



## FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

### Ground Broken on 2A in Acton Construction Underway!

After years of planning and negotiating, dozens of supporters of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail attended a groundbreaking ceremony on June 25 to launch Phase 2A of the project that will link where the trail ends now in Westford to East Acton.



With golden shovels in hand and yellow hardhats on their heads, Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack, State Sen. Jamie Eldridge (D-Acton), State Rep. Jen Benson (D-Lunenburg), Former Commissioner of MassHighway Luisa Paiewonsky, Westford Town Manager Jodi Ross, Westford BOS Scott Hazelton, Acton BOS Katie Green, Program Manager of GPI (who were lead design engineers) Becky Williamson, Jonathan Gulliver MassDOT District 3 Highway Director and FBFRT President Tom Michelman, flung ceremonious shovelfuls of dirt into the air at NARA park in Acton to mark the start of this 4.9-mile segment that will take two years to complete.

Michelman made comments after a long line of speakers took to the podium, praising the hard work and collaboration that took place among the state, town officials and abutting residents to finally make construction on the phase a reality. He spoke of the “true grit” he witnessed in people’s refusal to be blocked by obstacles and of the “patience and perseverance” exhibited by all who have a stake in the project. He also cautioned about what’s still to come.

“The battles and effort to design and build the BFRT are not over. There are many more to come,” said Michelman. “Together we have to advocate and make sure we get funding for Phase 2B that will span Rte. 2 to Commonwealth Avenue across from MCI Concord, and for Phase 2C, the balance of the Concord portion of the trail to the Sudbury border. The end of the 25% design in Sudbury will just mean another battle to move the BFRT to the next phase,” he said.

And together, Michelman stressed, the parties present on that hot June day would still have to work to support efforts for the state to purchase or help purchase the remainder of the right-of-way in Sudbury, south of Rte. 20, and in Framingham so that progress can continue at the southern end of the trail. But he said he believes that won’t be a problem judging from what the group has already achieved.



“Together we have the strength, together we can prevail and then some day, we, or our children, or our grandchildren, will be able to ride their bicycles to get on the commuter rail in West Concord or take a weekend ride from Lowell to Framingham,” said Michelman. “We just have to persevere, we just have to have grit.” His full speech can be read here: <http://bit.ly/IGY1kXz>.

After the speeches, the group gathered under a tent to enjoy a buffet-style lunch provided by the Friends and Pedal Power in Acton.



Daphne Freeman and her family, in the front row, were among the enthusiastic attendees at the groundbreaking.

Work started in the days that followed the celebration including removal of rail tracks from the northern side of the trail at Rte. 225, tree and invasive plant clearing, and installation of silt fencing and turtle barriers in environmentally sensitive areas.

To follow the progress on construction of this phase, sign onto the Town of Acton’s new blog dedicated to trail progress (<http://www.acton-ma.gov/Blog.aspx>). Construction of Phase 2A of the trail is scheduled to be substantially completed by SPS New England October 2017. The Friends are looking forward to the ribbon-cutting ceremony in two years!

## ...2A Construction is Underway!



Worker uses a torch to separate segments of rail.



Clearing tracks from rail bed.



Tangible evidence of clearing progress off Rte. 27 in Acton.

## Sudbury Moves Forward

A year ago, the Town of Sudbury selected the rail trail design firm VHB to do the initial (25%) design of the BFRT. The design will encompass the 4.4-mile rail bed from the Concord/Sudbury town line south to the crossing of the Mass. Central Rail Trail near Chiswick Park. The design is being paid for with \$200,000 in Community Preservation and other town funds, combined with a donation of \$58,700 from the Friends of the BFRT. The Friends had initially raised the funds to pay for the design of the northernmost half mile from Concord south to Rte. 117. However the Sudbury Board of Selectmen decided to combine the Friends' donation with Town funds to design the trail on the entire part of rail bed owned by the Commonwealth.

Wetlands flagging was done in fall 2014 before snowmageddon descended. Surveying resumed in the spring after the snowmelt. However an abutting landowner filed legal action questioning the Order of Conditions agreed to by the Town Conservation Commission. The state's Department of Environmental Protection dismissed this action in July. A companion Superior Court case was also filed. The next step is for the Court to endorse that dismissal. The town has filed legal papers to accomplish that. Meanwhile VHB is waiting for secure legal footing before restarting surveying work.

Once that happens nothing else significant stands in the way of completing the surveying and initial design and submitting that design to MassDOT. The target date for submission was February 2016. That submission would qualify the Sudbury section of the BFRT for state and federal transportation funding. However, this legal tangle makes it difficult to meet the February deadline, thus possibly delaying the construction funding for a year.

Meanwhile, 36 acres land just north of Hudson Road up to Codman Drive has been sold to a developer. A large chunk of that land is a pristine pine forest that abuts the east side of the BFRT. A 40B development plan has been submitted for eleven buildings housing 250 dwelling units, some of which would be affordable, on that parcel. Because the development would encompass the location of the long-gone Sudbury station of the Framingham & Lowell Railroad, the development is called the Village at Sudbury Station. However the project must clear a number of hurdles before being approved.

An enthusiastic group of BFRT supporters, their families, relatives and neighbors joined in Sudbury's July 4th parade. Ada Vassilovsky, Peter Cramer, their two girls and two neighborhood friends took part along with Kevin, Lana, Talia and James Szwarc. Perennial July 4th enthusiast Boris Shnapir (father of the Olympic pairs skater), his sister Inna and nephew Michael joined the happy group. Lots of thumbs up and applause greeted them along the parade route.

## Public Meeting Date Set for 75% Design of Phase 2C in Concord

MassDOT has scheduled a public informational meeting for the 75% design of the Phase 2C Bruce Freeman Rail Trail for Tuesday, November 17th, at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center, 1276 Main Street, in West Concord. An open house will take place beginning at 6:15 p.m. with the meeting slated to start at 7:00 p.m. The open house will give abutters to the trail an opportunity to review the proposed design of the trail next to their property and ask specific questions.

The 75% design plans include a new trail alignment across the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail line. After crossing the tracks, the trail will run between the new Woods Hill Table and the West Concord Depot and continue through Junction Park. The plans also show a new alignment of Commonwealth Avenue and Main Street to create more of a "T-shaped" intersection, which will increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians as well as facilitate traffic flow.

The BFRT Advisory Committee and Town staff applied to the Community Preservation Committee in October for the final \$125,000 for Phase 2B (bridge crossing Rte. 2) and Phase 2C (through Concord to the Sudbury line). This completes the initial 2013 request of \$500,000 in Community Preservation funds for design, since MassDOT requires communities to pay for initial design and any costs of construction that are deemed "non-participatory."

## Stasik Will Be Missed

The Friends bid farewell to John Stasik, who recently resigned from the Friends' Board of Directors. We very much appreciate his outreach efforts in the town of Framingham.

As a bicycle rider, state representative and later a Town of Framingham selectman, John was invaluable in building early support and keeping the idea of a trail alive in his community. After the trains stopped running, he was appointed by the Selectmen to a special committee to investigate the possibility of a walking trail and to write a report on the findings. Despite vocal opposition, John wrote a lengthy report and obtained agreement from a majority of the committee. You can read this 2004 report here: <http://bit.ly/1ZSidyn>.

His contacts in the Town and in the Statehouse were also most helpful. Having learned at one point of an effort of an abutter to buy a small piece of land formerly occupied by an early post office, John was able to gain support to prevent the purchase.

John was a continuing inspiration to those who worked to publicize the trail to an even wider audience. We wish him well in his retirement.

## Chelmsford Works to Improve Safety on the Trail

The Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) continues to work with the Chelmsford DPW, the town engineer and the Chelmsford Police Department to address safety and maintenance issues along the trail in Chelmsford.

Chelmsford has installed a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) system at the Golden Cove Road trail crossing in order to increase safety at this location. This site was the subject of a number of complaints about vehicle speeds on the road and pedestrian and cyclist safety when crossing this busy street. The RRFBs are pedestrian-activated and will provide a much more visible alert to motorists. We encourage everyone to use this system.



Additionally, signs have been installed at several street crossings on the rail trail that instruct cyclists to walk their bicycle across the roadway. This was a cooperative effort between the Chelmsford Police Department, the BPAC and DPW based on incidents in 2014 involving cyclists at road crossings. It is important for all cyclists to take this step since pedestrians have more rights than cyclists when crossing a busy street or in a legal crosswalk. The Chelmsford DPW has hired Arbor East to perform tree removal and pruning along the trail. This effort will remove low-hanging branches, dead trees and other trees that may fall on the trail in the future or whose roots are heaving and cracking the trail surface.

Some of the work was done in August, and was scheduled to resume in late fall.



There were a number of walking, riding and running events held on the trail in 2015 starting and ending at the Byam School. A sampling of groups which had events on the trail this year includes: The PMC Kids Ride, Live for Liv, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and PAWs New England. The BPAC worked with all groups to ensure that they use the trail safely, respect the property of abutters and obtain the required permission to use the Byam School property.

This year the volunteer light trail maintenance program was revised with more practical sectioning of the trail, based on known access points such as street intersections and other landmarks. Bob Schneider of BPAC is coordinating the volunteer list. Maintenance work includes litter removal and light pruning of weeds and tree branches encroaching on the trail, as well as reporting other maintenance issues needing professional attention. Volunteers include Brad Dillmann, Bob Carr, Holli Ashby, Tom Gazda, Mike Koziel and Tom and Jenn Morton.

The Chelmsford BPAC conducted a trail user count at the Chelmsford Artwalk/Cushing Place on Saturday, September 12. Though the day started cloudy with some fog, weather conditions rapidly improved, and it became a beautiful late summer day. The count of trail users totaled 1,325. Bicyclists comprised about 55% of trail users, while walkers and runners represented about 39% of users, consistent with past results. The number of cyclists not wearing helmets was approximately 22%, slightly lower than in the past. All cyclists are encouraged to wear a helmet when riding on the trail and on roads. Volunteer counters included Mike Garvin, Bob Morse, Jim Kelsey, Melinda Goodick, Bob Schneider, Carol Grueneich and Tom Gazda.

The BPAC is continuing its work on a detailed Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the Town of Chelmsford as called for in the updated 2010 Chelmsford Master Plan. The plan will take into account on-road and off-road facilities, recreational facilities and the BFRT, as well as increasing safety for these users at intersections and crosswalks. Proposed improvements include installation of bicycle racks, pedestrian crossing signals and pavement markings and signage at key locations.

Finally, the Chelmsford BPAC and the Town of Chelmsford wish to express their thanks to the Friends for their funding the placement of portable toilets along the trail at Cushing Place and at Pond Street/Heart Pond again this year.

*Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail*

*PO Box 1192*

*Concord, MA 01742*

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**Come See the New Construction**

at the Friends' Annual Meeting  
Sunday, 11/22, 2 p.m., Pedal Power Bike & Ski  
176 Great Road (Rte. 2A), Acton

**Come Support The Trail**

at the Public Meeting on Phase 2C  
Tuesday 11/17, 6:15 p.m., Harvey Wheeler  
Community Center, 1276 Main St., W. Concord

**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.

- Individual Membership \$10
- Family Membership \$25
- Sponsor \$50
- Conductor \$100
- Engineer \$250
- RR Tycoon \$500+

\*Sponsor and above receive complimentary BFRT cap or T-shirt.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name Last Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address 1 (Street Address, P.O. Box, company name, c/o)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address 2 (Apartment, suite, unit, building, floor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

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Daytime Phone Evening Phone

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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 am willing to receive phone calls from the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

I am a trail abutter.

I would like to volunteer.

Gift:  Cap  T-Shirt (S / M / 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 on-line at:

[www.BruceFreemanRailTrail.org](http://www.BruceFreemanRailTrail.org)



## Westford is Ever Hopeful!

The best *real* Westford news this fall is the actual construction of Phase 2A! It is more accurately termed “de-construction” at this time, as the rails and ties on the BFRT right-of-way are being removed not only on the ¼ mile in Westford, but also on a similar distance in Carlisle and on several miles in Acton.

The ever-hopeful part is that Westford is still awaiting permission from MassDOT to install a kiosk and benches that the Friends have donated.

A second “as-yet-to-be-installed” Friends’ addition to the Westford portion is upgraded safety equipment which alerts drivers on Acton Road (Rte. 27) that rail trail users are at the road crossing, and it will also more effectively remind trail users to stop before crossing the road. The original safe-crossing equipment was



This rapid response flashing beacon is an example of the upgraded safety equipment donated by the friends.

installed at the time of construction in 2009; however, that equipment was hard to maintain and, recently, technology has changed so that signage warning of a road crossing is much more visible and effective. The new equipment’s motion detector will be microwave-driven, and solar powered.

A significant donation to the Friends by the O’Donnell-Weizelquist family of Westford enabled the FBFRT Board of Directors to supplement the family’s very generous gift and to completely fund the much-needed equipment. After sending an email to Friends’ supporters and having articles about this equipment in local newspapers, other donations totaling several hundred dollars were also received.

The annual Live for Liv Ride on the BFRT was staged at the 4H grounds in Westford in July. Once again, the Ride was a spectacular success – not only for the fundraising accomplished for domestic violence work that the Live for Liv Foundation supports but also for the dedication and enjoyment of the runners and riders of all ages on the day of the event. This summer’s Ride raised over \$30K and had approximately 425 participants.

Last spring the Friends staffed a table at the Westford’s Board of Health Fair with newsletters, maps and other information about the BFRT. We had the opportunity to talk with many interested people about the upcoming extension of the BFRT, as well as other rail trails in New England. A raffle was held for two bike helmets donated by Pedal Power.

The Town’s “unsung heroes,” town workers and volunteers that help make the BFRT an enjoyable experience, have been busy! Dave Earl, Bob Shaw and Ron Johnson “swept” sections of the BFRT in October – collecting trash and moving debris. Linas Alinskas, a BFRT abutter, serves as a trail steward. The Westford Conservation Trust Trail Stewards have given hours of their Tuesdays to similar surface work and occasionally moving of branches and weeds. Westford Highway Department workers painted new “XING” and bicycle stencils on Acton Road near the BFRT crossing, and Park and Recreation Department workers mowed the weeds near Griffin Road. We continue to be grateful for the hard work done and active good will extended throughout the year by the Town staff.

## Donation Made in Cleven's Name

The State legislative delegation from Chelmsford presented a donation in Carol Cleven’s name to help maintain the rail trail. As state representative from Chelmsford, Carol submitted the original legislation in 1987 to create the BFRT.



From left to right: Mary Cleven, daughter-in-law of the late Carol Cleven; Stone Cleven, son of Jeff and Mary Cleven; Barbara Pike, FBFRT; Jeff Cleven, husband of Mary and son of the late Carol Cleven; Robert Schneider, member of the Chelmsford Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC); State Rep. Jim Arciero; State Senator Mike Barrett; Emily Teller, FBFRT; Laura Merrill, Chelmsford Selectwoman; Christine Corr, Treasurer of the FBFRT; Paul Cohen, Chelmsford Town Manager; Melinda Goodick, member of the Chelmsford BPAC; Gary Persichetti, Director of the Chelmsford Department of Public Works; Pat Wojtas, former Chelmsford Selectwoman.

### A Special Thanks to...

**Pedal Power Bike and Ski, Acton,**  
for hosting the annual meeting and their on-going support

**Jet Mail, Hudson,**  
for their assistance in printing and mailing this newsletter

**United Site Service, Chelmsford,**  
for helping sponsor toilets on the trail

### Revised Schedule for Phase 2B

The original contract for Phase 2B, the bridge over Rte. 2, expired. A new contract between the contractor AECOM and MassDOT is now in place. MassDOT is reviewing a revised schedule for the 25% design plans from AECOM. Also a new project manager, Sreelatha Allam, has been assigned.



Mother/daughter bike team riding on the BFRT near Griffin Road in Westford.

## Friends Annual Meeting

Celebrate the Groundbreaking of Phase 2A! Take a walk to see construction progress!

Sunday, November 22, 2 p.m.

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



Cyclists from rail trail enjoying an early autumn day at Heart Pond in Chelmsford.

### Thanks Shutterbugs!

Thanks to the following for contributing to photos used in this newsletter:

Larry Bruns  
Alan Cameron  
Nancy Dolberg  
Tom Gazda  
Carlene Hempel  
Emily Teller  
Bill Williamson  
Bob Zuffante

## CHELMSFORD THROWBACK

"The BFRT bike path was officially opened six years ago this month, in August of 2009. I still have a piece of the ribbon that was cut to open the BFRT that day...the ribbon is framed and hanging in my home. This BFRT has been a huge blessing for our town of Chelmsford. It has helped many of us stay as healthy as possible, and given us a safe place to walk, bike, jog, rollerblade, etc. It's one of the public places that helps make Chelmsford one of the best Towns in the Country!"

from trail user Tom Christiano's Facebook page

## BFRT Stars in Local Video

A new half-hour documentary featuring the BFRT, "Rail Road to Rail Trail," introduces viewers to both railroad history and present challenges of turning a defunct rail line into a 21st century transportation and recreation corridor. The video is a lively presentation featuring interviews with local public officials and historians, an animated map and a wealth of historical information and photographs. The full video can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/1Q9cfCJ>.

It was produced by Electa Tritsch, a Concord resident who has been a practicing archeologist and historian for 30 years. Electa says it was fun exploring the trail and said "one of the main challenges was finding the story when you are talking about something that doesn't exist."

The video is one of a series "Tracks in Time," which is part of CCTV's community access programming. Electa was a 2014 national award winner from the Alliance for Community Media. She authored the historical novel "Old Wives Tales" and is a member of Concord's Historical Commission.

## Carlisle Celebrates Old Home Day

For the sixth straight year, the FBFRT operated an information booth at the Carlisle's Old Home Day celebration. We distributed maps and flyers and addressed many questions, the most frequent of which was "When is it going to get built?" This year, our answer was far more specific: "Construction started last week!"

Pictured below is the group that staffed the booth: (L-R) Mike, Emily and Alec Paranzino, Alan Cameron (Carlisle's member on the Friends Board) and Dianne McAulay.



**For Further Information, Visit us at:**

[www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org](http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org)

[Facebook.com/BruceFreemanRailTrail](https://www.facebook.com/BruceFreemanRailTrail)

[Twitter.com/FriendsofBFRT](https://twitter.com/FriendsofBFRT)

**Call or Email local representatives:**

Acton:	Tom Michelman	978-580-6190	<a href="mailto:tmichelman@gmail.com">tmichelman@gmail.com</a>
Carlisle:	Alan Cameron	978-369-2223	<a href="mailto:alancameron@comcast.net">alancameron@comcast.net</a>
Chelmsford:	Tom Gazda	978-250-0012	<a href="mailto:tgazdap5tmr@comcast.net">tgazdap5tmr@comcast.net</a>
Concord:	Barbara Pike	978-369-0437	<a href="mailto:bbpike@aol.com">bbpike@aol.com</a>
Framingham:	John Stasik	508-877-6771	<a href="mailto:jhstasik@verizon.net">jhstasik@verizon.net</a>
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Westford:	Emily Teller	978-692-6968	<a href="mailto:eteller@earthlink.net">eteller@earthlink.net</a>

**Attend:** Friends meetings

**Send Email:** [info@brucefreemanrailtrail.org](mailto:info@brucefreemanrailtrail.org)