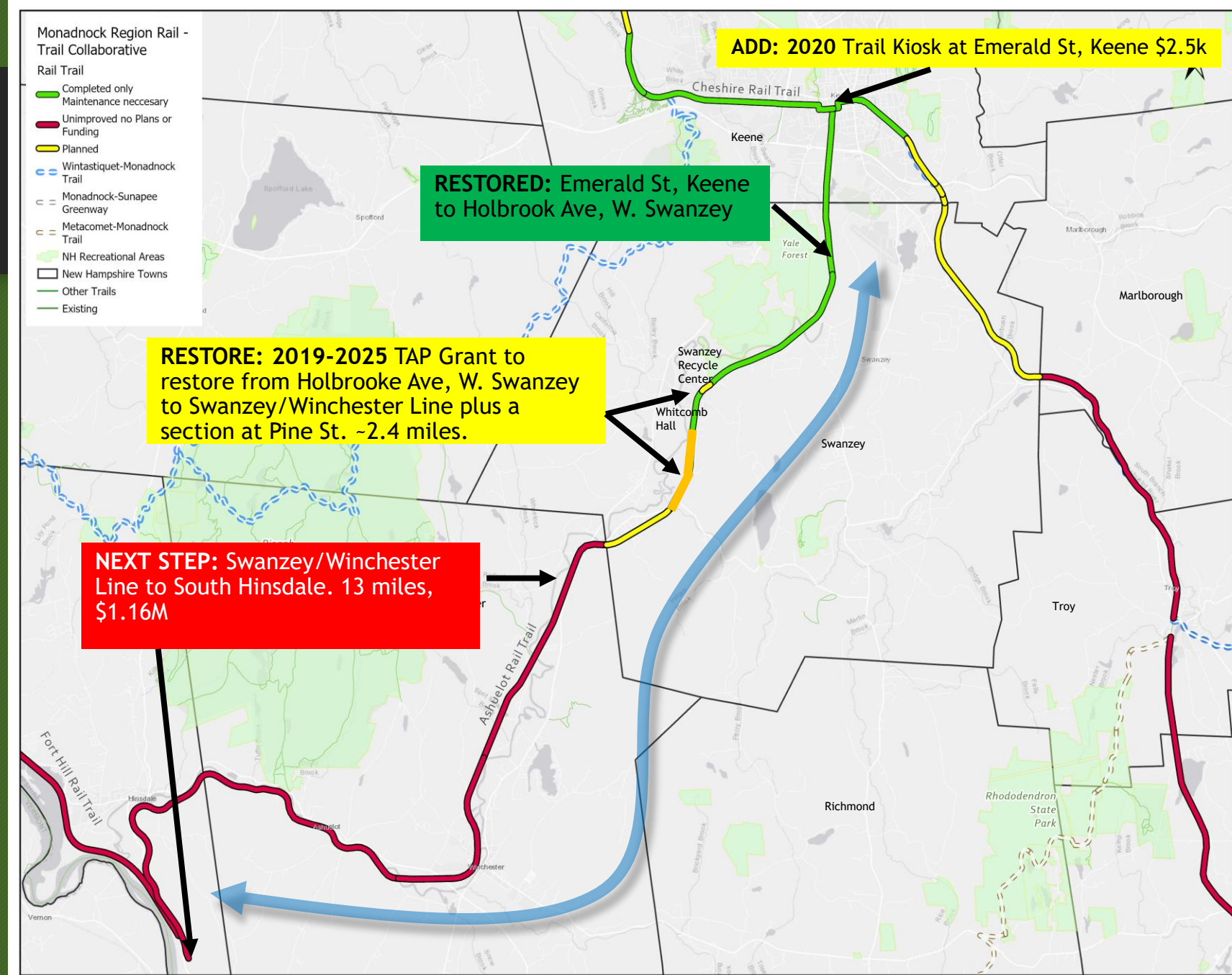


# Current Ashuelot Trail Status



Looking north from the station, woodworkers pause from their labors for a group picture. Behind them a steam mill operated by J. C. Field and a B&M boxcar spotted at the freight house are visible. Left to right: the main line, passing track, and a spur to the mill, Westport, ca. 1895. Hist. Soc. Cheshire Cty.

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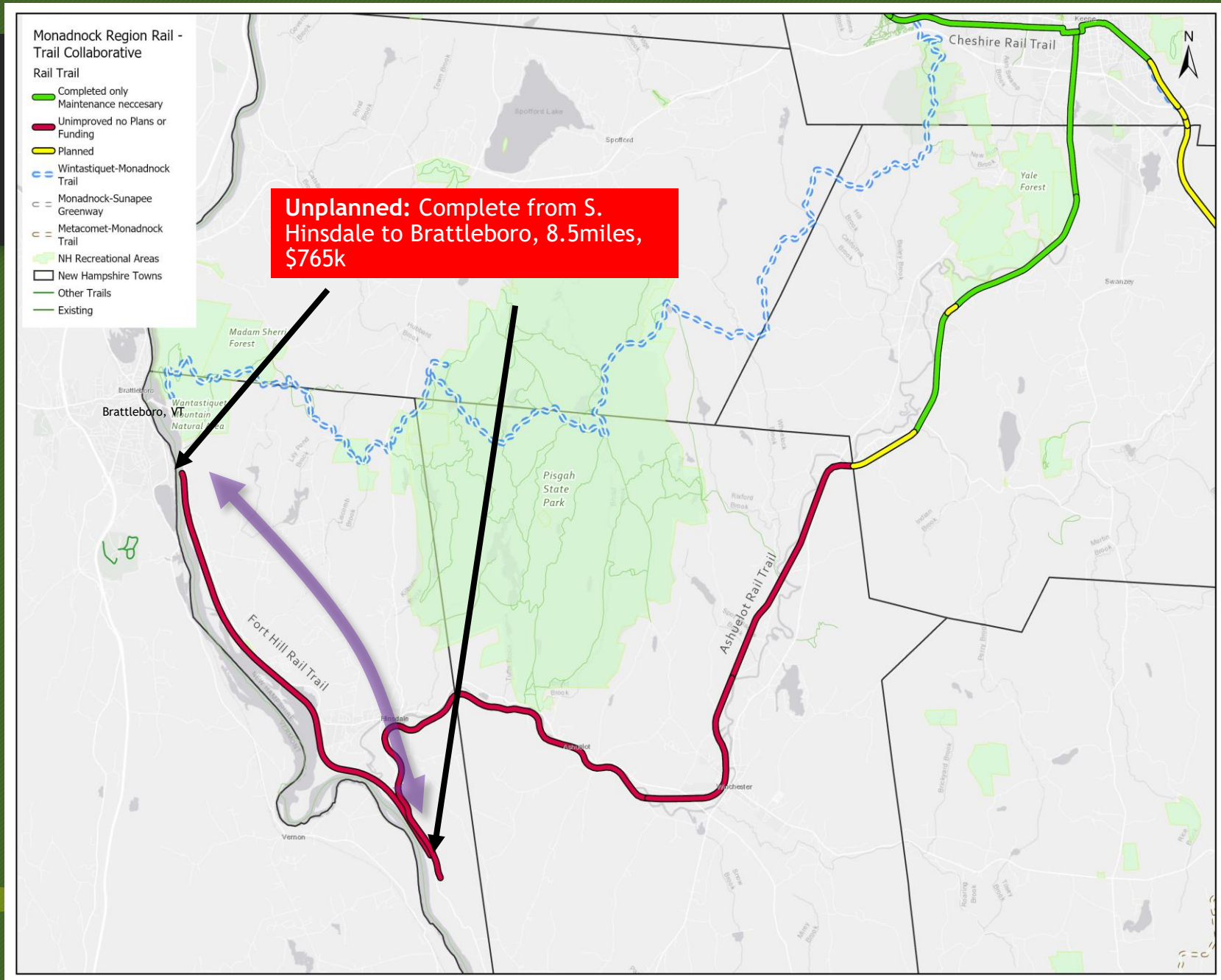


# Current Fort Hill Trail Status



(left) and north (right) at Dole Jct. on the former Connecticut River main line, now the Fort Hill Branch, shortly after the Dole Bridge was lost. CTC has been discontinued and the searchlight signals turned aside. Note the dwarf signal on the left that protected the main line. Post-1970. Ron Rand coll.

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# Friends of the West River Trail, VT

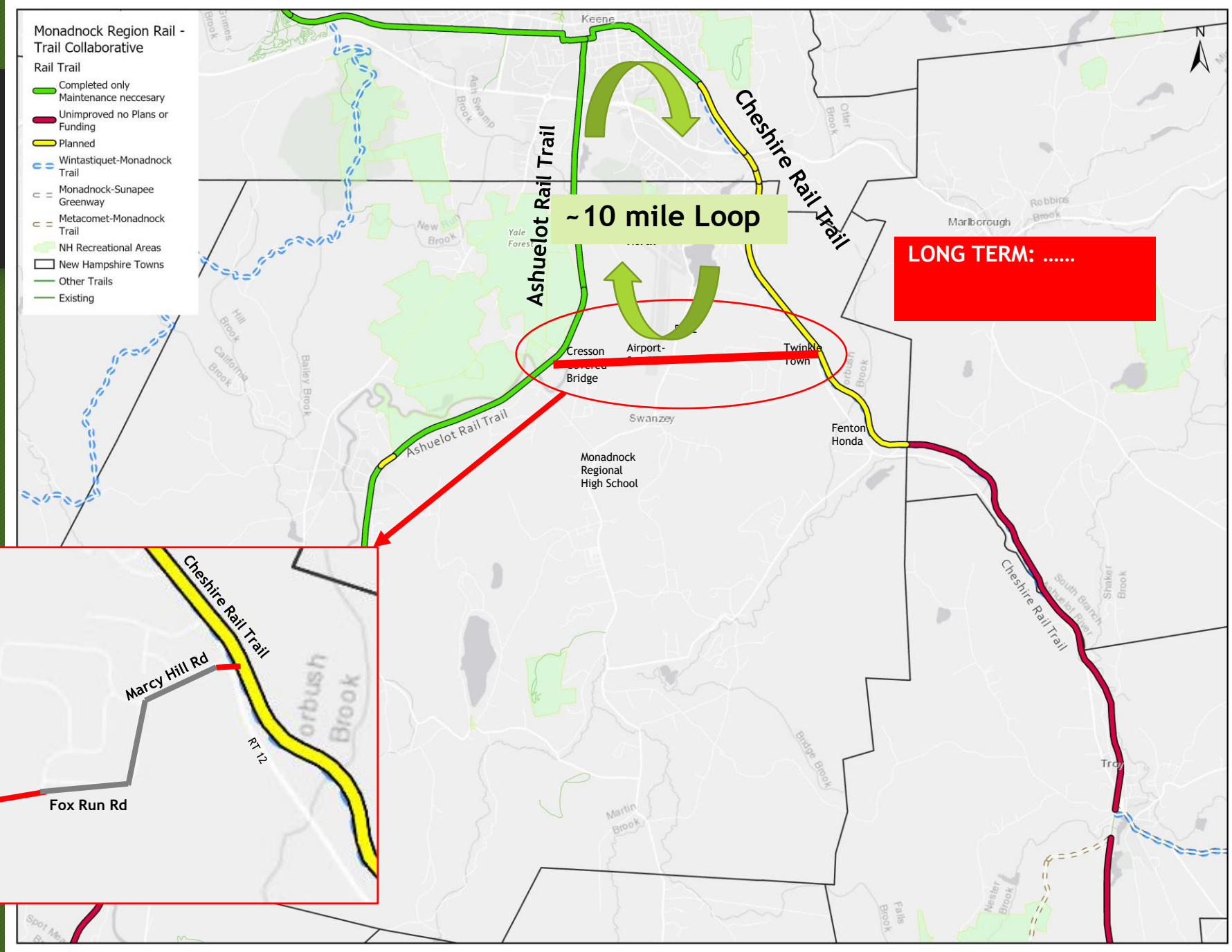


Looking south (left) and north (right) at Dole Jct. on the former Connecticut River main line, now the Fort Hill Branch, shortly after the E. Northfield Bridge was lost. CTC has been discontinued and the searchlight signals turned aside. Note the dwarf signal on the Ashuelot Branch that protected the main line. Post-1970. Ron Rand coll.





# Connector Trail Proposal





# What Does Restore The Trail Mean?

- Working Drainage Ditches
- Working Culverts
- 10-14' Wide Trail Surface \*
- Crushed Stone Trail Surface
- Crowned Trail Surface
- Mowed including min. 10' Canopy \*
- Gates at Road Crossings
  - Prevent Motorized Access
  - Prevent Dumping



\* AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) "Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities".



# Rail Trail Benefits\*

- Creating Value and Generating Economic Activity
  - Increase Real Estate Value
  - Increase Tourism
- Improving Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation
  - Increase bicycle and walking commute
- Improving Health through Active Living
  - Increase Active Living
  - Improve Health
  - Lower Medical Costs
  - Reduce Deaths



\* <http://www.greenways.com/benefits-of-greenways>



# Rail Trail Benefits\*

- Clear Skies, Clean Rivers, and Protected Wildlife
  - Help Protect Natural Ecosystems (e.g. plants, animal species)
  - Reduce Air Pollution (less automobiles, more plants)
  - Protect streams, rivers
- Protecting People and Property from Flood Damage
  - Protect Natural Floodplains along Rivers and Streams
  - Prevent Riverside Communities from Flood Damage
- Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Community Identity
  - Railroad History
  - Railroad's Impact on the Monadnock Region



\* <http://www.greenways.com/benefits-of-greenways>



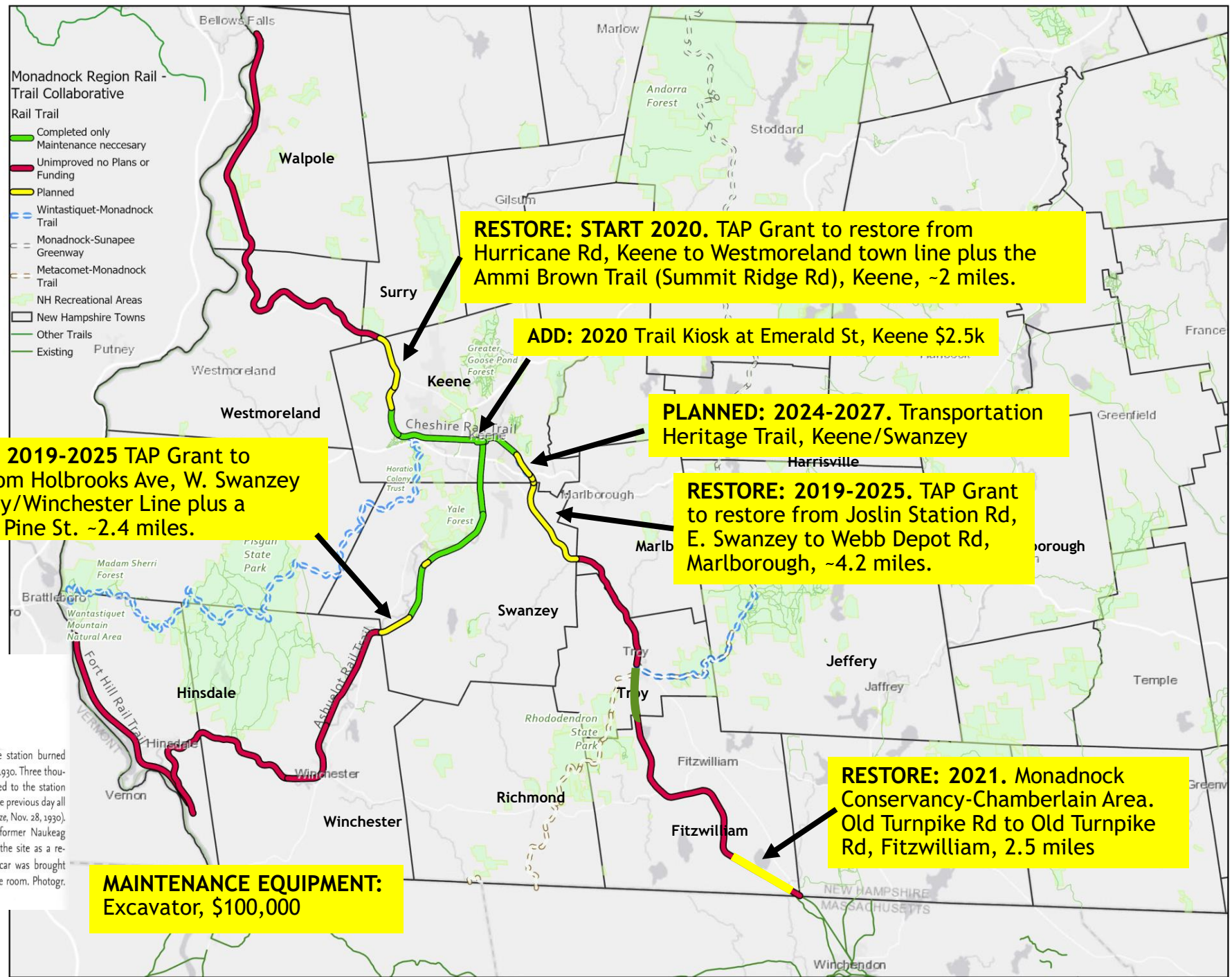
# Let's Talk Trail Maintenance

- Mother Nature Is Busy 24/7
  - Falling Leaves
  - Down Trees
  - Down Branches
  - Water
  - Erosion
  - Clogged drainage ditches
  - Clogged culverts
  - Rodents (burrowing holes)
- Maintenance Is:
  - Removing Leaves
  - Removing Downed Trees
  - Removing Downed Branches
  - Unclogging Drainage Ditches
  - Unclogging Culverts
  - Repairing Rodents Holes
  - Repair Trail Surface
- Maintenance Requires:
  - Excavator
  - Brush Hog
  - Mower
  - Dump Truck
  - York Rake
  - People





# Project Priorities - Planned/Needs Funding



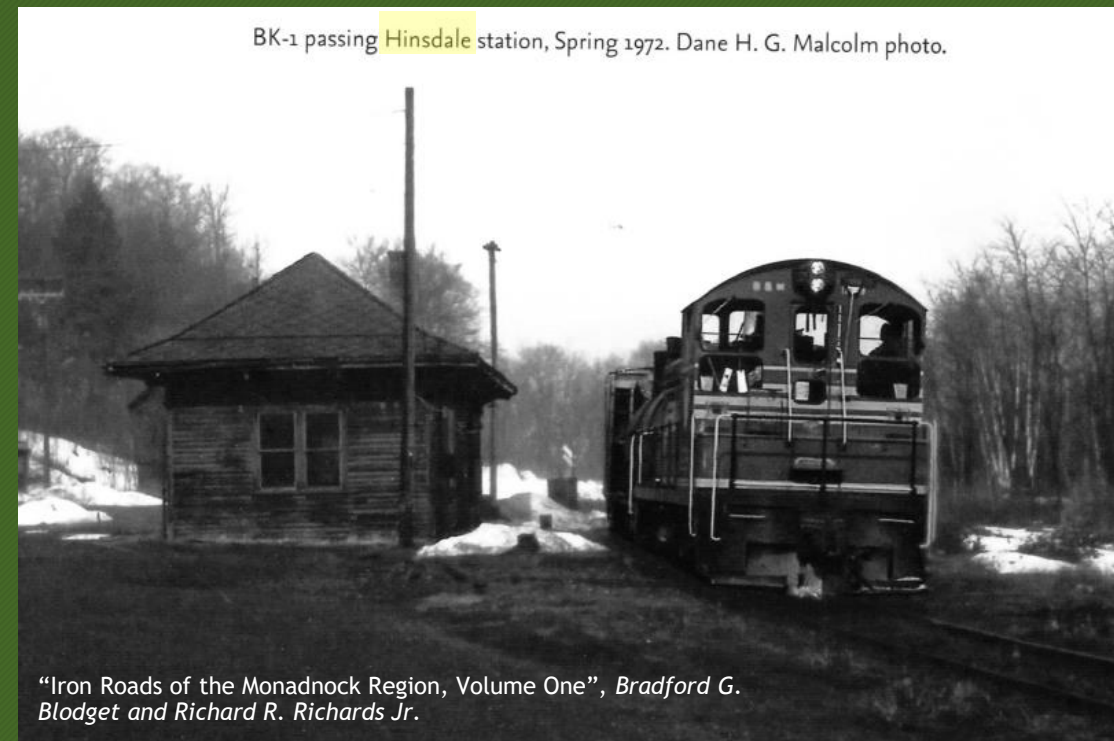
The original State Line station burned to the ground Nov. 23, 1930. Three thousand table legs delivered to the station from the Damon Mill the previous day all burned (Monadnock Breeze, Nov. 28, 1930). This little station, the former Naukeag station, was moved to the site as a replacement. An old boxcar was brought in to serve as a baggage room. Photogr. unknown.

“Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One”, Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.



# Getting The Word Out

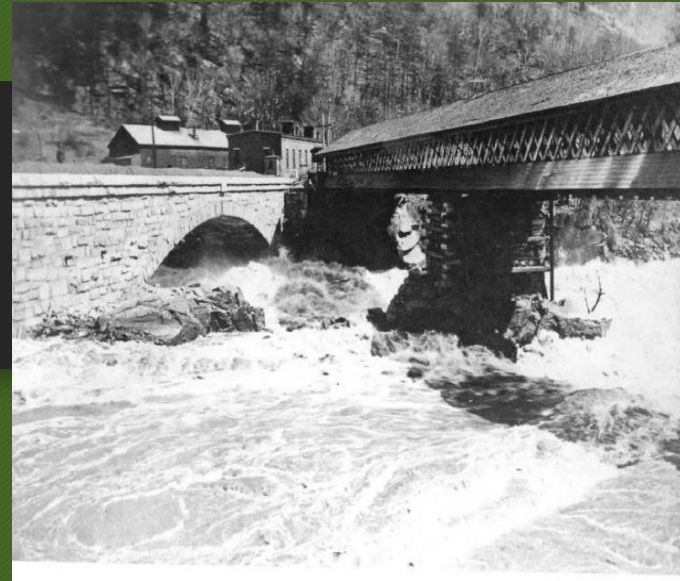
- MRRTC wants to get the “Big Picture” word out
- Willing to present to your favorite civic group, municipality, trail group, politician, etc.
- Contact: Mike Kowalczyk via [support@monadnockrailtrails.org](mailto:support@monadnockrailtrails.org)





# The Ask

- Support The Movement
- Monetary Need Priority:
  - Awarded TAP/RTP Grant Match
  - Transportation Heritage Project
  - Maintenance Equipment
- Volunteer
  - Maintenance
  - Grant Writing
  - Marketing/Communications



The double-arched granite bridge built by the Fitchburg in 1899 and the Tucker Toll Bridge built in 1840 were both located over the Great Falls of the Connecticut. Tolls ended Nov. 1, 1904. The toll bridge was razed and replaced by the Charles N. Vilas Bridge in 1931. Beyond, the original Sullivan (left) and Cheshire engine houses are visible, side-by-side at the base of Mount Kilburn, N. Walpole, ca. 1900-1910. Rockingham Public Library's Catalogued Photograph Coll.

*"Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One",  
Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.*

- Fiscal Agent
  - In Discussion with Established Local Organizations



# The Monadnock Region Rail Trail Historical Information

All historical pictures and narrative are taken from “Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region, Volume One”, *Bradford G. Blodget and Richard R. Richards Jr.*



Here comes E7 3820 attacking the ruling eastward grade with Train 5504/Mount Royal. She is passing the Golding-Keene Company's truck-rail transload facility at Siding 0757 in East Swanzey, NH, about halfway between Webb and Joslin, March 25, 1950. Golding-Keene mined and milled feldspar at its plant in Keene. The 3820, delivered in April 1949, was the twenty-first and final E7 to be rostered by the B&M. She would be lost in the terrible wreck of the *Redwing-New Englander* on the New Hampshire Division at Nashua, Nov. 12, 1954. George C. Corey photo.



# Thank You



Steam engine crossing Main Street c. 1880.  
This station was torn down in 1910 as trains were getting larger and did not fit through the depot.

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