



FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

Framingham Owns It!

Framingham finally has taken ownership of the southern-most 3.4 miles of the BFRT right-of-way that carried trains from Framingham to Lowell starting in 1871. This section of rail bed was last used in 2000. Following a derailment that year, owner CSX filed to abandon it. After some administrative delays, the property was transferred to the city in December 2023. Construction of this section will complete the 25-mile BFRT. (Editor's note: One finds it exciting to anticipate that, after more than 20 years, completion of the BFRT is in sight!)

According to Framingham's Planning and Community Development Director Sarkis Sarkisian, a preliminary design will be unnecessary, and the project will go straight to 25% design.

The project will be done in two sections: from the Sudbury town line to Frost Street, about 1.4 miles, and then from Frost Street to Rte. 30 (Pleasant Street), just short of Rte. 9 at Framingham Center. Framingham has contracted with BETA Group for design of the first section. Once Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) funds have been awarded, construction typically takes about two years.

Design and construction of the remaining section, which includes the bridges over Grove Street and the Mass Pike, will then follow.

When constructed, the BFRT will have the potential to be the spine of a network of trails connecting all of Framingham, including a direct connection to the Weston Aqueduct Trail.



The first section of the BFRT in Framingham will begin at the Sudbury town line and end here at Frost Street (shown to the right). Last year's roadway reconstruction included the curb cuts seen here in anticipation of the BFRT crossing.

Sudbury Phase 2D: Closer to the End than the Beginning

Construction of Phase 2D of the BFRT in Sudbury started in January 2023 and is expected to be complete by this summer. This 4.9-mile section of the rail trail, from Station Road near Rte. 20 to the tunnel under Powder Mill Road in Concord, is now recognizable as a Mass DOT standard rail trail. **However, until the trail is officially open, the public is urged to stay out of this active construction area.**

The base layer of asphalt has been laid on the entire corridor with the exception of the aprons where the trail crosses the roadways. The bridges over Hop Brook and Pantry Brook are in place, and the railings are being installed. Long segments of three-rail fencing along drop-offs and cattle crossings have been built, and mile markers are in place. New traffic lights and crossing signals at North Road (Rte. 117) and at the Peakham Road/Hudson Road intersections are being installed.



Sudbury Phase 2D photos (from left to right): Engineers from Jacobs inspecting old railroad bridge crossing at Hop Brook in 2018; specialized truck installing wood posts for railings just south of Pantry Brook; wooden fencing being installed just north of Rte. 117 (North Road).

Before the trail is open, trail signs, individual property screening, wayfinding signage, benches, hydration stations, interpretative panels, tool stands and sanitary facilities will be installed. The paved spurs linking parking areas at Davis Field and Parkinson Field to the BFRT are finished, providing substantial parking for trail users. The rest area and parking lot at the Morse Road crossing are under construction. The second layer of asphalt will be placed throughout Phase 2D by late June.

Former Sudbury Select Board member Len Simon remarked, "At the moment, we are between the start and the finish of the buildout of Phase 2D of the BFRT in Sudbury. It has been fascinating and exhilarating to watch the trail come to life before our eyes, whetting our appetites for the official opening later this year. Still to come is Phase 3, which now seems closer as we have seen steady progress for the past year. Let's celebrate together at the BFRT Phase 2D ribbon cutting later this year." (See inside for information on the Sudbury Town Meeting CPA articles for BFRT funding and public information meeting on Phase 3 design.)

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury



Sudbury Town Meeting to Vote on BFRT Funding

The May Sudbury Town Meeting warrant includes Article 35 to provide \$600,000 in Community Preservation Act funds for all of the unfunded design costs for Phase 3 in Sudbury. It also includes Article 39 to provide \$100,000 in CPA funds to pay for design and evaluation of options for rebuilding the driveway access to Parkinson Field and the BFRT connector, located on Rte. 27 across from Peakham Road. Both of these articles have been unanimously supported by the Select Board and the Friends of BFRT board.

Phase 3 of the BFRT in Sudbury is the section that begins at Station Road, currently the south end of Phase 2D, and runs 1.4 miles to Eaton Road in Framingham. The end of Phase 2D, the BFRT at Station Road, is called 'the diamond' because that's where the Mass Central Rail Trail intersects with the BFRT. The town has been coordinating with Mass DOT for the trail crossing at Rte. 20.

The preliminary 25% design has been submitted to MassDOT, and it should be eligible for state Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) funding when the 25% design is finalized in June. If all goes according to plan, Phase 3 will be assigned TIP construction funding for 2026. The project would then be advertised in summer of 2026 with bidding to follow. Actual construction could begin in late 2026 or early 2027.

An informational meeting will be held in Sudbury on April 23 to present information about constructing this section of the trail. The session will begin at 6:30 p.m. as a "drop-in" event to provide an opportunity for attendees to view design plans and to ask questions. A formal presentation will start at 7 p.m. More information about this meeting, including the location, can be found at <https://bit.ly/Sudburymeeting>.



The intersection of the BFRT and Mass Central Rail Trail is marked by this railroad cross track, called a 'diamond,' shown prior to the start of construction. It has been preserved and will be placed near its original location as part of a roundabout when construction is complete.

Bike Share Programs

Concord's Minuteman Bike Share program will run from April 1 to November 30 with locations in Concord Center behind the Visitors' Center and in West Concord along the trail near Nashoba Brook. Rentals, including two trikes in West Concord, will cost \$2 per hour and may be returned to either station. This year the program will have additional bikes and a system better able to handle international visitors and those without smart phones. More information about the Concord bike share can be found at the website: <https://bit.ly/ConcordBikeShare>.



As of early spring Acton's bike share funding was still pending for this season. However, through a Community Connections Grant, the town has received funding for bike parking along the BFRT, utilizing the pads in place for the bike share program. In response to concerns about the proximity of the bike parking to the trail, the parking area will be moved slightly farther off the trail. This will improve the safety of the trail while providing an opportunity for cyclists to park and enjoy the scenic vistas or visit adjacent businesses.



Construction of Phase 2D includes the 1/2-mile section in Concord from the Sudbury line past White Pond to the underpass at Powder Mill Road.

Tricycle Rentals Available at NARA Park

Acton's tricycle rental fleet has expanded to include one child trike, five adult trikes and one adult side-by-side trike. During the summer the bikes can be borrowed at the NARA Beach snack bar window or reserved ahead of time by using the self-service reservation system at the bottom of the Acton Recreation website: www.actonrec.com. During the off-season, arrangements for renting the trikes can be made by calling the Recreation Department at 978-929-6640.

The tricycles are available to interested riders whether or not they need adaptive equipment. Cost for the two-hour rental is free to Acton residents and \$5 to non-residents. A trike was rented out almost every nice day last summer, with the most popular being the adult side-by-side trike.

It Takes a Team in Chelmsford

Chelmsford residents and town staff collaborate to keep the trail safe and well maintained. Last fall, the Town DPW swept the trail several times to remove leaves and brush. Volunteer Bob Schneider not only patrolled the trail to pick up trash and remove small branches and limbs, he also worked with Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) member Tom Gazda to install the new trail rules signs.

BPAC also worked with the DPW and Police Department to address maintenance and safety issues along the trail. Mass DOT Highway Division addressed ongoing graffiti issues in the Rte. 3 tunnel and at the I-495 underpass along the trail.



The BFRT at Central Square in Chelmsford, looking south.

Lowell Litter Krewe Cleans Up

Late last fall 115 members of the Lowell Litter Krewe cleaned up under the Connector Bridge behind Target in Lowell. They filled a 30-yard dumpster with 7,000 pounds of trash, including 25 tires, four mattresses and two sofas, washing machines and refrigerators. They also cleaned up an assortment of pallets, paint cans, car seats, bottles and other discards.



The Krewe was joined by members of Triple Threat Organization, a Lowell-based youth nonprofit focusing on development of grade school boys and girls through sports, academics and community engagement. Jane Calvin, executive director of Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, gave some history of the Lowell Connector Trail, which will connect the BFRT to the Concord River Greenway. Peter Gervais of Gervais Auto Group helped transport the trash to the dumpster and hosted the volunteers for lunch.

"Lowell Litter Krewe is so excited that the Connector Trail will extend the end of the BFRT into Lowell, especially because of the amazing aerosol art that is located under the Connector Bridge. We look forward to sharing the light in which we see our wonderful city with the cyclists and pedestrians who spend so much time enjoying the BFRT," said Brad Buitenhuys, executive director of the Lowell Litter Krewe.

Connector Trail Plans Move Forward in Lowell

The northern terminus of the BFRT has been at the parking lot for Cross Point Towers office complex in Lowell ever since the first part of the trail was opened in 2009. The original rail bed, which is adjacent to the office complex, continues to the far side of Industrial Avenue. Lowell's planned 0.35-mile Connector Trail will extend the BFRT from Industrial Avenue northward, passing under the Lowell Connector highway and continuing to the Meadow Brook Shopping Center where Target is located. Engineering, permitting and bidding are expected to be completed this spring, clearing the way for construction.

Eventually this section of trail will be a link connecting the BFRT's northern terminus, the 5.2-mile system of downtown Lowell Canalway trails, the Concord River Greenway and the Merrimack River Trail to New Hampshire, closing one of the last remaining gaps in the regional 200-mile Bay Circuit Trail.

This project is spearheaded by the City of Lowell. Funding has been provided by a Mass Trails Grant and matching funds from community organizations, including a \$10,000 grant from the Friends of the BFRT.

Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
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Concord, MA 01742



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Sudbury Town Meeting warrant articles 35 & 39 provide funding for the BFRT
Sudbury Town Meeting starts on Monday, May 6

Friends Meeting on Invasive Species
April 18, Pedal Power in Acton

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.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Conductor \$100* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineer \$250* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> RR Tycoon \$500+* |

*Conductor (\$100) and above receive complimentary gift!

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Contact Name

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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. ☐ ☐

Send my newsletter via email (include email address above). ☐ ☐

Send via postal mail. ☐ ☐

I would like to receive email updates from the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. ☐ ☐

I would like to volunteer. ☐ ☐

If you are donating \$100 or more, please choose a complimentary gift:

- ☐ BFRT Cap
☐ BFRT Socks (S/M or 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 online at:

brucefreemanrailtrail.org



It's the Law - 4 Feet!



Massachusetts' new "Vulnerable Road Users Laws" went into effect in April 2023. The law requires motorists to pass vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists, at a safe passing distance of at least 4 feet.

If You See It, Pull It!

Garlic mustard is one of the most invasive weeds that grows along the BFRT. It eliminates native plants, which wildlife depend on, and it can stunt the growth of native trees. No animals will eat it, so it has no predators - except for informed, vigilant citizens who pull it out. Even worse, garlic mustard roots produce a chemical that prevents other plants from growing in that soil. One plant can produce up to 6,000 seeds that can remain viable in the soil up to 10 years. Because of this it's crucial to pull plants before they go to seed.



Garlic mustard can be eliminated before it goes to seed by pulling it from late April through May. Trail users can help control this weed by pulling it out of the ground at the base with a gentle tug, making sure to get out all of the roots. Most of the soil must be removed so the plant cannot go to seed.

The plants can be disposed of in a number of ways. They can be placed in black trash bags and allowed to sit in the sun until they completely dry. They can also be left in the "crotch" of a tree to die or on a hard surface (asphalt) to kill the roots.

It is important to pull all garlic mustard plants in an area every year until the seed bank is exhausted and seedlings no longer appear. This will require multiple efforts each year as rosettes can continue to bolt and produce flowers. Energetic BFRT users can help with this effort. For more more information, go to the FBFRT website: www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org.

April Member Meeting to Focus on Invasive Species

The Friends will sponsor a member meeting on April 18 at 7 p.m. at Pedal Power Bike and Ski, 176 Great Road (Rte. 2A), Acton, to focus on invasive species such as garlic mustard and buckthorn.

Jane Maloney, Land Steward of the Sudbury Valley Trustees, will share information on identifying and removing these plants from our neighborhoods and along the BFRT.

Jane holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science and has previously worked for the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston. As a Land Steward at SVT, she works to control invasive plants on SVT properties and to maintain hiking trails for public use.

Light refreshments will be served. The meeting is open to the public.

YES, Please Sit on the Bench!



This 'From Trash to Treasure' bicycle art sculpture bench was recently placed trail-side behind Pedal Power Bike and Ski in Acton. The bench was created by Acton artist Yin Peet of the YV Art Museum in North Acton. Yin, inspired by the BFRT, created the bench sculpture by recycling bikes that she picked up from the town transfer station. According to Peet, "the bicycle art bench was a transformation into something fun, functional and colorful."

Placing Acton public art benches and murals alongside Acton businesses reflects the importance of local businesses to the community, according to the town's Director of Economic and Community Development Julie Pierce. She said that the town's new public art initiative helps to "promote community cohesion, bring attention to small businesses, support local artists and highlight the town's values of sustainability, active recreation (bicycling) and town rail trails."

Pedal Power co-owner Joyce Reischutz said the bicycle bench really put Pedal Power 'on the map' after it was featured on a WBZ news story earlier this year.



Susan Devlin of Acton is with BFRT Westford Board member Emily Teller on the BFRT in Acton. Over the past six years, Susan has biked more than 12,000 miles on her Trek Townie level 1 e-bike, mostly on the BFRT. Despite having had three joint replacements, Susan uses her e-bike to keep on cycling.

Photo Credits

Sharon Galpin, Ed Kross, Barbara Pike, Len Simon

Join Us at a Friends' Event

Friends of BFRT Meeting

Tuesday, April 18, 7 p.m.

Topic: Control of Invasive Weeds

Pedal Power Bike and Ski, 176 Great Road (Rte. 2A), Acton

Framingham Earth Day

Saturday, April 20 (Rain date: April 27), 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Framingham Centre Common

Contact Ed Kross: ekross1976@gmail.com

Carlisle Route to Sustainability Day

Saturday, April 27, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Carlisle town center and school parking lot off Church Street

Contact Glenn Reed: greed@gdrconsulting.net

Summer Solstice Bike Ride

Friday, June 21, 6 p.m. (Rain date, June 22)

Pedal Power Bike and Ski, 176 Great Road (Rte. 2A), Acton

Parking available across Great Road

Come walk or ride on the BFRT

Join the Friends for post-ride/walk pizza

Contact Tom Michelman: tmichelman@gmail.com

Sudbury Spring Fest

Saturday, June 22, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Haskell Field, 40 Fairbank Road

Contact: Len Simon: lensimon@comcast.net

Carlisle Old Home Day

Saturday, June 22, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Carlisle school parking lot off Church Street

Contact Glenn Reed: greed@gdrconsulting.net

Go to brucefreemanrailtrail.org/calendar-events for the most up-to-date event information on all events.

See something? Say something!

In case of emergency, dial 911

Non-emergency safety issues:

Chelmsford: 978-250-5228 (weekdays)
978-256-2521 (nights & weekends)

Westford: 978-692-5532

Carlisle: 978-369-6156

Acton: highway@actonma.gov

Concord: 978-318-3220, or report online at:
concordma.gov/1227/Reporting-an-Issue

Nature on the Trail



A duck couple enjoying views of the new Pantry Brook bridge.

Rail Trail Safety Tip

Individuals and groups, whether walking or on wheels, should travel on the right side of the trail and use the left side (when clear) to pass.

Thanks to:

**Pedal Power Bike and Ski,
176 Great Road, Acton**
for their continued support
of the Friends and for
hosting the Friends
meetings and the Summer
Solstice Bike Rides.



For Further Information:

Visit us at: www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org
Facebook.com/BruceFreemanRailTrail
Twitter.com/FriendsofBFRT

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