



Bike/Ped Success Story: Kennebec Messalonskee Trails

The Process – 10 tips for success.

1. Be a Leader, Choose a Team. You need people from all walks of life. Look out for people who share a common goal of improving your community's physical infrastructure for walking and biking. Be careful to choose a mix of those with wisdom (about trails, sidewalks, finances/taxes, law, politics etc), wealth (either with money, or with a multitude of contacts), and work (people who will put their backs to a task). Your leader should be someone who does not give up despite the obstacles, and can inspire. Your team will eventually become your Board of Directors. Expect turnover – so always encourage new blood.
2. Divide the Workload into the Following Committees: Access, Fundraising, Publicity, Design and Maintenance. Encourage membership in these committees from outside your Board.
3. Gather as wide a group of supporters as you can muster. Ask yourself who in your community needs to be involved. For instance: Municipalities; Council of Governments; Development Corporation; Schools and Colleges; Hospitals and Health Clinics; Chamber of Commerce; Local Interest Groups (Healthy Maine Partners, REM, Hardy Girls Healthy Women, MoveMore, Move & Improve, Rape Crisis, Homeless Shelter, March of Dimes, Women's Groups, Central Maine Striders); Service Clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, VFW, American Legion). **THANK EVERYONE.**
4. Hold a Public Event. There is magic in starting. National Trails Day is a good place to start. We held our first trail walk on a rough footpath which we plan on making into a trail, someday. 200 people showed up one year, and 80 when it rained. We synchronized our first NTD events with a heritage festival that provided food at the end of our hike!
5. Write a grant for a Feasibility Study through the Department of Transportation. Prepare a map from what emerges. Add whatever detail you can, like sketches of all the trails that others developed in the past, Healthy Maine Walks, etc. Then use it as a publicity tool.
6. Publicize! Start a newsletter, a web site, Facebook. Anything to get your name out there.
7. Write Press Releases for your local newspaper about any successes or events you are having. If possible identify one reporter who will take your stories and run with them. Make a point to keep that person up to date. Cut out and keep anything that's published. Wager that you will have one story for every month of the year (or at least 12 per year). Don't worry about "bad news". It's all good publicity in the end.
8. Obtain Financial Support wherever you can. Walmart, new to town, covered a large part of our 20% matching grant for our Feasibility Study. Apply for a startup grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund, then attend their courses.
9. Talk it up! Offer to give talks to any group that wants to. Talk to your friends and neighbors. Become a champion for walking and biking. "Oh, there goes Mr./Ms. Trails!"
10. Keep good records. These should include: Financials, for not-for-profit recording, fundraising, and planning; Lists of donors for recognition; Agreements with landowners, Towns, and others; Lists of volunteers; Posterity – you are doing something that the Historical Society will want to know about.