



FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

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Phase 1: Lowell, Chelmsford & Westford Waiting For Construction To Begin

Phase 1 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is a 7-mile section that runs from Cross Point Towers in Lowell through Chelmsford Center to the junction of Routes 225 and 27 in Westford. Everything was set for construction to begin this year. The final design had been approved, all permits were obtained and \$3.7 million of construction funds were set aside. MassHighway put the project out for bid, and S&R Construction, the firm that built the successful Nashua River Rail Trail, was selected as low bidder. Yet the contract was not signed because a problem arose with disposal of material to be excavated from the railroad right-of-way.

According to Andy Sheehan, Community Development Director of Chelmsford, MassHighway is considering re-designing the project to avoid excavation of the trail surface. This would require new construction permits and would delay construction until next year, according to MassHighway. Andy was philosophical about the delay, stating "the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail was first proposed over 18 years ago, so that another 12 months for construction to start is not all that bad". The Friends group is hopeful that a quick resolution of the waste disposal issue will be found while progress is being made on the rail trail in the communities south of Phase 1.

Way back when...

**The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail follows the path
of the old Framingham & Lowell RR that
opened for business in 1871.**

Acton Update: Town Meeting Votes CPA Funds for Continued Trail Development

On April 4 Acton Town Meeting approved using \$75,000 in Community Preservation Act funds for four BFRT start-up activities in Acton:

1. Right-of-way acquisition negotiations with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation
2. Easement negotiations for alternative routing at Rex Lumber (The ROW goes through Rex Lumber. When constructing NARA park in a quid pro quo for access, the Town agreed to make best efforts to have BFRT go around, rather than through Rex Lumber.)
3. Studying a safe crossing at Route 2A (Great Road). (The Board of Selectmen were particularly skeptical that at-grade crossing could be safe.)
4. Remaining funds, if any, will be applied towards survey work in support of subsequent engineering and construction work.

The Acton Friends had worked closely with Town Manager Don Johnson and his staff on the preparation of the CPA application. That the measure passed Town Meeting unanimously and without discussion is a gauge of the support that the trail has generated in Acton.

Other recent activity has included community outreach at Oktoberfest, Winterfest, and Town Meeting, and support from the BOS to have the Friends perform a trail clean-up / clearing. Future activities will include:

- Trail clearing: getting approval from the EOT, and then conducting a trail clean-up /clearing.
- Fund-raising: The total Town portion of the cost of the BFRT will be probably be \$400,000 to \$600,000. It is hoped that much of these funds come from the CPA. For major requests, the CPC requires significant leveraging of funds. Our 2005 fund-raising goal is \$25,000 to support another CPA application.
- Continued outreach and education at community events, meeting with individuals, businesses, and community organizations.

If you are interested in helping in Acton, contact Tom Michelman at: tmichelman@comcast.net.



Concord Update: Trail Feasibility Study Nearing Completion, Public Hearing Date Set for June 16th

Results of Concord's engineering and environmental assessment will be presented at a public meeting on Thursday, June 16 in the Concord Town House on Monument Square. The engineering firm of Fay, Spofford & Thorndike (FST), selected last winter to conduct the study, will discuss their findings and gather citizen input on the proposed plan. The \$25,000 study was funded by contributions from over 400 town residents.

Put June 16 on your calendar and plan to attend what will be an important meeting to move the rail trail project forward. Strong town-wide support of the rail trail will be an important consideration when the Board of Selectmen are asked for their support, most likely in late summer of this year.

For the study FST is evaluating existing conditions along the corridor and environmental issues in converting the unused rail right-of-way to a new linear park and transportation corridor. They are investigating bridge options for three river crossings, including a 90-foot span needed over the Assabet River near West Concord Center. The study is also focusing on potential access points to the trail, adequacy of existing parking locations and identifying new locations along the trail. FST is also considering mitigation measures, such as landscaping, fencing and signage, to maintain the privacy of abutting residences and to discourage trail users from entering sensitive environmental areas.

This May FST will meet with Concord planners and engineers to discuss their draft report. After this meeting, the firm will submit a revised report to the State's Executive Office of Transportation (the owner of the right-of-way) and to the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail for review and comments prior to the public meeting on June 16.

If you are interested in helping in Concord, contact Barbara Pike at: BBpike@aol.com.

Thank You!

Many thanks to our supporting business partner, Pedal Power Bike and Ski at 176 Great Road in Acton. We encourage you to patronize them and thank Joyce and John for their support of FBFRT. "Friends" may bring this newsletter for a 10% discount on parts and accessories.

Sudbury Update: Town Meeting Votes CPA Funds for Trail Feasibility Study

Sudbury Town Meeting recently approved \$25,000 in Community Preservation Act funds for an engineering feasibility study of the section of the BFRT in Sudbury that is owned by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation. This section north of Route 20 is part of the BFRT Phase 2.

Last fall the Sudbury Selectmen established a Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC). The committee consists of at-large members in addition to representatives from the Park & Recreation Commission, Public Works, Conservation Commission and the Planning Board. Dick Williamson, a member of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and Pat Brown are Co-Chairs of the RTCAC.

Schedules and minutes of meetings of RTCAC, along with other rail-trail information, can be seen on the Committee's web site:

www.town.sudbury.ma.us/committees/committee_home.asp?dept=RailTrail

RTCAC meetings are open to the public, and there is a time for community input at the beginning and end of each meeting. Come tell the RTCAC how you feel about the rail trail

In January 2005, the state Central Transportation Planning Staff CTPS initiated a study of Phase 3 of the BFRT. This is the section that runs from Route 9 in Framingham north to the EOT-owned rail bed. The boundary is just north of Route 20 where the old Mass. Central Line crosses. Cathy Buckley Lewis of CTPS is leading the study. Hearings were held in Framingham and Sudbury. Volunteers in both towns turned out on a cold January day to do traffic counts at the major road crossings of the BFRT. The study is scheduled to come out this spring.

During the past three years, the owner of the Phase 3 rail bed, CSX, has been undergoing a merger with another railroad company to form CSXT. While the merger was underway, the company could not initiate any changes in property ownership, including the Phase 3 rail bed. Now that the merger is complete, CSXT is ready to negotiate with the Towns of Framingham and Sudbury concerning future use of the rail bed as a rail trail. At present negotiations have been extended through October 4, 2005. No talks are currently scheduled.

A BFRT booth has been reserved for Sudbury Day 2005, scheduled for September 17. Look for the red and white BFRT banner and stop by the BFRT booth to say hello, look at maps of the project, and lend your support. We are looking for folks to help staff the booth on Sudbury Day 2005.

If you are interested in helping in Sudbury, contact Dick Williamson at: williamson@ll.mit.edu.

Way back when...

**The Rail Line has changed hands several times:
1879 - Old Colony RR, 1893 - New Haven RR,
1970 - Penn Central, 1976 - Conrail (CSX)**

Framingham Update: Removal of Rails and Ties Starts on Trail Right-of-Way

Many Framingham residents are eagerly watching the removal of the rails and ties along the proposed Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. A few may even be envisioning that the Town or CSX Transportation is pulling a fast one by constructing a rail trail without their knowledge or input.



In actuality while the rails are gone and trespassing is no longer the danger that it once was, there is still much work to be done before the trail becomes a reality.

First, the Town and the railroad must determine the actual right-of-way to be transferred and a fair purchase price must be negotiated.

Then, a study by the State's Central Transportation Planning Staff in Boston must further define the broad outlines of the rail trail. Who will use the trail and for what purpose? Where are the road crossings and other potential places of danger? How will the trail relate to its surroundings? What trail surfaces should be considered? And finally, how much will it cost to construct?

The public needs to be involved and to participate in developing a shared vision regarding the many benefits to be realized. Potential objections need to be examined and courses of action negotiated.

There is a lot of work to be done by the local Friends group. The good news is that those working with state and local officials to overcome the expected objections and to make the rail trail a reality in the shortest possible time will realize a lot of satisfaction. If you are interested in helping in Framingham, contact Bill Williamson at: Bill@Wwilliam.com.

Way back when...

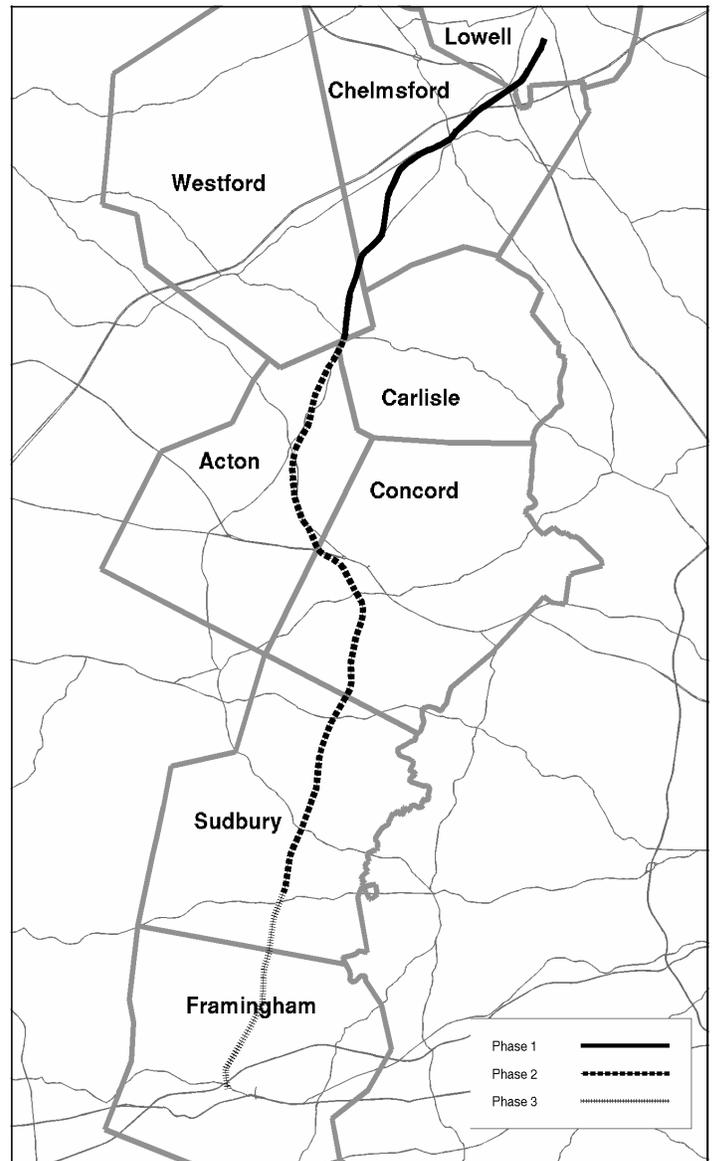
Passenger service was discontinued in 1933 due to lack of demand.

Rail Trail Caps Available



You have probably wondered where to get one of those colorful Bruce Freeman Rail Trail caps you have seen so many people wearing. Well you are in luck; we have a few more caps left. The caps are \$15 each and can be ordered by contacting Bob Armstrong at army103@comcast.net. The \$15 includes hand delivery if you live within 10 miles of Concord center, otherwise please include an additional \$3 for mailing.

Contributors: Bob Armstrong, Rob Comer (Map), Charles Martin (Photo), Tom Michelman, Barbara Pike, Bill Williamson, Dick Williamson, Bob Zuffante



It's Official!

The Friends Group is a Non-Profit Organization and Donations are Tax Deductible

In February 2005, the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service that stated the organization is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

What this means is that the FBFRT is now recognized as a public charity and will receive tax benefits afforded non-profit organizations. All contributions to the organization are now tax deductible. It also requires that the FBFRT comply with federal and state tax laws to maintain that status, including annual public filings. Our thanks go to Christine Corr, a member of the Friends group from Concord, who helped oversee this long and complicated filing process.

Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
6 Magnolia Drive
Acton MA 01720



Show your support by joining today!

Members will receive newsletters, notices of upcoming trail-related events, and opportunities to actively promote the rail trail through a variety of volunteer activities.



Yes! Sign me up as a supporter of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and add my name to your mailing list.

- Individual \$10
- Family \$25
- Sponsor \$50
- Conductor \$100
- Engineer \$250
- RR Tycoon \$500+

*Conductor and above receive a complimentary BFRT Cap

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____ **Evening Phone** _____

e-mail address _____

Please enclose a check payable to Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and mail this form to:

Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
118 Border Rd.
Concord, MA 01742

The Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization—membership fees and donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

