



FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

We Broke Ground!

CHELMSFORD / WESTFORD / PHASE 1 – MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky declared herself a "friend of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail" at the official groundbreaking for Phase 1. The ceremony was held on October 9 next to the BFRT at the Old Town Hall in Chelmsford. Phase 1 is 6.8 miles from Cross Point Towers in Lowell, through Chelmsford and Westford, ending at Rt. 225.

Other speakers included Daphne Freeman, widow of Bruce Freeman; Beverly Woods, Executive Director Elect of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, longtime BFRT advocate and Westford resident; Tom Michelman, President of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail; and former state representative Carol Clevin, the legislator who introduced the bill creating the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Bike Path in 1987. Mrs. Freeman noted, "I never gave up hope for my husband's dream."



Commissioner Paiewonsky, Carol Clevin, Daphne Freeman, Beverly Woods and Tom Michelman break ground on Phase 1 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

One notable absence in the list of speakers was Bernard Lynch, a strong advocate for this rail trail since 1983, a Chelmsford resident, and until recently the Chelmsford Town Manager. "I was disappointed to miss the groundbreaking but I'm very excited to see this long overdue project moving forward. I'm looking forward to the ribbon cutting."

"Expanding our network of bike trails is an important priority of MassHighway, and I'm proud that we're able to get this project moving," said Commissioner Paiewonsky. "Creating more and better bike trails not only benefits cyclists and allows walkers to enjoy the outdoors, but also improves

our multi-modal transportation options and enhances our recreation opportunities. I am truly grateful to all of our partners who have worked so hard to move this project forward for so long. I have never seen such an effective example of true civic engagement!"

Citing the October 8 front-page Boston Globe article, she reaffirmed her hope that the Bruce Freeman Trail will be part of a latticework of trails across the Commonwealth.

"After more than 20 years in planning and design, the groundbreaking of Phase 1 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is the culmination of great effort by public servants, legislators and advocates, past and present; we are very grateful for all their work." said Tom Michelman, President of the Friends. "Because of structural changes in the design and construction process, and great support from the Patrick administration, local, regional, state, and federal agencies, legislators and officials, we are optimistic the next phases will be constructed in the next few years as long as we, the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, do our job as public advocates of this soon-to-be great public asset."

After the ceremonial tossing of shovelful of dirt by the speakers, Michelman ended by saying, "I can't wait for the ribbon cutting!" which is expected to occur late summer in 2009. A celebration on the Chelmsford Town Common, sponsored by the Friends, followed the ceremony. The celebration featured a sheet cake decorated with the Friends logo and symbols of Lowell, Chelmsford and Westford; "Rail Trail" ice cream, and music. Visit the Friends' web site for more photos.

We would like to thank the more than 60 attendees at the groundbreaking, including Bruce Freeman's two sons and a granddaughter, our state legislators, past and present local officials, and state officials including, Danny O'Brien from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and MassHighway Project Manager Steve McLaughlin, as well as trail advocates past and present.

We especially want to thank Paul Cohen, Town Manager of Chelmsford, who was instrumental in organizing the event; Rick Sullivan of Sully's Ice Cream, who donated the "Rail Trail" ice cream; Flaky Pastry, who made and decorated the sheet cake; Stop & Shop in Chelmsford, who provided the beverages; Tom Christiano, who arranged for local cable access channel coverage; and Al Paradis, who serenaded us with accordion music. We would also like to thank the volunteers Doug Marlow, Jo Morse, and Elizabeth Twombly as well as Steve Ledoux, Town Manager of Westford.

A video clip of the ceremony is on YouTube, courtesy of Andy Metzger, staff reporter for the Chelmsford Independent.

Important Upcoming Events

Annual Meeting

Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

When: Sunday, November 18th, 2 pm

**Where: Concord Children's Center
1300 Main Street (Rt. 62)
West Concord**

(The center is on the corner of Main St & Church St. Park in the Church St lot)

What: We will conduct a short business meeting, hear town updates, partake of light refreshments & walk a section of the trail.

Concord's Special Town Meeting

**When: November 5th, 7th at 7 pm
(BFRT Articles likely on the 7th)**

Where: CC Regional High School

What: Two articles relating to the rail trail are on the warrant at the Special Town Meeting. **The Friends recommend a NO vote on Articles 9 & 10.** More information is available on our website.

Concord residents, please actively support the trail by attending and **staying to cast your NO vote on 9 & 10** at Concord's Town Meeting. These Articles will most likely come up for vote on the 7th, but watch your local access channel to be sure.

For more info: www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

ALL ABOARD!

LOWELL / CHELMSFORD / WESTFORD – The long wait is over – Phase 1 construction began on August 22! The groundbreaking ceremony, covered elsewhere in this newsletter, was held on October 9. The contract was awarded to S&R Corporation of Lowell, whose bid of \$4.24 million was under the estimated cost of \$4.98 million. S&R Corporation also built the popular Nashua River Rail Trail in Ayer, Groton, Pepperell, and Dunstable.

We would especially like to thank Luisa Paiewonsky, Commissioner of Massachusetts Highway Department, for her strong support of this project. Without her active involvement, this project would still be awaiting advertising and construction.

The Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT) mailed around 300 postcards to rail trail abutters in Lowell, Chelmsford, and Westford to let them know that construction was beginning. We also hand-delivered postcards and information to businesses in Chelmsford Center. The FBFRT will continue to work closely with MassHighway and the towns of Westford and Chelmsford to bring this project to completion.

To track construction progress and see answers to common questions, please visit www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/Phase1. Also please read the columns that appear monthly, or more frequently if needed, in the Chelmsford Independent ("Rails, Trails and Ties" by Cynthia McLain) and Westford Eagle (by Emily Teller).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

Letter from the President: MemberClicks™ Startup

The Friends were having database issues. Keeping track of information on members was difficult. Board members had their own individual databases. Data transfer was tricky. Sending e-mails to our thousands of contacts was troublesome. The list goes on and on. At the same time the FBFRT was growing, which made data management even more challenging. *Something had to be done.*

After considerable research and preparation, we are pleased to introduce MemberClicks™ as our host for a full-featured centralized database. If you are already a member of the Friends, then you should have received an introductory letter with a user name and randomly created password. Regardless of whether or not you are currently in our database, you can become a full-fledged dues-paying member by clicking through the "Join FBFRT" link on our web site. We now take credit cards as well as checks and cash.

What's nifty is that now you can view and edit your own contact preferences. To do so, just go to the "Sign in / Manage My Account" link at www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org. Don't worry if you have discarded or never received user name or password information; you can get it e-mailed to yourself (and if you are not sure if you are in the database, you can check for that too).

It all probably sounds more complicated than it is. Just try it out! As always, we keep your contact information confidential from other BFRT members and outsiders; only Board Members of the FBFRT and you can view and edit your database entries. Now that we have built a robust infrastructure to track members and contacts, automate membership renewals, facilitate communication, and take credit cards, we look forward to spending much less time on logistics and much more time on working to get the BFRT built.

I would particularly like to thank the following Board members, without whose huge infusion of time and enthusiasm our MemberClicks™ start up would not have been possible: Chris Barrett, Carl Elkins, Bob Hall, Cindy McLain, and Judy Perrin.

Best regards,

Tom Michelman

President – Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

The Friends Have Been Busy In Your Community!

April

Ushering in Spring at Earth Day

Concord's Earth Day parade featured new signs indicating each of the towns along the trail. The Johnstone's creativity added flair to the parade.

June

Old Home Day

Carlisle's Old Home Day attracted 35 new supporters in addition to the many people who already support the trail.

Fourth of July:

A Three-Town Presence

Sudbury: The Friends were very visible as marchers in the July 4th parade.

Concord: The Friends information booth featured a kids' bubble activity.

The wonderful reception the Friends received in both Concord and Sudbury indicates strong support for the trail in both towns.

Chelmsford: The booth at the Chelmsford Country Fair received 106 new names of supporters along with several new memberships.

Sudbury Summer Concerts

The Friends set up an information booth at six summertime outdoor concerts. The helium balloons were popular among the younger set.

September

Town Days

Sudbury Day Festival - Despite the soggy start, the Friends' booth was in full swing at the Sudbury Day Festival. Forty families added their names in support of the rail trail.

West Concord Family Festival - The Friends, carrying signs and banners, were an enthusiastic addition to the West Concord Family Festival parade. Dozens of helium balloons were handed out at the festival booth.

Acton Day - On a cool clear fall evening, the Acton Day town festival at NARA park included a FBFRT table. A steady stream of residents stopped by between the hot cooked food and the live music to ask about the trail.

October

The Friends introduced the groundbreaking and trail to many new supporters

Acton: West Acton Oktoberfest

Carlisle: Carlisle Pumpkin Fest

Westford: Transportation and Safety Day

Westford: Farmers' Market education table

Construction Begins in Chelmsford

CHELMSFORD – This year has been busy! In addition to interactions with MassHighway, FBFRT has been involved in several local activities.

Since construction became a reality this summer, FBFRT has taken on the role of clearinghouse for abutter concerns. We have been working closely with the MassHighway Resident Engineer and the Town to help smooth the construction process. To further support this role, we have a new column called "*Rails, Trails, and Ties*" in the *Chelmsford Independent* to provide information about construction and other related topics. This column will appear monthly, more frequently as items of note arise.

We have also been building partnerships with the Chelmsford Land Conservation Trust, the Chelmsford Historical Society, the Chelmsford Open Space Stewards, the Middlesex Canal Association, and Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust. We expect these partnerships to strengthen as the trail nears completion.

Finally, we have been working with MassHighway to preserve a number of artifacts and features of interest along the right-of-way. MassHighway is committed to minimizing the impact of construction on the surrounding areas. With the preservation of the current environment and connections to conservation properties, this trail will be an excellent way for Chelmsfordians to interact with the environment.

We would like to give special thanks to those who helped with the booth on July 3rd and 4th: members of the FBFRT Board, Bill Gerber (Middlesex Canal Association), Jane Calvin (Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust), Tom Christiano (local CCTV celeb), Ken Van Tassell, and Elizabeth Twombly. Many visitors to the booth were excited to hear that the rail trail is really happening.

Acton, Carlisle, and Westford Move Forward Together

ACTON / CARLISLE / WESTFORD – Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) is conducting preliminary design activities for Acton, Carlisle and Westford's section of Phase 2. The project covers the right-of-way from the southern terminus of Phase 1 (Rts. 225 and 27 in Westford) to Acton Indoor Sports (just north of Rt. 2 and the Concord border). This works out to 4.5± miles in Acton, and 0.31± miles in Carlisle and Westford. (For those counting, the last 0.1 miles in Acton will be incorporated into a Rt. 2 crossing.)

As part of the design process, the Town of Acton hosted a "10% design" public meeting in June to provide information about the project and to solicit citizen input. About 40 people from several towns attended. Questions about screening and trail surfaces were answered by Roland Bartl (Acton Town Planner) / GPI and/or other attendees. Of particular importance, GPI presented ten different options for crossing Rt. 2A (about 200 yards south of Rt. 27). After discussion, attendees unanimously and strongly supported a crossing via a bridge.

The evening's citizen attendees were very vocally supportive of this Phase 2 design as well as the entire project, and there was no spoken opposition. We were especially glad that Sarah Bradbury of MassHighway was present to witness the extent of the support.

With the input from the meeting, GPI submitted a Project Initiation Form (PIF) in August to MassHighway's District 3 for review and approval by MassHighway's Project Review Committee (PRC). We have heard that the PRC approved the project; once written confirmation has been sent to GPI and/or the Town of Acton, full "25% design" activities will move forward at full speed.

Concord Concludes Outreach Meetings

CONCORD – As an important part of Concord's 25% design, its consultants, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), conducted a series of Community Outreach Meetings. These meetings covered a variety of topics, including trail alignment, people management, bridges and road crossings, private property protections, historic artifacts, and environmental issues. The purpose of the meetings was to present information and provide a forum for citizen input. An online FAQ, cataloging many comments and questions, has been established at www.vhb.com/ConcordBike/faq.aspx.

At the final Outreach meeting in September, VHB stated that the environmental work was nearly complete and thus far they had found no environmental impediments to converting the trail along the right of way. Although the wetland flagging has been completed, portions of the work were reviewed by the Town at the request of a private citizens group.

Two warrant articles were submitted by petition for the special Town Meeting on November 5 (continuing to Nov. 7 and 8, if needed). Further information and recommendations can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. We encourage all Concordian trail supporters to attend Town Meeting.

The Concord BFRT Advisory Committee has been reviewing the 25% design and will be making recommendations to VHB on many design issues during the fall and winter. The BFRTAC meetings are open to the public and you are encouraged to attend.

Work to Begin on Depot Renovation

CONCORD – With the signing of the contract, work on the West Concord Depot renovation project began this fall and will take about 8 weeks to complete. Look for improvements to the slate roof, removal of the faux brick siding, and repairs to the exterior. By the time painting is completed next spring, the Depot will return to its status as a West Concord landmark, a reminder of the Village's historic beginnings.



Renovation is in progress at the historic West Concord Depot

Commuter Survey in West Concord

CONCORD – A survey of commuters at the West Concord train station indicated that many of them would change their mode of transportation if there were a bike trail available. Jessica Weinstein, a student at Oberlin College, conducted a survey of ninety commuters one morning last June. Of the respondents, 43 said they would make the change. Of the remaining 47, fourteen already walked or biked to the station. The survey results confirm that creation of the rail trail will help to ease congestion and pollution in West Concord.

Please Join or Renew!

If you aren't currently a FBFRT member, we invite you to climb aboard! Membership is available either through the FBFRT web site or by using the form included with this newsletter. Larger membership numbers give us a stronger and more persuasive voice.

The Friends use membership funds to support development of the BFRT. Members funded this newsletter, informational brochures, the website, the numerous phone calls required to advance the project to the construction phase, the courtesy mailings to rail trail abutters, and public education and outreach activities. All of this is necessary to advance the rail trail!

Sudbury Proceeds with Rail Trail Studies

SUDBURY – Sudbury Town Meeting approved funds for three rail-trail-related articles last April: a title search, a wildlife study and a survey (including wetlands flagging). Despite a vigorous campaign against these articles by a small group of opponents, the final votes were overwhelmingly in favor of the rail trail.

After the title review for the rail bed was completed, Town Counsel determined that the title is sufficiently clear to proceed. A firm to conduct a four-season wildlife study has been selected. Next on the agenda is the selection of a firm to survey the rail bed and do wetlands delineation.

The Town of Sudbury's Board of Selectmen has asked the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC) to assemble information about the rail trail and submit it by September 2008. The Selectmen plan to make a go/no-go decision concerning the rail trail in December 2008.

The RTCAC has been communicating with the Sudbury Agricultural Commission in order to understand their concerns and to see how other rail trails through agricultural areas have addressed some of the issues relating to farm abutters. Roughly half the length of the right of way in Sudbury passes through or borders farmland, most of it active.

Framingham Land Saved From Sale

FRAMINGHAM – A valuable piece of land directly adjacent to the CSX-owned right of way was saved from auction last August. Although the parcel at 730 Water Street is not buildable, it could be used for trailside amenities such as a seating area or a parking area, if the right-of-way is converted to a trail.

After being alerted to the potential value of the land to the town, the Board of Selectmen withdrew the parcel from the auction.

Yard Sale for the Trail

Vika Testarmata and her mother drive past the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail near their home in Acton almost every day. She says she has been waiting “for a really long time” for its construction so that she can safely bike around town with her mother and friends.

They have enjoyed riding on the near-by Nashua River Rail Trail and particularly appreciate its scenery and nature: beaver dams, snapping turtles, and beautiful ponds. But they have to drive to a trailhead. When the Bruce Freeman is complete, they will be able to ride right down the street to connect with it. Vika had been planning a yard sale and decided that she would donate part of the proceeds to the local BFRT. She hopes that her donation will help move the project along and inspire other people to support the trail too.



According to her mother, Ann Marie, Vika and a friend “had a great time waving at cars, selling coffee and lemonade in addition to the stuff they had collected to sell.” The sale even went self-service for about an hour while the girls were at soccer.

MassHighway Forms Coordinating Committee

WESTFORD / CARLISLE / ACTON / CONCORD / SUDBURY / FRAMINGHAM – At the direction of Commissioner Paiewonsky, MassHighway is forming a committee to facilitate development and construction of Phases 2 and 3 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). The BFRT Coordinating Committee will consist of representatives from town governments and state agencies, including the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The Chair of the Committee is the newly designated MassHighway Project Manager for Phase 2, Lawrence Cash, P.E

The Committee will meet quarterly, starting this fall, to provide a forum for towns to exchange information with each other and relevant state agencies. Rail trail advocacy groups, such as the FBFRT, will be able to participate as observers but will not be members of the committee. FBFRT will set up a webpage dedicated to following the activities of this committee. **If you live in a Phase 2 or a Phase 3 town, please let your Town Manager and Board of Selectmen know that your town’s participation in the BFRT Coordinating Committee is important for advancing the rail trail and that you expect them to have a representative in attendance at every meeting.**

Toot, Toot!

Thank you to the numerous staff at various state, regional, and local offices and agencies who have provided answers to our questions and assistance over the past year.

Pedal Power Bike and Ski has stuck by the Friends through thick and thin. Show them your appreciation by shopping for your next bike there! If you bring this newsletter you can get 10% off on parts! 176 Great Road (Rt. 2A) in Acton.

The Friends are once again indebted to Jet Mail Services Inc. of Hudson, MA for their support and for their assistance in assembling and mailing this newsletter.



Daphne Freeman, widow of former state rep. Bruce Freeman and MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky cut the cake at the long-awaited trail ground breaking.

For Further Information

Visit: www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

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Attend: Monthly Friends meetings

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