



FRIENDS OF THE BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

Trail Officially Opens in West Concord

The BFRT through West Concord was officially opened with the MassDOT ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 27. This 2.5-mile section, known as Phase 2C, runs from Commonwealth Avenue through West Concord Village and south to Powder Mill Road.



Friends' Board member Stuart Johnstone presented Marcia Rasmussen with a plaque for successfully guiding the design and construction of the BFRT through West Concord.



State Representative Tami Gouvei and Friends' President Tom Michelman exchanged high-fives as she presented a citation to him on behalf of the Friends. It recognized "Your dedication and success in advocating for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail."

Marcia Rasmussen, Concord's Director of Planning and Land Management, expressed gratitude to all who have been involved in getting to this day. She quoted from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Adopt the pace of Nature; her secret is patience." And she noted "this is a project that has taken patience and perseverance."

Nearly 20 West Concord merchants donated prizes for the free raffle.

Thanks local businesses for your generous donations to our raffle!

- Belle on Heels
- Brookside Square
- Concord Computer Consulting
- Concord Firefly
- Concord Flower Shop
- Concord Outfitters
- Concord Teacakes
- Debra's Natural Gourmet
- Joy Street
- Marx Academy



- Merlin's Silver Star
- Nashoba Brook Bakery
- Reasons to be Cheerful
- Reflections
- Three Stones Gallery
- Twin Seafood
- Village Art Room
- West Concord 5 & 10
- West Concord Pharmacy



Cutting the ribbon were Concord Director of Planning and Land Management Marcia Rasmussen, Concord Town Manager Stephen Crane, State Representative Tami Gouvei, State Representative Carmine Gentile, State Senator Mike Barrett, MassDOT Highway Administrator Jon Gulliver and Friends Board Member Stuart Johnstone.

Board member Christine Corr presented a raffle prize to Concord resident Janet Miller.



Concord Ribbon Cutting (continued from page 1)

The setting on Nashoba Brook Bridge and the warm, sunny weather created a festive atmosphere as over 200 trail enthusiasts joined state and local dignitaries to mark the occasion. After many years of waiting, it was a day to celebrate!



Joyce and John Reischutz and staff of Pedal Power Bike and Ski in Acton set up canopies, tables and chairs, all of which contributed to the success of the day. (left)

The souvenir map bandanas (designed by Bill Harman) were the fashion statement of the day (2 right).



The cake and ice cream are always popular. The special rail trail ice cream had chocolate chips, M&M's and chocolate-covered pretzel bits in vanilla ice cream.

The cakes were decorated with the Friends' train logo and the BFRT dragonfly logo.



A map of the trail through West Concord is available here: <http://bit.ly/2C-QR>.

Scanning the QR code with a phone will access an interpretive map with 40 sites described along the trail.

What's Next in Concord?

Now that the BFRT is open from Commonwealth Avenue through West Concord to Powder Mill Road, attention has turned to the connection that will link this section, known as Phase 2C (C is for Concord), to the section which opened in Acton last year, known as Phase 2A (A is for Acton). A 300-foot bridge over Rte. 2 will connect these two sections, extending the trail from Wetherbee Street in Acton to the small parking area near Commonwealth Avenue in Concord.

The 100% design for this section, Phase 2B (B is for Bridge), has been accepted by the state, and construction is expected to begin next year. The official date for opening this section, according to the easement documents, is November 2021. Plans for Phase 2B are available here: <http://bit.ly/2B-info>.

The southern-most section of Phase 2C, which runs from Powder Mill Road to the Concord/Sudbury line, is fully designed and will be constructed as part of the trail construction in Sudbury.



Bringing the Trail to Sudbury

In August and September crews from Jacobs, the design consultant, and New England Borings, a company that specializes in drilling, were out on the rail trail right of way obtaining soil and rock samples at three locations: 1) the area where a boardwalk section will be built located, just south of Hudson Road, near Ti Sales (photo left); 2) the north and south abutments to the Pantry Brook crossing (about 250 to 300 yards south of Haynes Road), and; 3) the north abutment to the Hop Brook crossing (about 500 yards south of Old Lancaster Road).

This field work, finished in early September, was required by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for Jacobs to submit the boardwalk (Type Selection) and bridge (bridge sketches) plans to complete the 25% design. Now that Jacobs has the soil and rock samples, they will do their analysis and submit their recommendations for the structures to the teams at MassDOT. The boardwalk Type Selection has already been approved. Mass DOT is expected to approve the two brook crossing bridges this fall.

When these decisions are finalized MassDOT will schedule and host the Design Public Hearing in Sudbury to hear comments from residents and answer questions. This hearing, expected by the end of this year or early next year, will complete the 25% design.

A note of clarification on the term "25% design." It is a term of art and does not refer to how much of the design is done or the cost of the design. It refers to specific tasks in the design process.

The next step will be to contract with the design firm for the remaining designs, the so-called 75% and 100% designs. Each design has specific tasks which need to be completed and submitted to MassDOT for approval. These design tasks must be completed by December 2021, in a little more than two years, to receive funding for construction in 2022.

For Sudbury's \$1 million investment in design funding, it will get a \$10 million properly designed, paved, safe, disability friendly, fully emergency vehicle accessible rail trail that will connect points within Sudbury and communities to its north.

Acton Addresses Safety Concerns

After the Acton section of the trail opened last year, safety concerns were raised about stone dust from the shoulders washing onto the trail at the Great Road bridge, creating a soft and uneven surface. These loose stone dust piles created a hazard for cyclists and roller bladers.

Last June Acton town staff worked to correct this situation. They modified the edges of the trail on the approaches to the bridge by placing round shoulder curbing on both sides. This prevents the stone dust from washing onto the trail, greatly improving conditions near the overpass. Trail users have been most appreciative of these improvements.



Curbing has been installed along the trail over the Great Road (Rte. 2A) Bridge to prevent stone dust from washing onto the trail.

Trail safety is an ongoing concern, particularly at road crossings. Trail users should stop and look before proceeding across intersections. Where there are flashing lights, press the button to activate the lights and wait for traffic to stop. Winter trail conditions can present challenging conditions, from low light to slippery conditions. Extra caution is advised.

The Friends are looking for Acton volunteers to help on the trail for about 2 hours a month, either by taking care of a kiosk or by reporting maintenance needs. Scheduling is flexible. Contact Paul Malchodi (paulmalchodi@gmail.com) or 978-406-7264 for more information.

Lots Going On in Chelmsford

Chelmsford has installed three new benches along the trail. A bench at the 5.6 mile marker was donated by Lisa Sullivan and her family. A second bench, donated by Ron Clayton and Dottie Morris, was installed along the Sunny Meadow Connector path near the trail. A third bench was donated by Fred Holmes and Lucy Ticknor at the 2 mile marker. The Town Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), the Town and trail users greatly appreciate these donations.

BPAC is working with the developer of the new Grist Mill Condominiums at Beaver Brook to transform the Art Walk area of the trail at Cushing Place into the Carol Clevener Park. This area will have a memorial to Carol, a sign giving the history of the Framingham-Lowell Rail Line and other amenities. Landscaping, irrigation, maintenance and improved parking and traffic flow are also included in the plan.

Approximately 30 public parking spaces will be available along the railing between the new condominium building and the trail. Additional parking for trail users in this area is available in the lot behind the Chelmsford Center for the Arts on North Road (non-event times only) and in the lot behind Santander Bank on Billerica Road.

BPAC is still working on the installation of a second kiosk at Pond Street. The DPW is planning to do site work this fall and assist in installing the kiosk, which will be built by the Nashoba Valley Technical High School Carpentry Shop. The Planning & SQE Performance Management Team at Lockheed Martin has donated funds for amenities, including bike racks, at this site.

BPAC organized a cleanup last spring of the Cushing Place/Art Walk area and the trail from Fletcher Street to the Central Square. Work included mowing, raking, cutting weeds and removing fallen branches. Volunteers included Bob Schneider, Steve Pustell, Michael Carignan, Robert Klinkhammer and Tom Gazda. Over the summer, Pustell, Schneider and Gazda also did periodic maintenance in this area.



Chelmsford DPW recently acquired a brush cutter attachment for the sidewalk plow. The machine has been used for mowing along the trail and cutting back brush, grass and weeds that had encroached on the trail.

BPAC conducted its annual trail count at the Artwalk/Cushing Place on September 7. The count totaled 860 users. Bicyclists and walkers/runners each accounted for about 48% of users, an increase in walkers/runners and a reduction in cyclists compared to 2018. The number of cyclists not wearing helmets was 22%, compared to 18% in 2017, but still less than in 2016 and prior years when 25% or more had no helmet. All cyclists are encouraged to wear a helmet while riding. Volunteer counters included Jim Kelsey, Steve Pustell, Mike Carignan, Dave Antonelli, Dennis McNurland, Robert Klinkhammer, Bob Schneider, Melinda Goodick and Tom Gazda.

A number of events were held on the trail in this season. To name a few, the PMC Kids Ride, Live for Liv, Indian Association of Greater Boston, World Pay Cleanup and the Borego Solar Cleanup. The BPAC worked with all the groups to ensure they used the trail safely and respected the property of abutters.



Dana and Jim Snyder-Grant (left) try out a bike at the accessible bike demo day, held at Pedal Power last May. AccesSportAmerica brought a variety of bikes for participants to try.

Trail Support by Town:

In case of **emergencies**, dial **911**

For **non-emergency safety issues**:

Chelmsford:

week days: 978-250-5228

nights & weekends: 978-256-2521

Westford: 978-692-5532

Acton: 978-929-7711

Concord: 978-318-3220



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Join Us at the Friends Annual Meeting

Sunday, November 24, 2019, 2 p.m., Pedal Power
Bike and Ski, 176 Great Road (Rte. 2A), Acton

Photo Credits

Peter Baumgartner, Emily Teller,
Tom Gazda, Len Simon, Barbara Pike

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+ |

*Sponsor and above receive complimentary gift.

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

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 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 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:
www.BruceFreemanRailTrail.org



Historic Sites along the BFRT in Acton - Part II (Courtesy of the Acton Historical Society and Doug Herrick)

When the Acton section of the BFRT opened last year, several historical sites and areas became more accessible. This article refers to a few of them along Phase 2A of the trail, noted by the granite mile markers along the trail and shown as black circled numbers on the trail map. Some of these sites and buildings have visible remains while others are just memories.

The map is available at <http://bit.ly/BFRT-Map-201908>

Much of this trail section runs north to south along the Nashoba Brook within East Acton. It follows an old Native American trail, sometimes referred to as the original Mohawk Trail, to Western Massachusetts. It was designated as Route 2A when the new Route 2 was constructed in 1950.

Much of East Acton's development was linked to this road, along with the building of the Framingham and Lowell (F&L) railroad (the BFRT right of way) in 1871 to service the Lowell mills. A few years later the Nashua, Acton and Boston Railroad (NAB) installed parallel tracks along the F&L roadbed, providing service from West Concord to Nashua, N.H. and points north. So despite its modest size and population, East Acton had passenger service to Boston and New York, frequent freight service and easy access to markets for its farm produce and light manufacturing.



Greenhouse on former Ball pencil factory site.

The Ball pencil factory (1848) stood near mile marker 11.75 where the trail crosses Brook Street. It can be seen between the house and barn in the photo to the left. It was destroyed by arson in 1944. Another owner, Henry Smith, built the greenhouses (each one heated by a wood stove) to grow winter vegetables for the Boston market, shipped out on the F&L railroad.

An historic path crosses the rail trail about 100 yards south of Brook Street and ends at Route 2A near Strawberry Hill Road. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, this is the old road that Captain Isaac Davis and the Acton Militia used on the morning of April 19, 1775, to march to the battle at the Old North Bridge in Concord. Captain Davis and two other Acton militia members were killed that day. Acton Minutemen still use this route to re-enact their march to Concord's North Bridge every year on April 19.

Further down the trail on the west side (mile marker 12) the beginning of Ice House Pond is visible. As its name suggests, this mill pond was used to harvest ice for the dairy industry, agricultural produce storage and home ice boxes right up until the 1950s. Although mills had been operating on the Nashoba Brook near Concord Road since the late 1600s, the mill pond was not used for ice harvesting until 1889. You can still see the foundations of the early 20th-century ice houses in parking area west of the pond off Concord Road. Up the bank west of the pond is the 32-acre Forbes-Morrison Farm, which is now owned by the Town, complete with its early 1930s farm buildings. The barn behind the house once housed the oxen that pulled the ice wagons for the Concord Ice Company. Each spring the pond was drained to grow hay in the summer, then cleared of all growth and dammed up again for the winter ice harvest.

Opposite the farm, adjacent to the east side of the rail trail, is one of Acton's stylish "lottery houses," built in 1800 for John Robbins and also listed in the National Register.

The East Acton railroad station in the photo to the right (around mile marker 12.5) used to stand just before the trail crosses Concord Road. Although nothing remains of the station (another victim of arson), the telegraph pole on the left side of the photo is still there. It is planned to turn this area into a park to be called the East Acton Village Green.

The mill pond dam can be seen across Concord Road, and right across the road is a property with some of the spillway and raceway masonry still intact. The earliest mill here was built by Captain Joseph Robbins as a saw mill in 1797. It was later taken over by Daniel Wetherbee in 1840 and continued operations until the early 20th century, producing plaster in its later years.



Old East Acton station house with signal poles.



The Old Mill, East Acton, Mass.

A few yards downstream on the current Bursaw Oil property stood the oldest mill in East Acton, built in 1669 by Captain Thomas Wheeler. Wheeler was Acton's first settler and was granted a tract of land for cattle grazing and a gristmill. The Wheeler Dam was replaced and enlarged in 1840 by Daniel Wetherbee, who ran a flour and grain mill. Wetherbee's mill was fed by a canal, which has since been filled, rather than by the Nashoba Brook.

Another nearby mill was built by John Barker Jr as a forge in 1728. It was equipped with "a trip hammer and other implements and conveniences for working in iron."

(See the [Spring 2019 FBFRT Newsletter](#) for Part I of this article.)



Bay Circuit Trail Documentary Shared in Westford

Dan and Marilyn Briemann joined former Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) Alliance coordinator Alan French for a presentation about the BCT at the J.V. Fletcher Library in Westford in September. The trail runs in an arc for 200 miles from Newburyport to Kingston and co-joins the BFRT in portions of Chelmsford into Acton. For further information please visit www.e-awakening.com and www.baycircuit.org.



From left, Westford residents Bill and Marian Harman, FBFRT Board members Dennis McNurland and Emily Teller, the Briemanns and Alan French.

Lowell to Develop Bicycle Master Plan

In response to a growing interest in bicycle paths in Lowell, the city is developing a Bicycle Master Plan. A newly created Bicycle Advisory Working Group (BAWG), with representatives from interested groups will assist in developing the master plan. The BAWG will review, comment on and provide input about the Bicycle Master Plan and provide assistance with outreach and data collection. Board member Sharon Galpin is the Friends' representative on the committee and will advocate for an extension of the BFRT to connect with future bicycle paths in the city.

Friends Annual Meeting

You are invited to the Friends Annual Members Meeting & Board Member Elections

Sunday, November 24, 2019, 2 p.m.

Come celebrate the progress made in 2019 and see what to look forward to in 2020.

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

Parking is available at Patriot Square, across Great Road from Pedal Power

Light refreshments will be served.



"I go really fast!" The Cail brothers from Boxborough enjoyed riding their scooters on the trail this fall.

Westford Runners Paying it Forward



A group of runners from the Westford area, the Xiliang Runners, organized a clean up day on the trail last May. The 4 teams covered the trail from Lowell through Acton, a total of 13 miles. Since each team ran out and back, they covered a full marathon distance of 26 miles all together. The trash pickup combined their love of running with their interest in conservation.

Organizer Liewei Bao explained that "Xiliang" in Chinese refers to a region in the northwest part of China, just like Westford is northwest of Boston. Also the Xiliang region has some strong horses that are strong runners, like members of the running group.

For Further Information:

Visit us at:

www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

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

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

Call or Email local representatives:

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
| President: Tom Michelman | 978-580-6190 | tmichelman@gmail.com |
| Acton: Paul Malchodi | 978-406-7264 | paulmalchodi@gmail.com |
| Carlisle: Glenn Reed | 978-807-2785 | greed@energyfuturesgroup.com |
| Chelmsford: Dennis McNurland | 978-251-0777 | djmcn192@gmail.com |
| Concord: Barbara Pike | 978-369-0437 | bbpike@aol.com |
| Framingham: Ed Kross | 508-380-6925 | ekross1976@gmail.com |
| Lowell: Sharon Galpin | 978-446-8906 | sgalpin99@gmail.com |
| Sudbury: Dick Williamson | 978-618-5475 | williamson@alum.mit.edu |
| Westford: Emily Teller | 978-692-6968 | eteller@earthlink.net |

Send Email: info@brucefreemanrailtrail.org

