
FAQ

Concord's Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Project

Prepared by the BFRT Advisory Committee 4/24/08 Article 27

1. Q: At Town Meeting 2008, are we voting to build the BFRT in Concord?

A: *No.* The 2006 Town Meeting voted to spend \$160,000 to create a 25% design plan for the BFRT. The design firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) was hired and with input from the citizens, the town Advisory Committee and the Selectmen have produced the 25% design plan. Article 27 asks the Town to vote to authorize the Selectmen to submit this 25% design to MassHighway for approval. There are three other articles on the warrant, all submitted by petition, also relating to the rail trail.

2. Q: What is a 25% design?

A: A 25% design is the first step in the MassHighway design process. It includes survey data, traffic data, preliminary pavement design and cross sections, sketch plans for bridges, a preliminary cost estimate, and a design report with a list requesting exceptions from standard MassHighway requirements. A preliminary review of anticipated environmental permits is included as well as delineation of environmentally sensitive areas.

3. Q: If Town Meeting approves the 25% design plan, what happens next?

A: The town will begin the process of submitting the plan to MassHighway for approval. If MassHighway approval is received, then it is likely that Town Meeting (perhaps in 2009) will be asked to approve funds to pay for the 75% design. If that funding is approved, the design process will continue.

4. Q: What will be addressed in the 75% design phase?

A: The 75% design phase will address abutter privacy issues through landscaping and fencing, wetland mitigation measures to be implemented, construction footprint, trail surface details, signage, drainage, access ramps, and other design issues. Rules for trail use will have to be addressed by the Town prior to the opening of the trail.

5. Q: Who will use the trail?

A: The BFRT will be a multiuse trail, serving Concord residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, including those who wish to walk, jog, bicycle, tricycle, cross country ski, snow shoe, push a stroller, and those using a wheelchair and others. The paved portion of the trail will also serve in-line skaters and children on scooters. Equestrians and motorized vehicles (except motorized wheelchairs) will be excluded from the trail.

6. Q: Why has the Advisory Committee recommended two different surface types?

A: The committee has heard the opinions and interests of many abutters, town citizens, experts, and VHB and, after serious consideration, voted to recommend a compromise solution: an asphalt paved surface from the Acton town line to the Assabet River and a non-asphalt stabilized surface from the Assabet River to the Sudbury town line.

7. Q: What is a non-asphalt stabilized surface?

A: It is a trail surface composed of sand, gravel or crushed stone bound together or "stabilized" with a binding agent such as polyurethane, pine resin or other product. It is firm and stable, meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and accommodating bicycles, tricycles, baby carriages, wheelchairs, cross-country skiers, and others, but not very small wheels such as those on in-line skates.

8. Q: What type of surface is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

A: Proposed federal regulations require that trail surfaces be "firm and stable." An earlier requirement that such surfaces also be "slip resistant" has been dropped "because slip resistance cannot be guaranteed in the outdoor environment" (www.access-board.gov/outdoor/nprm Sec.T303.3).

Asphalt, non-asphalt stabilized, and stone dust surfaces *all* satisfy the ADA requirements.

9. Q: What will happen at the northern end of the trail that crosses Route 2 to join with the Acton portion of the BFRT?

A: MassHighway is including in its plans for redesigning the Concord Rotary an overpass or underpass to carry the trail over or under Route 2. The committee recommends crossing Route 2 at or near the current rail bed location. Before the Rotary project is completed, the trail will have a temporary endpoint near Commonwealth Avenue.

10. Q: What will happen at the southern end of the trail if Sudbury does not continue the trail or delays the construction of its portion?

A: Unless and until Sudbury moves forward in building its portion of the trail, the southern endpoint of Concord's portion of the BFRT will be at Powder Mill Road.

11. Q: How will the trail cross the active rail line by Concord Depot?

A: At this stage in the process, the Advisory Committee is recommending that users of the trail continuing south from Nashoba Brook bear right onto an old spur of the railroad to Commonwealth Avenue. At that point, users will be directed to walk (with their bikes) along the sidewalk on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue to Junction Park. The existing pedestrian track crossing at the West Concord Station will not be altered, but is not being considered as part of the trail.

This decision was made because the committee was advised by the MBTA that federal rail rules do not allow "at grade pedestrian crossings" of active rail lines. (The existing at grade crossing is grandfathered for train users, but not for a new use—a rail trail). A crossing at Commonwealth Ave. where there are pedestrian gates and flashing lights was deemed appropriate by the MBTA for a rail trail crossing. The Advisory Committee supports further investigation to determine the feasibility of alternative means (including a tunnel) of crossing the railroad tracks.

12. Q: Will there be additional parking spaces for trail users?

A: Yes, the Advisory Committee recommends that there be two new small parking lots, one near the West Concord Depot and one where the trail crosses Commonwealth Avenue, as well as one new handicap parking space near the junction of Williams Road and Old Marlboro Road.

13. Q: Will there be rest areas along the trail?

A: Yes, the Advisory Committee recommends that there be four small rest areas (not including bathrooms): one north of Commonwealth Avenue near the present site of the Prison Cemetery, one near Nashoba Brook in West Concord Center, one on the north side of the Assabet River, and one near the Jennie Dugan wetland.

14. Q: Will there be trail access at Powder Mill Road?

A: Yes, the Advisory Committee recommends neighborhood access by an ADA-compliant ramp from Powder Mill Road to the trail. The committee does not support any additional parking on streets in this area.

15. Q: What environmental impediments were found that will impact construction of the trail?

A: The Natural Resources Commission approved the wetland boundaries, and avoidance of these areas will continue as the design progresses. It is not expected that there will be any wetland filling.

A rare plant survey was conducted last year, with a follow-up survey to be conducted this summer. No rare plants were found in the initial survey. Surveys for blue-spotted salamanders in the vernal pools along the right-of-way (ROW), wood turtles, and rare dragonflies will be done this year. Even if blue-spotted salamanders are found, the proposed trail isn't expected to affect them (or other amphibians) because they will be using it on rainy nights when there won't be much human use. Dragonflies are also not expected to be affected by the rail trail construction or use. There is a known nesting area for painted turtles along the ROW near Warner's Pond, and the trail will be designed to avoid this area.

16. Q: How will the BFRT design and construction be funded?

A: If MassHighway funding is obtained, the Town will be expected to pay 10% of the total cost, which is generally the cost to design the trail. Thus the state (10%) and federal government (80%) generally are expected to pay 100% of the construction costs of building the trail. These state and federal funds are specific to projects such as rail trails and cannot be used for other projects such as highways, sidewalks, schools, or public safety. Concord would be responsible for any costs that would be considered above what is deemed fundable by MassHighway. It is possible Concord might have to pay the full cost of any restroom facility if one is included in West Concord center.

The Town of Concord will be responsible for all ongoing maintenance and management costs.

17. Q: What would the cost be to replace the culvert at Powder Mill Road?

A: VHB estimated the cost to replace the culvert at Powder Mill Road to be about \$1,000,000 if the road is kept open or about \$500,000 if the road is closed during construction. The Advisory Committee does not recommend replacing the Powder Mill culvert.