



OLD NORTH BRIDGE

TOWN OF CONCORD

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June 23, 2014

Ms. Marie Rose, P.E. - Director of Project Management
Massachusetts Department of Transportation - Highway Division
Ten Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116-3973

Attention: Mr. Dave Shedd, P.E. - Project Manager

Subject: Historic Interpretation along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail – Phase 2B and 2C

Dear Mr. Shedd,

The Town of Concord has played a significant role in regional, state, and national development and history, being the site of the first battle of the American Revolutionary War on April 19, 1775, and the home of some of the greatest literary and transcendentalist minds in America. The Town hosts many visitors who come to Concord for its nationally significant historic, natural, and cultural sites, and we believe the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) will draw new visitors to Concord as they experience the rail trail. West Concord established its identity as a separate village and developed as a commercial and industrial center between the mid-1870s and the 1920s, focused on the three railroad lines that intersected near the West Concord Depot.

The BFRT provides an opportunity to focus on the rich railroad and industrial history of West Concord. In January 2008, Public Archaeology Laboratory Inc. (PAL), a sub-consultant to the design firm Vanasse, Hangen, Brustlin (VHB), identified and surveyed over 40 railroad-related artifacts along the BFRT. The final PAL report included recommendations for preservation and integration of these artifacts into the landscape design with interpretive displays. The Town of Concord's BFRT Advisory Committee, working with the Concord Historical Commission and a local railroad historian, reviewed the recommendations in the PAL report.

Enclosed is a list of the historic artifacts that the Town of Concord would like to retain and protect. Also included is the list of interpretive display design elements that the Town would like to have Greenman, Pedersen, Inc (GPI) include in the 75% design of the BFRT. Some of these elements are in the Phase 2B section of the trail. The Phase 2B elements are included in this letter for completeness. The Town would like to retain these elements for the duration of our lease of the

Right-of-Way and therefore would like to continue the discussion of how we can include this itemized list of artifacts in the lease.

Obtain, Retain, Relocate, Restore and Protect

The enclosed spreadsheet, Table 1, contains the list of artifacts that the Town of Concord would like to retain and protect in the ROW lease. The first column of the table indicates the resource number as listed in the PAL report. The “Sign” and “Type” columns indicate whether this is a location of historic interpretation and the type of sign to install. In addition, there are some original items that have been removed since the 2008 report, which the Town would like to reacquire or obtain from another source and reinstall for interpretive display. If artifacts are in need of repair, the Town would like to acquire the appropriate components from salvage yards to repair the items.

There are a few artifacts that may be impacted by the design of the trail, such as the mile post at the Commonwealth Avenue crossing near the Massachusetts Correctional Institution (MCI) – Concord. Rather than discard any of these artifacts, the town would like them moved to the Nashoba Brook Bridge 14.81 display area (described in detail later in this letter).

Because residents abutting the BFRT south of Williams Road would prefer that trail users continue riding through the sensitive wildlife areas located here and not be tempted to stop, we would like to relocate a few artifacts located south of Williams Road to the Nashoba Brook area for display & interpretation, rather than adding signs at their present locations along the trail.

Interpretive Displays

The Town envisions a focal point of the historic interpretation located at the rest area designed as part of the Nashoba Brook crossing, Bridge 14.81 that will be described in detail in this letter. In addition, there are six other locations where the Town would like signage: Phase 2B - the Nashoba Brook Bridge near Route 2 and the prison cemetery; Phase 2C – Middlesex Junction near MCI Concord, the flanger in Junction Park, the Main St intersection, and the semaphore located south of Williams Rd.

- Phase 2B - Nashoba Brook Bridge near Route 2: Though the actual BFRT is elevated at this point, the Town would like MassDOT and the design firm to retain as much of the existing bridge and its abutments in place. The 25% design is not yet complete for this phase of the BFRT, but if possible, it would be desirable to allow for an informal footpath from the trail surface to the at-grade bridge location. If it is possible to allow pedestrian access to this location then a sign of Type 1 or 2 could contain information about how the existing abutments allowed for a two-track crossing of the brook at this location and the associated railroads that serviced these areas.
- Phase 2B - Prison Cemetery: The design plans prepared by VHB show a rest area near the prison cemetery. The Town would like to have a sign of Type 1 or 2 at this location to explain the historic context of the cemetery. For example, the graves were originally marked

only with the prisoners' identification number. Through local efforts, the names were added to the grave stones at a later date.

- Phase 2C – Middlesex Junction: Resource 10 is a junction in the tracks, with the switch linkage, that allowed for trains to exit the main track and continue to the prison property. Guards could activate the switch from within the prison. The Town would like to restore and protect the curved section of rail, the linkage, and any other existing artifacts in this area. A sign of Type 1 would explain the history of the rail lines that intersected here.

From Middlesex Junction to the Nashoba Brook Bridge 14.81, there are three complete sets of tracks and a granite wall running parallel to each other. The Town would like to retain in place the granite wall and two of the three sets of rails in this section. The trail surface would replace the center set of rails from Middlesex Junction to just south of the Winthrop St. crossing. Just south of Winthrop St., the trail surface would then transition to the west edge of the bridge crossing.

- Phase 2C – Bridge 14.81 Nashoba Brook Rest Area: The bridge rest area will be a focal point for historic interpretation of the railroad artifacts. We envision that the rest area will include the bridge viewing area and also extend past the bridge structure for several feet in both the north and south direction. The Town would like to retain the full width of bridge 14.81. The trail travel surface would occupy the west end of the bridge width and a rest area would occupy the east 2/3 of the width of the bridge. Figure 4 (a) shows a plan view of the bridge and rest area. Figure 4 (b) shows a cross-section through the bridge.

Our goal is to obtain rails and a switch to reinstate the section at resource 18 & 19 that was removed by MassDOT a few years ago. If there are any switches within Phase 2A or in a MassDOT salvage yard, the Town of Concord would like to obtain a switch with the appropriate components to restore the section as shown in the rest area figures.

Currently, there is a new housing development (an assisted living project is being considered) proposed for the former prison land at the end of Winthrop St.; therefore, we would like to have the bridge rest area surface be a solid surface that can be flush-mounted with the rails. Figure 4 (b) contains photos of an installation in Manhattan (the High Line). However, another possibility could be porous pavers similar to that in Junction Park. We are looking for guidance from design consultant Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) to propose a surface for the rest area. The Town would like a surface that has the following features:

- (a) is visually distinct from the hot-mix asphalt travel surface of the rail trail;
- (b) does not require a raised curb between the asphalt and rest area;
- (c) will not have sand, pebbles or other small granular material spilling onto the travel surface;
- (d) will work well with the new bridge drainage system and won't degrade the bridge structure;
- (e) will fit in with the aesthetics of West Concord Village.

The 25% design created by VHB shows a safety railing between the trail surface and the rest area; however, the Town would prefer to eliminate the safety railing and have a continuous, level surface between the hot-mix asphalt travel surface and the rest area surface. In addition, the Town requests that GPI propose locations for two benches within the rest area. When preparing the design of this bridge, rest area, and signage, GPI should be mindful of the existing trail networks, driveways and new mixed use development near this bridge crossing. The signage at the bridge and display area should be of Type 1.

Again, if any existing artifacts along the trail corridor need to be removed due to the trail design or construction, the Town encourages consideration to relocate such artifacts for display at this rest area location rather than discarded.

- Phase 2C – Flanger in Junction Park: The Town would like to add a small sign of Type 2 to be located at Resource 22, a flanger that is located in Junction Park.
- Phase 2C - Main Street Crossing: The BFRT crosses Main Street in front of the Ninety-Nine Restaurant. On the north side of this intersection is the recently renovated Junction Park. On the south side of the intersection, is a memorial granite bench. The Town would like to include a kiosk, sign Type 3 on the south side of the intersection. Locating a kiosk at this intersection will provide incentive for trail users to slow down, and preferably dismount their bikes, prior to crossing the intersection. The kiosk can act as a gateway into West Concord by providing content that could include a map of the village, trail rules, and historic information pertaining to West Concord.
- Phase 2C – Semaphore: Resource 43 is a semaphore that is located south of Williams Rd. The Town would like a sign of Type 2 to be located near the semaphore. The semaphore is missing one of its blades and therefore the Town would like to repair the semaphore by obtaining a replacement blade. The semaphore also has a ladder attached to it. The Town would like GPI to propose a solution that allows for interpretation of this historic resource while keeping the safety of trail users in mind (and reducing the attractive nuisance aspect of the ladder).

Sign Content

The Town would like to coordinate with Kurt Jergensen of MassDOT regarding the format characteristics of the signs (background colors, fonts, etc.). The Town can assist in developing the content material to be included on each sign. Figures 5 to 8 are examples of existing images that the Town possesses and might be included in the sign content. In addition, the Town will also provide a content server with the goal of including a barcode or “QR” code, that trail users can scan, and link to additional information on the Town’s website.

Conclusion

West Concord has a vibrant agricultural and industrial history. The village was a transportation hub for the various passenger and freight railroads, such as the Fitchburg Railroad and the Penn Central

Railroad. The historic West Concord Depot and Junction Park continues to serve passengers of the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter rail line. The design and construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail provides the Town of Concord a unique opportunity to highlight the importance of the railroad history to this community. Thank you for your consideration of including these artifacts and design elements in the right-of-way lease and the design of Phase 2B and 2C of the BFRT.

Sincerely,



Steven Ng, Chair
Concord Board of Selectmen

cc: Senator Michael Barrett
Representative Cory Atkins



Figure 1. Sign Type 1



Figure 2. Sign Type 2



Figure 3. Sign Type 3

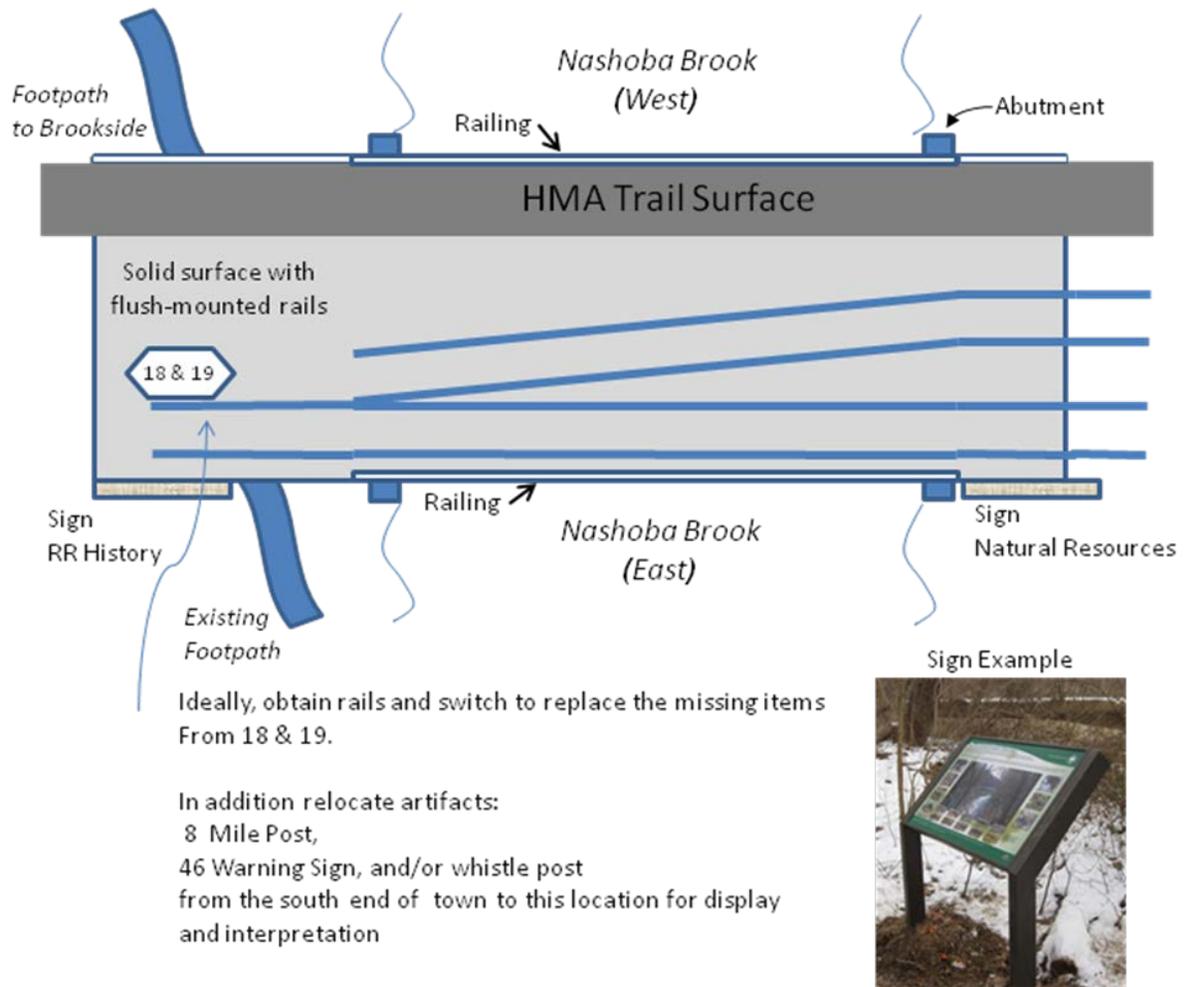
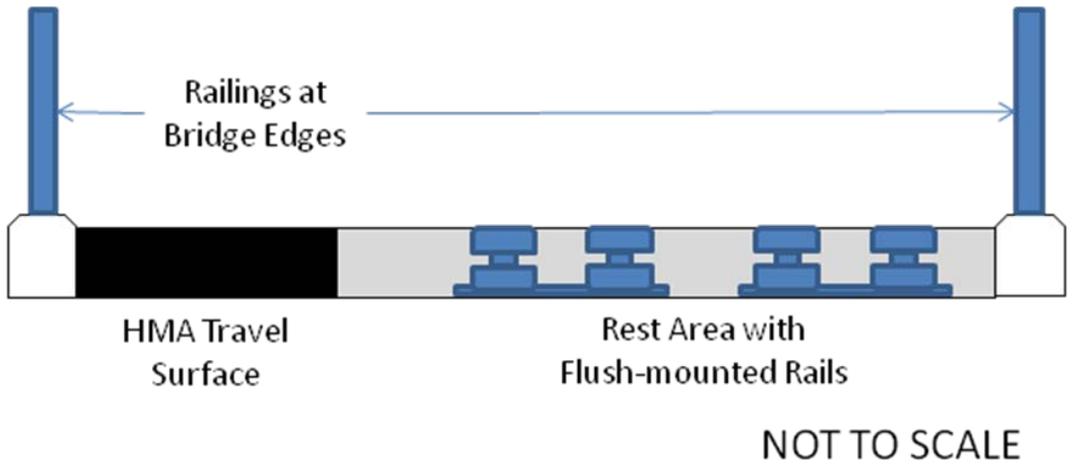


Figure 4 (a). Plan view of Rest Area at Nashoba Brook



Examples of Flush Mounted Rails in a Solid Surface
(The Highline – Manhattan)



Figure 4 (b). Cross Section of Rest Area, Images of Highline Surface



Figure 5. Prison Reformatory



Figure 6. Penn Central in West Concord



Figure 7. Crossing the Assabet



Figure 8. Aerial View of West Concord
(Assabet Bridge on right)