

MassHighway Department DISTRICT 4
Project Need Form (PNF) and Project
Initiation Form (PIF)
Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Concord, MA
Attachment A

PART 1

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT NEED (Page 1)

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) corridor extends approximately 25 miles along the Framingham and Lowell railroad corridor and is named in memory of former State Representative Bruce Freeman. The Town of Concord is proposing the construction of a 3.5 mile context-sensitive trail section of the BFRT from the Acton Town Line at Route 2, south to the Sudbury Town Line. The Concord section of the BFRT will be constructed to meet the trail in Acton to the north, and Sudbury to the south. Both Acton and Sudbury are currently under design and study of the trail, respectively. The Concord section at Route 2 has been included with MHD's Rotary Redesign project and is within the purview of MHD.

The Concord portion of the trail passes near Warner's pond; across Nashoba Brook in two locations; through the West Concord village center; over the Assabet River; along farmland, the wetlands of a beaver pond, the Jennie Duggan stream and White Pond (a state designated Great Pond). The alignment crosses four public roads at-grade including Commonwealth Avenue, Main Street, Old Marlboro Road, Williams Road, and passes under Powder Mill Road. The trail also crosses the active Fitchburg line of the MBTA Commuter Rail at the West Concord station.

The intent of this project is to provide a multi-use rail trail that maintains the feel of a Concord woods path while accommodating for safe road crossings; minimizing impacts to White Pond and other sensitive areas; and minimizing impacts to abutters. The proposed trail will be designed to highlight historic and environmental resources along the corridor.

MOBILITY ISSUES (Page 4)

The existing abandoned rail does not meet ADA compliance. The surface has been covered in sections with debris, and the surrounding vegetation has overgrown the right of way in many areas. The trail is currently being used by pedestrians and off-road bicyclists, and there is an established path worn along the rail lines in most areas of the trail. The Town intends to connect this section of the rail to trail with the other sections of trail regionally in both Acton and Sudbury, as well as locally to Sanborn School, the West Concord business district, the West Concord MBTA station as well as various neighborhoods adjacent to the trail.

The Town voted at the April 2008 Town Meeting to use an asphalt surface treatment for the trail that will fit into the context of the surrounding landscape. The surface will be designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Town Meeting also approved an amendment to the design that requires replacement of the existing Powder Mill Road culvert, which had been installed in the mid-1980's.

There are existing sidewalks on Main Street with existing pedestrian crosswalks at the intersection with Commonwealth Ave. that could be utilized by trail users. Measures may have to be taken, such as physical barriers and/or trail realignment to dissuade path users from taking the direct, straight-line route across the intersection with the active MBTA commuter railroad in West Concord. The signalized intersection of Commonwealth Avenue with Main Street will be upgraded to accommodate bicycles.

OTHER CONDITIONS (Page 5)

The existing RR right-of-way is currently utilized by pedestrians and bicyclists. The corridor crosses several roadways at skew angles, which do not have bicycle and pedestrian signs or pavement markings to provide for a safe crossing. There are no advanced warnings to alert motorists of trail users crossing the roadway. This project will realign the trail to the greatest extent possible and clear vegetation as needed to meet intersection sight distance requirements for at-grade crossings. The introduction of signs and pavement markings combined with improvements to existing signal equipment will improve sight distances and provide guidance to the trail users to make for safer interaction with vehicular traffic.

ALL PROJECTS EFFECT ON MULTIMODAL ACCOMMODATION (Page 6)

The Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Bicycle Path/ Rail Trail is a 25-mile shared-use path proposed from Lowell to Framingham along the former Lowell Secondary Track right-of-way of the Old Colony Railroad. Phase 1 extends from the Lowell/Chelmsford line to Route 225 in Westford (7 miles). Phase 2 extends from Route 225 in Westford to Route 20 in Sudbury (13 miles) and is broken into four sub-sections due to timing and scheduling differences for each of the communities involved:

- 2a. Acton, Westford and Carlisle
- 2b. Route 2 Rotary Redesign
- 2c. Concord
- 2d. Sudbury

Phase 3 extends from Route 20 in Sudbury to just north of Route 9 in Framingham. This project will provide the 3.5-mile multi-use off-road segment within the Town of Concord, included in Phase 2c. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) is being developed on a town-by-town basis with the following goals in mind:

- Encourage alternative forms of transportation to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution.
- Provide a safe transportation alternative for residents, commuters and area visitors of all ages and abilities.
- Improve non-motorized access to the MBTA Commuter Rail Station in West Concord.
- Provide trail access to commercial areas in Chelmsford, Acton, Concord, Sudbury and Framingham.
- Educate the public by providing an opportunity to expose historic and cultural resources along the corridor.
- Provide a recreational facility for Concord residents and residents of neighboring communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

As part of the evaluation of the trail, the Town prepared an environmental and historic study of the proposed trail alignment. Copies of both studies have been attached to the Functional Design Report for review.

PUBLIC PROCESS

On behalf of the Town, the Bruce Freeman Advisory Committee has undertaken a community outreach program that allowed the community to give input to the design of the rail to trail project. Nine public meetings were held during the spring and summer of 2007 to present the various design components and to solicit opinion on the components by the public. The meetings were video taped and played on public access television to reach the entire community. Many of the design features were debated, and the Town, through the advisory committee, listened to the community input to develop a trail that meets the community goals and objectives.

In addition to the public meeting process, the town drafted warrant articles regarding the rail to trail project for the 2006 Annual Town Meeting, the November 4, 2007 Special Town Meeting, and the April 29, 2008 Town Meeting. The warrant drafted for the 2006 Town Meeting approved through majority vote to fund the development of the

preliminary design of the trail. The warrants drafted for the 2007 Special Town Meeting requiring further environmental studies for the project, as well as town meeting approval of the plan prior to submittal to MHD for review failed to pass.

The April 29, 2008 Town Meeting voted to approve the March 5, 2008 preliminary design report and plans for submission to MHD with the following two changes: the Town voted to replace the existing culvert under Powdermill Road with a modern, ADA-compliance culvert and to surface the entire length of the trail in Concord with asphalt. In addition, the Town voted to authorize \$50,000 for the next year to fund revisions to the plan as requested by Town Meeting, including design discussions with MHD, additional survey work required in West Concord center, and additional environmental studies related to endangered species. An alternative design brought to Town Meeting by a private citizen group was rejected.