



FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

With Your Support Phase 2A on Track for Spring '14 Construction

Construction of Phase 2A is still scheduled to begin in spring 2014, pending final financial approval by the Boston MPO, the organization in the Boston region that holds the purse strings to state and federally funded transportation projects. First, a quick update; then, a request for you to help us advocate for Phase 2A funding and construction in 2014.

With all but the most detailed design completed, the FBFRT conducted an outreach campaign in Acton to ask abutters for their preferences on screening and access to the trail (see accompanying abutter article). Some major design elements remain to be finalized.

- Bridge details are the critical path item. MassDOT is reviewing initial plans submitted by GPI, the trail consultants. After this review, decking, facing, safety rails and other details can be finalized.
- Historically, rail right-of-ways tended to follow flat lowlands. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Army Corp of Engineers has determined that a large portion of the trail is in a floodway. Any work in these areas must be reviewed to make sure construction does not cause any substantial negative impacts. On the other hand, culverts and drainage that have deteriorated will be improved by the rail trail construction e.g., in the vicinity of East Acton Village Green and Ice House Pond.
- After draft bridge plans are advanced, a coordination meeting will be held with representatives of utilities, particularly to discuss the bridge over Route 2A, which will intersect water, gas, electric and communication lines.
- A proposed agreement (e.g., license, 99 year lease) must be drafted by the EOT rail division of MassDOT, and then accepted by all three the Towns in Phase 2A.

According to David Shedd, MassDOT Project Manager for Phase 2A, advertising for construction bids in early December 2013 is aggressive, but the project is still on course for a spring 2014 start. The Phase 2A portion of the trail is expected to be substantially complete in latter half of 2015.

As stated, the design is more or less on schedule. However, Phase 2A will go through the financing gauntlet one more time. In June 2012 the Boston MPO voted to include BFRT Phase 2A for 2014 construction start in its 2013-2016 four-year plan. To finalize funding with updated budget estimates, Phase 2A will again be subject to a vote to include it in the 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP is the funding process for transportation projects).

Public advocacy and participation is needed during the time leading up to the final votes this spring. Showing public support

is very important for getting the final approvals. We have to do well again during this process and that is why we are asking for your support again. You will have the opportunity to advocate by attending meetings or by writing to the Boston MPO when they request public comment.

Please keep up to date on activities and opportunities to support the BFRT by reading our emails or visiting our website or the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Facebook page. Thank you very much for your continued and essential support.



A whistle post in West Concord, one of the historical railroad artifacts the Town is considering for preservation and/or interpretation

Concord Readies for Next Phase of Design

Progress on the 75% design for Phase 2C in Concord awaits resolution of survey discrepancies and final determination from the MBTA about the location for the rail trail crossing of the commuter rail line in West Concord.

Meanwhile the Town BFRT Advisory Committee continues its outreach to owners of abutting properties near White Pond to determine appropriate use of fencing near their land. Also, representatives from the BFRTAC and the Historical Commission have started reviewing historic artifacts remaining along the railroad Right of Way, prioritizing them based on historic significance, and considering how best to interpret them for trail users.

Phase 2A Abutter Outreach

Phase 2A, the proposed 4.88-mile portion of the trail (starting at the Phase 1 southern terminus in Westford at Routes 225 and 27, continuing via Carlisle into Acton and ending at Teamworks in East Acton) is expected to start construction in spring 2014. Volunteers from the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, in conjunction with the Towns, conducted informational outreach to approximately 80 abutters to this section of the trail requesting their preferences for screening and access to the trail.

FBFRT volunteers included Ernie Abrams, Gerri Abrams, Alan Cameron, Bill Davies, Tom Michelman Judy Perrin, Joyce Reischutz, Lenny Simon, Emily Teller and Lisa Underkoffler.

Phase 2A extends the BFRT south by ~5 miles, from the current southern terminus of Phase 1 at Rt. 225 in Westford through Carlisle and Acton terminating in East Acton at Teamworks.

Phase 2B is the short segment of the trail crossing Rt. 2 which will connect Acton and Concord.

Phase 2C goes from Commonwealth Ave. in West Concord south of Rt. 2 through West Concord to the Sudbury border.

Phase 2D in Sudbury starts at the Concord border and ends just short of Rt. 20.

The FBFRT worked most closely with Acton's Planning Department (the majority of 2A is in Acton) and the consulting firm GPI to create an outreach letter for Phase 2A abutters (see letter at <http://bit.ly/Zy7eHy>). Using the abutter list provided by the Towns, FBFRT volunteers sent the letter to each landowning abutter. And volunteers were assigned the majority of abutters to contact individually, with Town staff contacting special cases (e.g., Acton Water District or other Town departments). Within three weeks all the abutters had been contacted once, and the FBFRT volunteers were able to meet most of them in person.

The visits were very encouraging and gratifying. Gerri Abrams wrote of her experience: "We had a great time talking with commercial abutters yesterday. We did all but one on our list. It was great fun. They all but hugged and kissed us when we identified ourselves. They want the finished trail to go by their establishment, tomorrow. Some of them gave us their life histories, so it took much of the day."

Consistent with the Abrams' experience, most residential abutters were delighted to hear that construction would start in 2014. Only a few abutters asked for privacy fencing (e.g., stockade fence). Others desired more subtle barriers such as evergreen bush screening or a split rail fence to define the trail from abutter's property. Many asked for access to the trail, e.g., a gap in a split rail fence. Some were concerned about trail users parking in their neighborhood or in business parking spaces. Most concerns were satisfied with the plans for parking in North Acton near Carlisle, NARA Park, and Gould Plaza. The plan is to show designated parking on the BFRT official map, just like our current Phase 1 map (<http://bit.ly/10iDLns>).

Results of the outreach were entered into an online database that the public can review (<http://bit.ly/10oPRRep>). The information and preferences gathered will be used as input to the final design and bidding documents.

Volunteers were thanked many times for taking the time and effort to contact abutters and to allow them to request access and screening. It was a pleasure to be able to tell them that construction is likely to start just a year from now in spring 2014, although funding still needs final approval (see Phase 2A On Track article).

Boring Plan Finalized for Phase 2B

The 25% design of Phase 2B of the rail trail, which primarily includes the bridge crossing over Route 2, was contracted to the consulting firm AECOM by MassDOT. Because there was insufficient geological information to design the bridge and retaining walls, AECOM has submitted a plan to MassDOT for additional borings for review and comments.

If MassDOT has major comments, the boring plan will have to be resubmitted. If this is not required, it is likely that the 25% design will be provided to MassDOT during the summer. After a review, the project will need clearance for a public hearing from several MassDOT entities. Assuming only minor comments on the 25% design from these entities, a public meeting will be scheduled in the fall after September 30th, which is the end of the federal fiscal year.

Rail Trail Symphony?!

In a first for the BFRT, a symphony movement was recorded on the rail trail! "Stylus Symphony" was commissioned for the newly formed Berklee Contemporary Symphony Orchestra, and the fourth movement was recorded on the trail in the tunnel under Route 3 near the northern terminus.



Former Westford resident and Berklee College of Music professor Stephen Webber composed this ground-breaking 2007 symphony that bridges the gap between hip-hop and orchestral music and features turntables by Webber as a solo instrument. He chose the tunnel for the recording because he loves to ride on the BFRT and thought the tunnel "looked cool."

Current Westford resident, Jon Forsyth, who is a filmmaker and teacher, collaborated with Webber to produce a music video of the symphony. Webber recorded each instrumentalist individually, and Forsyth filmed each performer for music videos which went onto the newly completed DVD. The DVD was premiered in Westford on March 29th at annual Steven Webber Blow-Out Concert. More information about this symphony can be found at www.stylussymphony.net.

Westford Accepts Land Parcel Adjacent to the Trail

A long-disputed parcel of land adjacent to the BFRT was accepted by the Town at Westford's Annual Town meeting in March. This parcel had originally been designed to offer parking for the rail trail in the earliest design from the 1980s. The parcel's acceptance was affirmed by a 2/3 voice vote called by the Moderator; however an amendment to "prohibit parking" was approved by a counted vote of 120-117.

Chelmsford BPAC Works on Trail Enhancements

The Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) has been working on amenities along the trail. Seasonal portable toilets have again been installed in the Pond St. parking lot and at Cushing Place near the kiosk. They are sponsored by the Friends and provided at a discount by United Site Services.

The BPAC is working with local Eagle Scouts to develop a project which includes placing more visible mile markers at 0.2-mile increments along the Chelmsford section of the trail and signs to identify and direct trail users to the Sunny Meadow Farm on Robin Hill Road.

The committee is also working on a detailed Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Town of Chelmsford as called for in the updated 2010 Chelmsford Master Plan. The plan will take into account on-road and off-road facilities, recreational facilities, and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. It will also include increasing safety at intersections and crosswalks, installing bicycle racks, providing signals at pedestrian crossings, and installing pavement markings and signage at key locations.

Results from the trail count conducted by BPAC and FBFRT last fall showed usage down from the previous two years, reflecting the damp weather conditions on the morning of the count. Counts at Heart Pond, Chelmsford Center, and Chelmsford Mall showed that about 2/3 of the trail users were riding a bicycle. Trail count data has been used to apply for grants for trail art, motivate construction funding for Phase 2A, justify maintenance and amenities, and apply for creation of a cultural district that includes the trail.

Funding Recommended for Concord

Supporters of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail were pleasantly surprised on March 7th when funding for construction of the BFRT in Concord was included in the list of projects recommended for construction funding during 2014-2017 (<http://bit.ly/112YX38>). This is not the final step in getting funding, but it is a very positive sign.

Funding for rail trails, as well as for all transportation construction projects (roads, bridges, intersections, etc.), goes through a yearly review process that leads to firm decisions about the funding and the timing of each construction project. Public transportation is handled separately. Each year, the staff of the regional transportation organization (the Boston MPO, which controls funding for the BFRT) looks at all previously recommended projects and all projects that might be added to the funding list. The staff recommendations are then submitted to a formal body that makes the final decisions.

The staff identifies the most worthy projects and gives each a score for about forty evaluation criteria. The scores are added up, and the projects are ranked according to their final score.

Construction of Phase 2A of the BFRT in Westford, Carlisle and Acton, previously recommended for funding in 2014, received a high score and is included in the recommended list. Final approval of Phase 2A construction is expected this spring (see Phase 2A On Track article for more details). Construction in Concord also scored high, receiving 77 points out of a maximum possible of 154. The highest-ranked transportation project received 102 points. The Concord section of the BFRT ranked 14th out of the 51 projects scored. This is very good news and should provide assurance that this section will be built.

Happy Birthday Friends!

The Friends trace their beginnings to a meeting at Bob Armstrong's home in Concord in October 2012. National Rails to Trails (RTC) President Keith Laughlin spoke to a group of about 30 people who were interested in rail trails. He talked about all of the successful rail trails in other states but didn't mention any in Massachusetts. Finally Craig Della Penna, a RTC field representative, spoke up about the BFRT.



Current FBFRT Board members who were present at the first Friends' meeting in October 2002: Dick Williamson, Barbara Pike, Stuart Johnstone, Bob Hall, and Joyce Reischutz

We, of course, knew about the unused rail corridor that ran through West Concord and behind Pedal Power in Acton. But we had no idea that the state legislature had already designated it as a rail trail, named it the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Bike Path, and had started working on the design in Chelmsford and Westford (the current Phase 1).

Joyce Reischutz encouraged us to organize and invited us to meet again at her store, Pedal Power, in Acton. Since then, the Friends have grown to nearly 500 members.

Denmark's "Bike Superhighway"

Denmark recently opened an 11-mile "bike superhighway," linking Copenhagen with its suburbs. Danish statistics show that every 6 miles biked instead of driven saves 3 1/2 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions and 9 cents in health care costs. But many cite happiness among the chief benefits of bicycle commuting.

Protect Yourself; Wear a Helmet

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that, although less than two percent of motor vehicle crash deaths are bicyclists, the most serious injuries among a majority of those killed are to the head. Helmet use has been estimated to reduce the risk of head injury by 85%. Helmets are important for riders of all ages, not just young bicyclists. Eighty-nine percent of bicycle deaths are persons 16 and older. During the past few years, only about 1 in 10 fatally injured bicyclists were wearing helmets.

Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
 PO Box 1192
 Concord, MA 01742



NON PROFIT ORG
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 PERMIT NO.6
 HUDSON, MA 01749

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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.

The Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Membership fees and donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Yes! Sign me up as a supporter of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

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

*Sponsor and above receive complimentary BFRT cap or T-shirt.

 First Name Last Name

 Contact Name

 Address 1 (Street Address, P.O. Box, company name, c/o)

 Address 2 (Apartment, suite, unit, building, floor)

 City State Zip

 Daytime Phone Evening Phone

 Email address

YES NO

I would like to receive the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail newsletter. YES NO

Send my newsletter via email (include email address above). YES NO

Send via postal mail. YES NO

I would like to receive email updates from the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. YES NO

I am willing to receive phone calls from the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. YES NO

I am a trail abutter. YES NO

I would like to volunteer. YES NO

Gift: Cap T-Shirt (S / M / L / XL) No Thanks

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
PO Box 1192
Concord, MA 01742

You may also join on-line at:
www.BruceFreemanRailTrail.org



A Warm Spring Thank You!

Pedal Power Bike and Ski, Acton
for hosting the annual meeting and their on-going support

Jet Mail, Hudson
for their assistance in printing and mailing this newsletter

United Site Service, Chelmsford
for helping sponsor toilets on the trail

Still Waiting in Sudbury

It has been almost two years (June 27, 2011) since the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT) made an offer to the Sudbury Board of Selectmen (BOS) to raise and contribute \$50,000 to fund the initial design of the ½-mile of the BFRT from the Concord/Sudbury town line south to Route 117. As of this spring, the BOS had neither accepted nor declined the offer.

Instead, the BOS decided to ask the residents to vote on two questions at the March 2012 Town Elections. One question asked whether the voters wanted to “move forward with designing” the northern-most ½ mile, and a second question asked whether voters wanted the entire BFRT, from the Concord/Sudbury line south to Route 20. Both questions were answered with a definitive YES by margins of more than two to one. The BOS also placed the same two questions on the May 2012 Town Meeting Warrant. Again the answer was overwhelmingly YES.

Several years ago, the BOS created a Concept Committee to study how to proceed with the BFRT in Sudbury. The committee consists of Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen, Town Planner Jody Kablack and DPW Director Bill Place. The committee had done little since its inception. However, after the town votes showed overwhelming support for the trail, the BOS directed the Concept Committee to proceed.

The Mass Department of Transportation has put forth a set of standards (AASHTO) for “shared-use” paths. These standards have been applied to the completed sections of the BFRT in Chelmsford and Westford, as well as to the design of the soon-to-be constructed sections in Acton and Concord. A substantial financial advantage of a standards-based rail trail is that construction is funded by state and federal dollars. A town pays only for the design.

The Concept Committee suggested to the BOS that they study several alternatives for the entire trail in Sudbury, as the wording of the questions voted on by Sudbury’s residents did not mention a “standard” trail. By this spring they had formulated a matrix of pros and cons of four alternatives: 1) a “standard” rail trail constructed on the rail bed, 2) a narrower gravel-surface path or “greenway”, 3) a trail that goes back and forth on and off the rail bed and 4) a route on walkways entirely outside the rail bed. The committee will present its trade-off matrix to the BOS sometime after this spring’s Town Meeting. The FBFRT will continue to advocate for the BOS to accept our June 27, 2011 offer before its 2nd anniversary.

Bay Circuit Trail & BFRT Together

Have you seen the Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) logo on the BFRT and wondered where this trail is?



The 6.8 miles of the BCT that runs along the BFRT in Chelmsford and Westford are a small part of the nearly 200 miles of the BCT that runs through 37 communities in Eastern Massachusetts, from Plum Island to the Duxbury/Kingston shore. Conceived as an “outer emerald necklace” around Boston, the trail connects thousands of acres of scenic and historic acres and conservation lands and includes 4000 acres of protected land. Recently, the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Trustees of Reservations have joined forces to complete and improve the Bay Circuit Trail.

When the next section of the BFRT is completed, the BCT will use this portion of the rail trail to connect to Wheeler Lane in Acton before turning east through Acton conservation land. The BCT will also use the segment of the proposed Mass Central Rail Trail from Horse Pond Road in Sudbury east to Wayland. Along the way, the Mass. Central/BCT will cross the BFRT just north of Route 20 in Sudbury.

One of the remaining gaps in the BCT is in Lowell. This gap could be partially filled by the planned expansion of the Concord River Greenway. The BCT would then connect to the BFRT at its northern terminus. The Friends of BFRT is a member of the Bay Circuit Alliance, which includes approximately 50 organizations, both public and private.

History Buff on the Trail



Concord’s Henry Keutmann is known as a railroad history expert. It turns out that he is a railroad history detective, as well. Recently, Henry was working to locate and identify remaining railroad artifacts along the right of way in Concord. He was puzzled about a missing whistle post near Old Marlboro Road. “I always thought there should be a whistle post there,” he said. So he started looking and, sure enough, he found the marker lying down under some dirt and brush. Its subterranean sojourn has left it somewhat the worse for wear. But he hopes it can be restored to its original position when the trail is built.

Upcoming Community Events & Volunteer Opportunities

May

4th - Concord Minute Man ARC MARCH – marshaling

June

21st - FBFRT Summer Solstice Bike Ride, 6 p.m.
Chelmsford Center for the Arts (formerly
Old Town Hall), 4 North Road (Rt. 4)

29th - Carlisle Old Home Day

July

4th - Sudbury Fourth of July Parade

4th - Concord Picnic in the Park (Emerson Playground)

September 28th - Greater Lowell Community
Foundation Bike-a-Thon

October - West Concord Oktoberfest

Summer

Sudbury Summer Concerts (Mondays starting 7/8)

Westford and Acton Farmers' Markets

We hope you will join us and/or help us out at one
or more of these events.

See www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/volunteer for up-to-
date volunteer opportunities. Or contact your town's
representative listed below and to the right.



Farewell Cindy

We bid regretful adieu to Chelmsford Board Member Cindy McLain, who was working on the Chelmsford/Westford section of the BFRT before the Friends were even formed. She knew it all: locations and information for every tenth of a mile, abutter issues and resolutions, construction schedule and upcoming tasks, and how to work the back channels at MassHighway. Her "steno notebook" was a wealth of information at the tip of her fingers at all times. She was the force behind the amenities, such as art work, a kiosk, and benches in Chelmsford. She also set up the Chelmsford trail crew and organized the trail counts. We are very indebted to Cindy for all of her efforts and will miss her presence on the Board. See you on the trail, Cindy!



Members of the Westford Conservation Trust's "Tuesday Trail Stewards" group enjoying a winter morning on the BFRT
photo by David Sherrill

Welcome New Board Member

We welcome Sudbury's Lenny Simon as the newest member of the BFRT Board of Directors. Lenny recently retired from his law practice. He now has more time to devote to the trail and to advance the rail trail in Sudbury. Lenny has written two well-received op-ed pieces for the *Sudbury Town Crier* in support of bringing the BFRT to Sudbury. Lenny's good friend, Dr. Stan Sabin, Chief of Medicine at the MetroWest Medical Center, was killed recently while biking on the road. That is one reason for Lenny's dedication to creating a safe, off-road rail trail in Sudbury and in other towns along the BFRT

For Further Information:

Visit: www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

Call or Email:

Acton:	Tom Michelman	978-580-6190	tmichelman@comcast.net
Carlisle:	Alan Cameron	978-369-2223	alancameron@comcast.net
Chelmsford:	Tom Gazda	978-250-0012	tgazdap5tmr@comcast.net
Concord:	Barbara Pike	978-369-0437	bbpike@aol.com
Framingham:	John Stasik	508-877-6771	jstasik@rcn.com
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Westford:	Emily Teller	978-692-6968	eteller@earthlink.net

Attend: Friends meetings

Send Email: info@brucefreemanrailtrail.org