Mascoma River Greenway Quest
(Formerly Quest for Connection)

Lebanon, New Hampshire
Physical Difficulty: Easy
Special Features: Paved trail, accessible to walkers, runners, skaters, roller bladers, skateboards, wheelchairs, scooters, tricycles, baby strollers, and when conditions are right, snowshoes and cross-country skis, dogs on leash are welcome. No snowmobiles or other gas-powered vehicles. Accessible using Advance Transit Monday - Friday
Duration: 2.5 miles one-way
Bring: water bottle, camera, flower/tree/bird ID Book (or phone app)

To get there, From Exit 18 off I-89 follow Rt. 120 South toward Lebanon. Take a left onto Hanover Street at the stop sign. Follow Hanover Street till you see the Lebanon Mall on your left. Take left into the parking lot and keep left. As you get behind Village Pizza you will see the tunnel tucked underneath the Mall. The tunnel is where this quest begins.

Overview:
This Quest takes you on the Mascoma River Greenway where you will discover hidden parts of Lebanon and lovely views of the river. The length of the greenway is 2.5 miles one way. This is a great Quest to do on a bike!
Clues:
You are invited to join us on a Greenway Quest,
You can start at the tunnel and then move west.
Head to the parking lot behind City Hall,
And look for the tunnel that runs under the Mall.

There’s a piano to make music, note the art on the walls,
then proceed toward the sunlight and Mascoma Falls.
You’ll emerge from the tunnel - on the right is a park
a shady place to picnic and enjoy flowers until dark.

This once was the site where three river mills stood
You can find one last wall if your detective skills are good!
Take a peek at the mini-meadow to the left of the trail.
If the flowers are blooming, you’ll see pollinators without fail.

Now onto the bridge over the river
watching the waterfall may make you shiver.
Girl Scouts have given the cement pylons a glossing,
Giving new meaning to a “rainbow bridge crossing”!

As you leave the bridge there’s a post in recline
which tells you the bridge is at mile __________
Continue to travel toward High Street junction;
be wary of cars in this five/six way dysfunction.

After crossing the road you enter the Greenway
where a kiosk stands built by Lebanon Rotary
On the left, in season, is a garden, pesticide-free . . .
can you spot a monarch, a hummingbird, or bee?

Monarch on butterfly milkweed.
Moving ahead there are stonewalls of granite, backyards of homes on Mascoma & Mechanic.

Now, look on the left for a cement whistle post, an engineer as he approached was supposed to warn everyone, here comes the choo-choo, he’d pull on the whistle chord, a loud ____________.

You enter a railway cut, as you bike or you walk where gandy-dancers* sliced right through this rock then laid rail at less than a 2% grade. Look for signs etched in rock that they made.

On both sides of the trail are neighbors’ homes; do you see gardens, or porches, or maybe some gnomes? Imagine the train chuffing by as you sleep/eat. It’s quiet now as you walk by on feet.

You round a corner, move toward Slayton Hill. On the left is a smokestack of an old river mill. Not far from the turn, a stone marker you’ll find, the distance to Boston is a hundred thirty ______________. Ahead is where Mascoma Street finds a way to Route 4/10 under Scytheville Underpass, built way back when . . . (There once was a business making scythes on Slayton Hill; old maps show that area to be known as Scytheville.)

Ahead to the right is a paradise for bees, a pollinator garden, elderberries, and a few apple trees. At the back of the garden, near the trail you will see A black locust with sharp thorns, not the friendliest tree!
Head west, more homes you’ll pass for a while; 52% of Leb residents live within half-a- ___________. 100 feet down on the right is a pond; you’ll see/hear Interstate 89 rushing by beyond.

Both sides of the trail are now woodland barrows; a path to the right leads to Renihan Meadows. Over the interstate bridge you now proceed; The MRG provides safe passage indeed.

You continue to walk to the left round a bend to a special river bridge. I recommend you stop a while. and watch the river flow near. In the field you might see a bear, fox, or ___________.

Soon on the left you’ll hear an industrial sound, it’s Timken Aerospace, MRG sponsor renowned. The next short section is hill, woods, & marsh Then the river returns. The path up left is harsh!

It leads to the parking of Miracle Mile Mall. Tired? You can catch Advance Transit back to City Hall. It runs only on weekdays but continue your quest. Beyond is an umbrella sculpture & a table to rest.

"Steel Umbrella" by artists Justin O’Rourke & Margaret Jacobs

As you move on the trail, on the left you will see dogwoods, aronia, button bush, cranberry. Planted to enhance habitat, with a bit of a flair We are hoping pollinators and birds find their way there.
Then keep an eye to the left for an old rail line spur; the rails are still there for unloading oil tankers; (A "spur" is a stub track diverging from the main, allowing access to industrial/commercial areas for the train.)

Look just ahead, two bridges you’ll walk under; the near one a before-Route-4 railroad crosser. Pretend you’re a hobo riding atop a box car; Look for a bridge warning “telltale” crossbar.

Before there were air brakes, “tell-tales” warned brakemen, who were on top of the train, that they were nearing a bridge or tunnel. It also helped hobos who were riding atop the trains.

The second bridge named to honor Terri Dudley, a Lebanon matriarch who served our city aptly. Find another rail trail sculpture, “Wheels”. A bit of the river’s history it reveals.

“Wheels” by Susan K. Johnson encapsulates this area’s history — from water wheels to railroads and now bikes, - Photo by Jill Aube
Beyond the trail bridge there are railroad tracks. The pavement ends with a scenic sidetrack. A dirt road shadows rails the woods overgrew, by the river to Glen Rd past mile marker ___________

You have completed your Quest of the Greenway: the only bike/ped trail to provide the safe way to walk from east to west through our fair city; the only such footpath route in our long history.

To attain recognition of your Quest completion look to the kiosk, there’s a Quest box hidden.

* What is a Gandy? A manual laborer. The nickname "gandy dancers" was inspired by the synchronized movements of the rail laborers when repairing sections of track.

This Quest was created by Frank Gould in 2019 and revised/updated by Pat McGovern in 2023.

REMEMBER: Please be a good steward of the land; leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.

Valley Quest is a collection of treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional non-profit organization serving the Upper Valley Region. For more information about Valley Quest please check our website: www.vitalcommunities.org. You can call us at 802-291-9100 or email valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org.