



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

White Mountain National Forest  
Pemigewasset Ranger District

1171 NH Route 175  
Holderness, NH 03245-5031  
Comm: (603) 536-1315  
TTY: (603) 536-3281

---

File Code: 1950-1

Date: June 16, 2006

Dear Planning Participant,

I am writing to invite you to comment on the proposed Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project. The proposed project is located on White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) land, on State Rights-of-Way and private lands within the Towns of Franconia, Bethlehem, and Carroll in Grafton and Coos Counties, New Hampshire.

The Project is being proposed by a group of individual business owners as well as the Twin Mountain Chamber of Commerce. The proposed project is supported by the New Hampshire Department of Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Trails and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. The proposed Bicycle Path would connect the north end of the existing recreational trail through Franconia Notch with the commercial area of the community of Twin Mountain.

The enclosed Public Comment Package provides additional details about this project, instructions on how to comment, as well as a map for your reference. This document is also posted on our WMNF web page: [www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white\\_mountain/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/), under Projects and Plans.

I am writing to you because you own property or live in proximity to the project area or have expressed interest in this or similar projects. I am interested in receiving your comments about our proposal, including any information about the project area that could help us improve our plans or contribute to my decision making process.

This project proposal is subject to formal notice, comment and appeal regulations. There are two distinct points at which we request your comments. The first is during the current Scoping Period; I welcome your comments on the enclosed Scoping Letter. The second point at which we will request your comments and in order to have standing to appeal my decision, you must submit timely comments during a separate 30-day comment period which is anticipated for late Summer, 2006. Please see further details about the analysis and comment process in the enclosed Scoping Letter.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

*/s/John J. Serfass*

JOHN J. SERFASS

District Ranger

Enclosures: Scoping Report, Project Area Map



Scoping Report for the Proposed  
**Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project**  
White Mountain National Forest  
Pemigewasset Ranger District  
June, 2006

The White Mountain National Forest is conducting an environmental analysis for a proposal to construct a bicycle path connecting the existing bicycle path and snowmobile trail through Franconia Notch which terminates in Franconia at the Skookumchuck Parking Area, just east of exit 35 of Interstate 93, with the commercial district of the community of Twin Mountain. The bicycle path would be approximately eight miles long and portions of it would be open seasonally for snowmobile use.

**Location**

The proposed project is located on the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) within the Towns of Franconia, Bethlehem, and Carroll in Grafton and Coos Counties, New Hampshire. The Project Area generally parallels NH Route 3 and is located within the Ammonoosuc River watershed. The portions of the trail located on National Forest System Lands are designated by the 2005 White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as Management Area (MA) 2.1; these lands are available for management activities which include development of recreation trails.

**Background**

In 2004, several business owners from Twin Mountain approached the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the WMNF to request the construction of a bicycle path that would connect the north end of an existing dual use trail through Franconia Notch with the commercial area of Twin Mountain. Since that time, Forest Service personnel met with a consortium of organizations advocating for this project's development. Together the Forest Service and the partner groups refined the Bicycle Path proposal and identified design opportunities including winter motorized (snowmobile) and non-motorized (cross country skiing) use of portions of the trail and as well as a variety of challenges.

**Project Area**

The Project Area lies between the Skookumchuck Parking Area and the commercial area of Twin Mountain. The Area is characterized by a forested setting dominated by northern hardwood species. The Proposed Project includes gentle topography that would provide bicycling and walking opportunities for people with a wide range of physical abilities; portions of the proposed project lie on abandoned portions of the original NH Route 3. These remnant sections of Route 3 retain the original character and shape of the roadway, though saplings and brush have begun to revegetate the road surface.

The Proposed Project includes three trail segments; an additional four potential trail segments have been identified by Forest Service resource specialists as possible alternative segments. All seven trail segments will be analyzed in combinations that constitute a range of management alternatives that meet the Project's Purpose and Need. The trail segments under consideration are indicated on the enclosed Map.

### **Purpose and Need**

The Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project is a proponent-driven project; it was proposed and is advocated by individuals outside of the Forest Service. When the proponent's approached the Forest Service about the project, it was their view that the area around Twin Mountain would benefit from a connection with the Franconia Notch State Park Recreational Trail. Project Proponents advocated for the construction of a bicycle trail that caters to bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and physical abilities. The Project's proponents have specified that the purpose of the Bicycle Trail is to:

- increase visitation and commerce in the community of Twin Mountain, particularly in the summer months, by broadening the range of recreation opportunities,
- provide bicycle riding opportunities that are safe and secure, and
- encourage health and fitness for the community and its visitors.

While further refining the proposal and while working with other agencies and groups the proponents identified another purpose of the Bicycle Trail which is to:

- eliminate certain sections of snowmobile trails within the Twin Mountain area which were problematic due to topography, snow conditions, etc.

While this analysis considers a Project proposed by individuals and groups outside of the agency, the purpose and need for the project must be in compliance with the Forest Plan. Indeed, in order for the Forest Service to consider this proposal, a number of conditions must be met, among them compliance with the WMNF Forest Plan.

At this point in the analysis, the Proposed Project's "Purpose and Need" meets two of the Forest Plan's Forest-wide Goals "Management will recognize the Forest's support to local economies while realizing the importance to society of a natural appearing landscape distinct from the human altered environments otherwise dominant in the East." (Forest Plan, p. 1-3)

A) Goals for Recreation include:

1. The White Mountain National Forest will provide a range of quality recreation activities and opportunities (Forest Plan, p. 1-10) and
2. The Forest Service will implement recreation management approaches ..... to minimize increased development levels in the backcountry and to protect and manage both high and low use areas and facilities. The overall effect of these approaches will be to guide, and seek public support for, agency actions in response to changing or increasing use. (Forest Plan, p. 1-10)
3. Developed Recreation will provide a variety of quality campground, day use, and other roadside recreation opportunities where the natural setting is an important part of the visitor's experience, while ensuring the balanced protection of social and natural resources. (Forest Plan, p.1-13)

B) Goals for Accessibility include:

1. The Forest will provide a variety of recreation opportunities for people with disabilities (without fundamentally altering the non-motorized policy), and will continue to improve

accessibility to recreation sites and programs through specific capital investment proposals as sites are reconstructed or rehabilitated. Priority will be given to developed sites (camp and picnic grounds), but accessibility is also considered each time a trail or more remote site is maintained or reconstructed. The goal of the Forest is to provide as many recreational opportunities as possible, in as many varying degrees of difficulty as possible, that are barrier free. (Forest Plan, p.1-3).

The Proposed Project meets Forest Plan Objectives for Recreation:

1. The Forest Service will emphasize concentrating use at specific sites or locations rather than dispersing use within the area or to other areas. (Forest Plan, p. 1-13)
2. Forest Management action will not disperse use from high to low use areas. (Forest Plan, p. 1-13)
1. The Forest Service and partner organizations will collaborate to provide recreational opportunities, conservation education, and visitor information programs. (Forest Plan, p. 1-13)

Seasonally, the Proposed Project meets the Forest Plan Goals for Winter Motorized Dispersed Recreation:

The Forest Service will provide for snowmobile use on designated trails in certain areas. The importance of the natural setting will be emphasized. (Forest Plan, p. 1-13)

National Forest System Lands within the Project Area are designated as MA 2.1. The Proposed Project meets the Purpose described for MA 2.1:

3. Provide opportunities for a full mix of recreation opportunities, from low-use hiking trails to highly developed campgrounds, and ROS objectives, varying from urban to semi-primitive motorized in different locations and sometimes varying by season or presence of management activities. (Forest Plan, p. 3-3)

Furthermore, the Proposed Project would move the Project Area closer to its “Desired Future Condition” for MA 2.1, as described in the Forest Plan.

Recreation opportunities will be diverse, including activities such as hiking, mountain biking, driving for pleasure, snowmobiling, hunting and fishing, roadside camping, and developed camping. Some roads and trails will receive limited use, while others will be heavily used at certain times. (Forest Plan, p. 3-3)

The Proposed Project would meet the above purposes and goals specified in the Forest Plan by providing a logical extension to a popular, existing bicycle path through Franconia Notch. Site-specifically, extending the existing trail and providing a connection with the community of Twin Mountain, the Project will meet the need to provide additional recreation opportunities in a concentrated use area along Route 3, provide opportunities for healthy, widely available recreational pursuits, and help strengthen the economy and improve the quality of life of a rural New Hampshire village by directing visitors and associated commerce to Twin Mountain businesses.

### **Proposed Action**

The Proposed Action would construct a 9-mile (+/-) multi-use Bicycle Path from the Skookumchuck Parking Area to the community of Twin Mountain utilizing proposed trail segments 1, 3, and 4 as indicated on the attached map. Construction would include clearing

existing vegetation, installing appropriate drainage structures and trail bridges, leveling the trail tread and providing a crushed rock or rock dust hardened riding surface. Additional details regarding trail design and construction would be determined in conjunction with site-specific analysis. The Proposed Action would allow seasonal snowmobile use of segments 1 and 3.

A brief description of the Proposed Action is provided below:

<b>Segment</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Important Considerations</b>
<b>1</b>	2.7	Parallels the south side of NH Route 3 from the Skookumchuck Parking Area	Closely parallels Route 3 within sight and sound of road traffic. Winter snowmobile use would be allowed.
<b>3</b>	1.5	Located on abandoned portions of Route 3, beginning at the end of Segment 1 and terminating at the “Five Corners” junction of Route 3, Trudeau Road, and the Gale River Loop Road FS 92.	Remnant portions of abandoned NH Route 3 are in good condition and would require limited site disturbance for trail construction. Winter snowmobile use would be allowed.
<b>4</b>	4.1	Utilizing the abandoned portions of Route 3, this segment parallels existing Route 3 from Five Corners to the Haystack Road FS 304. The path would travel north, crossing to the north side of Route 3 at Haystack Road, then continue to the WMNF boundary to a proposed parking area at the entrance to the Bridge Maintenance Facility.	Remnant portions of Route 3 are in good condition and would require limited site disturbance. Segment would require crossing Route 3 and traversing the road along and within the north side of the State Right-of-Way.

As the project is fully developed and analyzed, precise trail tread location, types of crossings, trail surface materials, signs, types and seasons of use, and related facilities will be determined and described in detail.

### **Funding**

The Forest Service is conducting the planning and analysis of the proposed project. The costs for this work are being provided by Forest Service program funds. If a decision is made to implement the project as proposed, or as modified in an alternative, it is anticipated that funding for trail construction and maintenance would be provided by a variety of funding sources other than and/or including the Forest Service. These sources may include State, local and individual grants as well as donations of funds, material, labor, equipment and supplies.

### **What decisions will be made?**

An environmental analysis will evaluate the site-specific issues, consider alternatives, and analyze effects of the proposed action and alternatives. An Environmental Assessment will provide the deciding official with the information needed to make the following decisions with regard to the Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project Area:

1. Will the Forest Service proceed with the proposal or with an alternative?
2. Is the information in this analysis sufficient to make the decision to implement the proposed activities?

3. Does the proposed project have a significant impact that would trigger a need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement?
4. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements should the Forest Service apply to these proposed activities in the project area?
5. Will a Forest Plan amendment be required to accommodate this project?

### **Public Involvement**

At this time the Forest Service is inviting you to make site-specific comments on the proposed Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project. Please consider the following when commenting:

- Are there aspects of the project that you would change or eliminate? Why?
- Are there possible effects that you suggest that we consider in detail?
- Is there anything about this area that the Forest Service may not know which might affect activities proposed for the Project Area?
- What do you think about the overall project concept?

Your comments will first be used to define issues associated with this project, to develop and look closely at alternatives to the Proposed Action, and to refine our analysis and disclosure of effects.

Subsequently, based on your comments and our environmental analysis, we will compile a preliminary version of the Environmental Assessment, known as a 30 Day Comment Report. If you provide comments to this Scoping letter, you will receive the 30 Day Comment Report which will include a description of the alternatives considered, mitigation measures prescribed, and a detailed analysis of the anticipated effects of implementation. (If you do not wish to provide comments at this time, but wish to receive the 30-Day Comment Report, please let us know.)

The 30 Day Comment Report will give you the second opportunity to provide comments on the this project. Following the close of the 30 day comment period, we will assimilate your comments in the final Environmental Assessment, and I will make a decision for this project and issue a Decision Notice. If you provide comments concerning the Proposed Action during the 30-Day Comment Period, you will receive a copy of the Decision Notice and will be eligible to file an administrative appeal of my decision regarding the Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project. You will not be eligible to appeal my decision if you only respond to the Scoping Notice you are now reading.

At this time, your comments may be provided orally or in writing (phone, letter, FAX, or e-mail) and must be received by **July 24, 2006**. Please be sure that your comments are in specific reference to the proposed Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project.

Please note that comments received in response to this scoping letter, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Comments should be addressed to John Serfass, District Ranger in one of the following ways:

**By Mail** – Pemigewasset Ranger District, 1171 NH Route 175, Holderness, NH 03245, ATTN: Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project/Susan Mathison;

**By FAX** – (603) 536-5147, ATTN: Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project/Susan Mathison

**By phone** – (603) 536-1315 (voice) or 603- 536-3281 (TTY), ask for Susan Mathison

**By email** – [smathison@fs.fed.us](mailto:smathison@fs.fed.us)

Information about this proposal is also available on our website at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white/projects/index.html>.

Please include the following information with your comments:

- Your name, address (include in any email correspondence), and, if possible, telephone number; and
- Site-specific facts or comments concerning the proposed Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project, along with supporting information that you believe I should consider in reaching a decision.

It is the responsibility of interested parties to respond to this notice within the established time period. No means of communication is perfect. Please contact us at our address above if a document is not available or delivered at the expected time, to ascertain its availability, and if necessary, arrange an alternate delivery method.

Thank you for your interest in helping us to manage the White Mountain National Forest.

## The Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project and the NEPA Process

NEPA is an acronym for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Forest Service analysis, decision-making and documentation process. NEPA provides opportunities for interested parties to give their ideas and opinions about resource management. This input is important in helping us identify resource needs, which will shape the alternatives evaluated and lead to the formation of a decision.

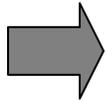
This form shows where the Twin Mountain Bicycle Path Project is in the steps of the NEPA process.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step One - Need for a Project**

The Forest Service or some other entity may identify the need for a project.  
*YOU* may bring the need for a project to the attention of the Forest Service.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Two - Develop Project Proposal**

The Forest Service or a project proponent develops detailed, site-specific proposal  
*YOU* may be proponent who develops proposal or *YOU* can share input and ideas

 **Step Three - Scoping (Public Input)**

The Forest Service solicits public input on the site-specific proposal to define the scope of environmental analysis and range of alternatives to be considered  
*YOU* provide site-specific input: suggest issues, alternatives, mitigation measures

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Four - Develop Reasonable Range of Alternatives**

If proposal fits categorical exclusion: Forest Service makes & documents decision  
If scoping determines need for EA or EIS: Forest Service develops alternatives  
*YOU* suggest alternatives to the proposed action during the scoping process

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Five – 30-Day Formal Public Comment Period**

Forest Service performs analysis of environmental effects, identifies preferred alternative, solicits formal public comment (30-Day Comment Period)  
*YOU* provide timely & substantive comments on the analysis during Comment Period

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Six – Environmental Analysis & Decision**

Forest Service finalizes the Environmental Assessment and makes decision to implement one of the alternatives  
*YOU* can review decision; you can appeal if you disagree and you have “standing”.  
*Standing: You provided substantive comments during formal period (Step 5).*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Seven - Appeal**

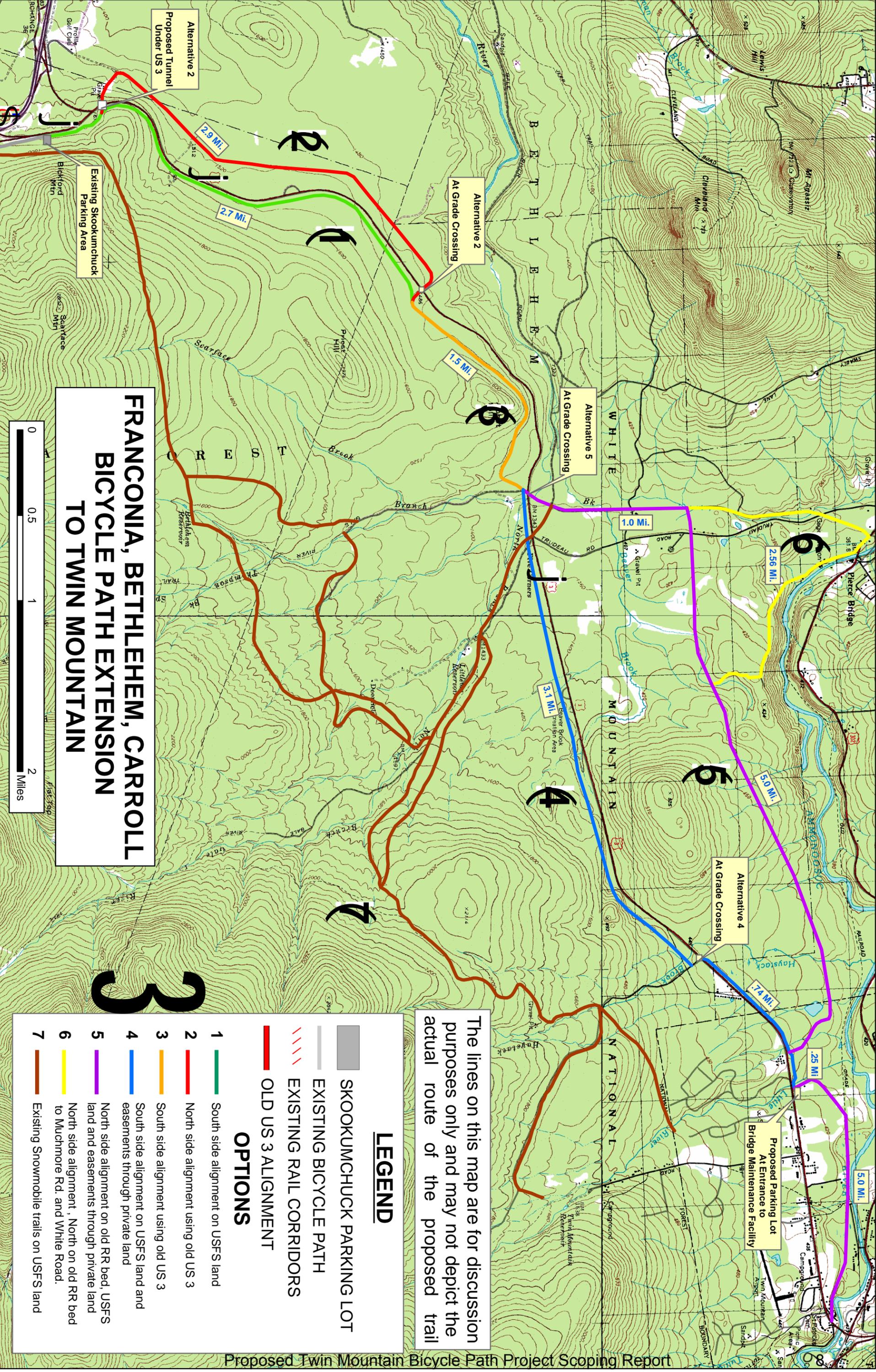
Forest Service allows public 45 days following legal notice of decision to appeal  
*YOU* may file formal Notice of Appeal

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Eight - Implementation**

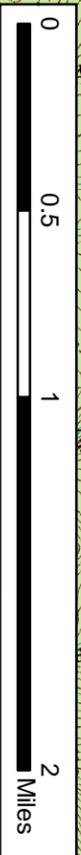
Forest Service implements the project  
*YOU* may contribute labor, equipment or funding to implement the project

\_\_\_\_\_ **Step Nine - Monitor and Evaluate**

Forest Service monitors and evaluates project results  
*YOU* provide feedback on the project to the Forest.



# FRANCONIA, BETHLEHEM, CARROLL BICYCLE PATH EXTENSION TO TWIN MOUNTAIN



The lines on this map are for discussion purposes only and may not depict the actual route of the proposed trail

### LEGEND

- SKOOKUMCHUCK PARKING LOT
- EXISTING BICYCLE PATH
- EXISTING RAIL CORRIDORS
- OLD US 3 ALIGNMENT

### OPTIONS

- 1** South side alignment on USFS land
- 2** North side alignment using old US 3
- 3** South side alignment using old US 3
- 4** South side alignment on USFS land and easements through private land
- 5** North side alignment on old RR bed, USFS land and easements through private land
- 6** North side alignment, North on old RR bed to Muchmore Rd. and White Road.
- 7** Existing Snowmobile trails on USFS land