

REFORMATORY BRANCH TRAIL PUBLIC FORUMS AND STUDY

MR. POSNER MOVES THAT THE TOWN TAKE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ON
ARTICLE 46

AS PRINTED IN THE HANDOUT PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLE

Concord Town Meeting 2022

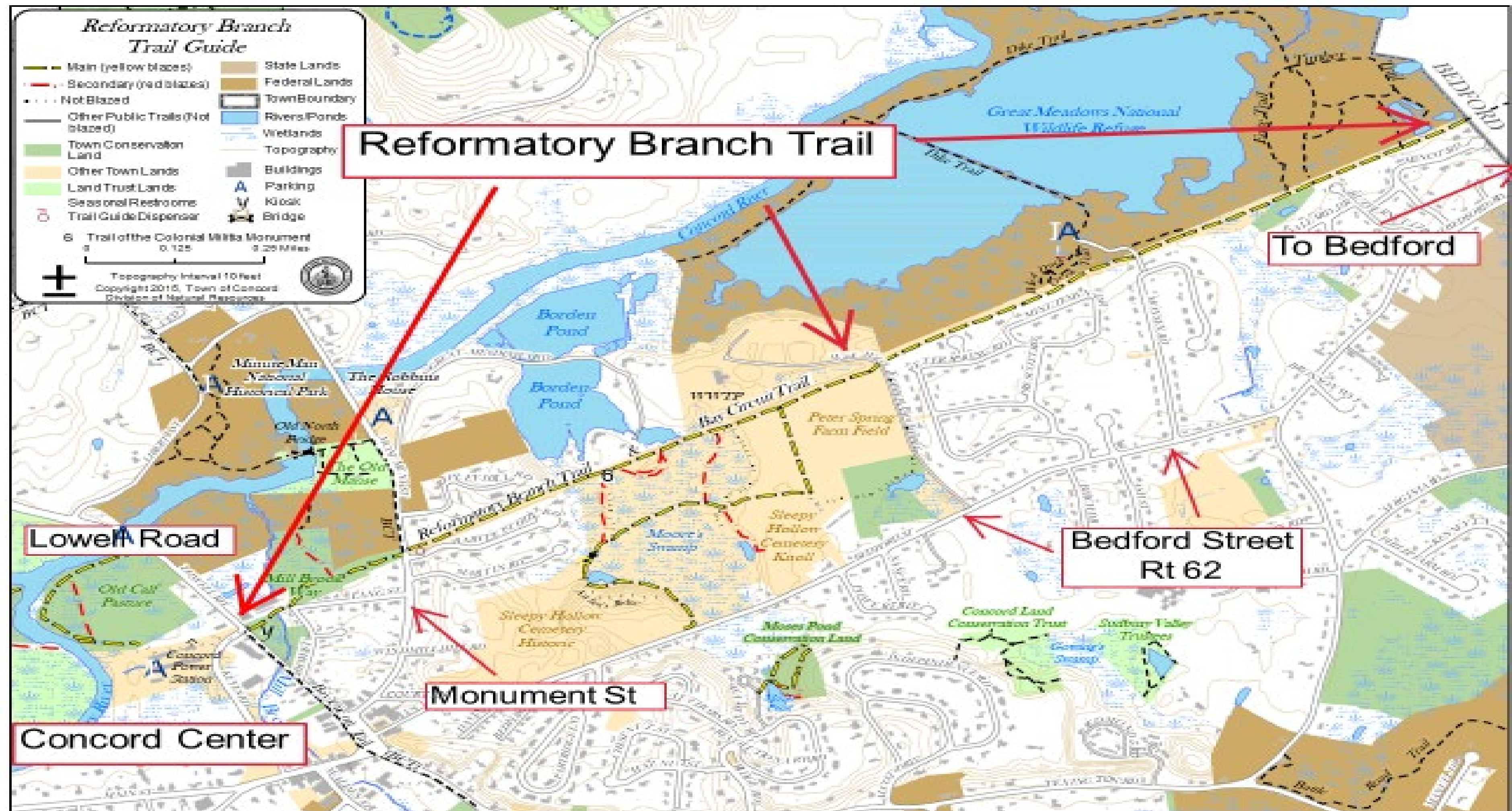
Warrant Article 46:

Reformatory Branch Trail (RBT)

Seeks funding to conduct Public Forums and a study relating to improvements to Concord's **Reformatory Branch Trail** from Lowell Road to the Bedford town line.

Reformatory Branch Trail History

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Reformatory Branch Trail History

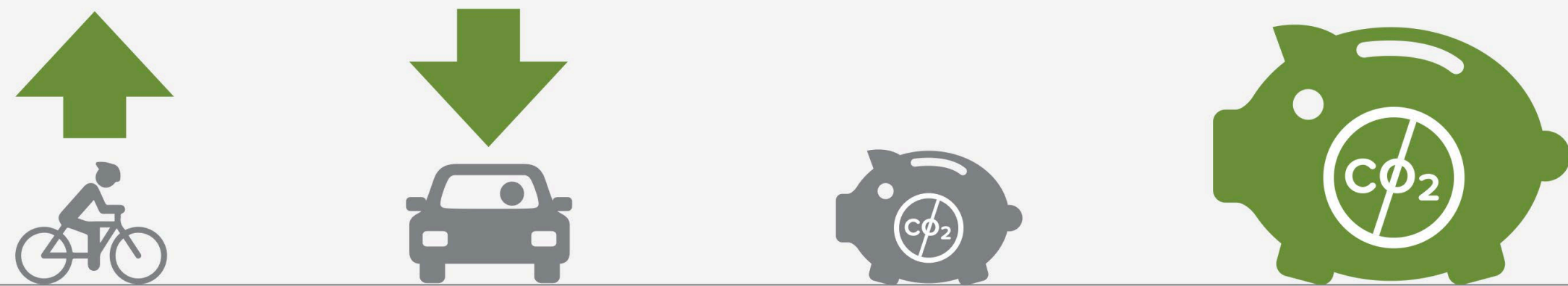
- ❑ **1873** Middlesex Central Railroad builds the **Reformatory Branch line** running from Bedford Center train depot to Concord Center, including a 2-mile section in Concord ending near Lowell Road.
- ❑ **1875** Dedication of Daniel Chester French's Minuteman Statue at the Old North Bridge. In addition to the **Boston & Maine Rail Line**, the **Framingham & Lowell Rail Line (now BFRT)** and the **Reformatory Branch Line** transported visitors to Concord to view the internationally recognized sculpture. **150-year anniversary of the Reformatory Branch Line in 2023.**
- ❑ **1879** The **Reformatory Branch Line** continued 2.5 miles further west to **Reformatory Station**, located near the State Prison. The need to bring supplies, personnel and visitors to and from the prison (the "*reformatory*") motivated construction of the rail line.
- ❑ **1927** Passenger service suspended to **Reformatory Station.**
- ❑ **1962** Freight service suspended; the Reformatory Branch line is abandoned by the B & M Railroad. The "RBT" right-of-way is purchased by the Towns of Bedford and Concord. Later, tracks and tie are removed and sections regraded.
- ❑ **2004** Concord DPW buries sewer pipes along the RBT right-of-way extended from Monument Street to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. DPW trucks regularly traverse the trail for pipe maintenance and upkeep.

Why are Multi-Use Trails important?





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- ▶ They allow us to interact with nature and each other
- ▶ They are equitable, inclusive, and serve many people
- ▶ They provide a safe and emission-free alternative to car transportation
- ▶ They encourage physical fitness and healthy lifestyles
- ▶ They preserve environmentally, culturally, and historically-valuable areas
- ▶ They strengthen local economies
- ▶ They ***connect*** neighborhoods and build community

The reduction in single-occupancy vehicle trips attributed to shared use path commuting reduces harmful pollutants like particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds, and carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere.



9.6 mi trip length (average weekday **11** on weekends) **+** **90,500** fewer single-occupancy vehicle trips **=** **\$23,000** average weekday daily savings **+** **\$3,600** average weekend day savings **→** **\$2.2M** during peak period (July-Oct)

	 Minuteman	 Northern Strand	 MCRT-Norwottuck	 Cape Cod
JOB'S CREATED OR SUSTAINED	26	4	20	99
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT	\$2.6M	\$378K	\$1.8M	\$9.2M
STATE/LOCAL TAXES COLLECTED	\$363K	\$49K	\$250K	\$1.5M

Numbers based on surveys from one city along each trail.

What does Article 46 propose?

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- ▶ Requests \$75k to fund a Study on the future of Concord's 2-mile section of the **Reformatory Branch Trail (RBT)**. The former B & M Railroad right-of-way is 100% owned by the Town of Concord; improvements & maintenance are needed to maximize its value to **ALL**, to protect wildlife and provide accessibility to residents.
- ▶ The Public Forums and a Study will identify and document the benefits, costs, issues, and concerns related to RBT improvements among **ALL** stakeholders, including:
 - ▶ Concord residents, trail abutters, trail users, and future users
 - ▶ Environmental experts and conservation groups
 - ▶ Town committees and departments
 - ▶ Local, state, and federal agencies
- ▶ The Study will compile facts and propose solutions to facilitate future decision making, as Concord citizens consider the future of this historic, beautiful and valuable community & regional resource.

Why does the RBT need improvements?

- ▶ The **current trail condition can be inadequate** for many users (e.g., young & elderly, mobility-impaired or those in wheelchairs, baby strollers, etc.)
 - ▶ **Lack of Equity:** ADA design standards require a stable surface, a flat or gently-sloping grade, and the absence of large rocks and roots.
 - ▶ **Need for Consistency:** ensures multi-use trails are **accessible and safe**, including during seasonal inclement weather.
 - ▶ **Poor Conditions** encourage detours, which harms wildlife habitats.
- ▶ **Increase in trail users expected from Bedford**
 - ▶ A “Minuteman Bikeway Extension” project was slated to start in 2023 but has been delayed by a recent Town Meeting vote. MassDOT and Bedford’s goal is to create an ADA-compliant multi-use trail with passage under Rt 62, as well as other key safety and accessibility improvements, ending 800 feet short of the Concord-Bedford town line
 - ▶ Improving the RBT in Concord can both protect its natural habitat and character, provide accessibility, and accommodate increased bicycle and pedestrian traffic from Bedford and other MetroWest Boston communities.

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Drainage: several trail segments are perpetually muddy, even outside of the usual mud seasons.



Grading: steep grades & unexpected obstacles in the trail can be challenging for mobility-impaired users.

Concord Residents Support Multi-Use Trails

Envision Concord 2030

based shuttle are more critical for certain populations – such as seniors or youth – than for older students or adults. The Town should work with companies utilizing new technologies such as Automated Vehicles (AV) for transit shuttles when the technology is effective and appropriate for Concord's uses.

4. Encourage and incentivize carpooling in town, including high school students to reduce the amount of traffic and congestion from the high school. The concept of incentivizing carpooling may also apply to employees in town if preferential off-street parking or other tangible benefits are identified.

5. Identify shared use of transit vehicles (e.g., buses, vans) to improve door-to-door transportation options for the rapidly growing senior population and others who are unable to wait, walk, or carry packages to shuttle stops. The Council on Aging (COA) offers a shuttle for seniors but is limited in its capacity and restricted in who it can serve, as is the case with transportation offered by other social service providers. With appropriate and more flexible funding sources, some of these separately run shuttles may be able to coordinate and offer services to the public. In Acton, a collaborative multi-town service consisting of COA vans was piloted to increase capacity with existing vehicles. While the COA vans still operate in Acton, Bostonborough, Littleton, and Maynard, Acton also has multiple services, including the MinuteVan that is dial-a-ride for residents of any age, a commuter rail shuttle, and Road Runner, which is specifically for seniors and those with disabilities. The Town should coordinate with the State around efficacy of shared mobility programs that utilize Town-owned vehicles, including school buses, for integrated public transportation. These existing shared use vehicles may be complemented by new technology to provide a comprehensive range of services.

6. Improve multi-modal transportation opportunities, particularly from transit hubs to work destinations. Continue discussions with Henscom Air Force Base and others to develop shuttle service for first-mile/last-mile from Concord's train stations to work destinations. Employers whose businesses run outside of standard commuting hours, such as farms and restaurants, face the additional hurdle of not having available access to either train station (due to limited train service late at night and early morning). Employers who have more standard operating hours could participate in CrossTown Connect to learn more about transportation demand management options and participate in implementing transportation solutions.

ROADS POLICY & COMPLETE STREETS

How does the 1994 Roads Policy Compare to National Complete Streets Standards?

In the Elements of a Complete Street Policy (2016), the National Complete Streets Coalition (NCS), which is recognized by MassDOT and is a widely accepted collaborative authority on complete streets, identifies 10 elements of a comprehensive complete streets policy.

To more fully address these elements Concord may wish to add standards focusing on bicycle and pedestrian safety as well as customization of standards for different land-use contexts. The Town should also consider how best to coordinate these standards across various review agencies and provide clear performance standards to ensure effective implementation.

10 Elements of Complete Streets

1. Vision and Intent
2. Diverse Users
3. Commitment in all projects and phases
4. Clear, accountable expectations
5. Jurisdiction
6. Design
7. Land Use and context sensitivity
8. Performance Measures
9. Project Selection Criteria
10. Implementation Steps

Goal 3: Create safe, cost-effective walking and bicycling connections between key pedestrian and bicycle paths/trails to improve mobility around Concord.

During the planning process, many residents voiced their desire for strategic sidewalk and bike path connections from residential neighborhoods to key destinations, such as schools, village centers, and existing paths. Such enhancements would specifically focus on improving connections to school or afterschool activities for students and to and between the village centers for all residents – eliminating vehicle trips and improving community

2018

“...IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES, PARTICULARLY FROM TRANSIT HUBS TO WORK DESTINATIONS....”

“...IMPROVE AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN BICYCLING AND WALKING PATHS AND SIDEWALKS....”

Climate Action & Resilience Plan

Plan at a Glance



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Goal: Concord's buildings and solid waste system minimize GHG emissions and are resilient to a changing climate.

- Increase electrification and improve energy efficiency of residential buildings.
- Improve energy performance of commercial buildings.
- Set progressive sustainability standards for new municipal buildings and schools and develop a phased plan for deep energy retrofits to existing town buildings.
- Establish policies and incentives for new development to achieve high standards for sustainability and resilient design.
- Create opportunities town wide to increase the waste diversion rate by 30%.



ENERGY

Goal: Concord's electricity is 100% carbon-free, reliable, and affordable.

- Redesign electricity rates to support energy conservation, peak load management, electrification, and renewable energy generation.
- Provide incentives for businesses and homeowners to invest in renewable energy.
- Shift CMLP's electricity supply to 100% carbon-free sources by 2030.
- Deploy utility-scale energy storage.



MOBILITY

Goal: Everyone has access to zero-carbon transportation options to commute and get around Concord.

- Increase use of public transportation and other low-carbon and no-carbon transportation options.
- Accelerate adoption of electric vehicles.
- Implement a long-term plan to electrify school and municipal vehicle fleets.
- Improve availability, accessibility, and connections between bicycling and walking paths and sidewalks.



NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal: Concord's natural resources are enhanced and supported to provide resilience benefits to the community and to maximize biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

- Develop forest management plan to enhance health of Concord's forests.
- Increase indoor and outdoor water conservation.
- Work with homeowners to promote sustainable landscaping practices.
- Assess the vulnerability of natural resources most at risk to projected climate changes.
- Assess and improve Concord's tree canopy.



PREPAREDNESS

Goal: Concord's critical infrastructure is designed to reduce emissions and be prepared for projected climate impacts.

- Develop an integrated water resource management plan.
- Conduct a threat assessment for Concord's critical infrastructure.
- Update stormwater regulations and create a stormwater utility.
- Increase the use of green infrastructure and low impact development.

2020

Town Departments support Multi-Use Trails

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Complete Streets Policy



TOWN OF CONCORD
SELECT BOARD'S OFFICE
22 MONUMENT SQUARE - P.O. BOX 535
CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01742
TELEPHONE (978) 318-3001
FAX (978) 318-3002

TOWN OF CONCORD
COMPLETE STREETS POLICY
July 30, 2018

The Town of Concord has recognized the goal of enhancing multimodal transportation planning through the Public Works Commission's adoption of its December 1999 Road Policy Statement which states:

In the reconstruction or construction of roads, The Town of Concord seeks to maintain those aspects of the existing environment which will enhance the historic, scenic and agricultural properties of the roadway consistent with public safety, and, in addition, to consider alternative transportation accommodation(s) on the Town's roads consistent with this policy and public safety.

Since that time the Complete Streets program has been developed and has evolved to expand the existing Road Policy statement. Providing safe and accessible modes of transportation, including walking, biking, transit and other motorized vehicles for people of all ages and abilities, continues to be a major theme for the Town of Concord as expressed in the recently completed 2018 Comprehensive Long Range Plan. Now with the development of the Complete Streets program the Town continues to recognize and establish guidelines for roadway design which indicate the Town's preference for Complete Streets, whenever feasible and practical.

This policy indicates the Town's desire to accommodate as many modes of travel and types of users as practical within the transportation network. The provision of safe and accessible "Complete Streets" will further the Town's sustainability principles as adopted by the Select Board by promoting use by pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, potentially decreasing the Town's impact on the environment and minimizing its carbon footprint.

Vision and Intent

The Town of Concord recognizes that an opportunity exists for the implementation of Complete Streets each time a roadway is designed, constructed, reconstructed, maintained or improved. The Town will strive to provide safety and accessibility on Town roadways, sidewalks, parking lots and other town owned public Rights of Way (ROW). Users include pedestrians,

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“THE TOWN WILL STRIVE TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY ON TOWN ROADWAYS, SIDEWALKS, PARKING LOTS AND OTHER TOWN OWNED PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY”

“...ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN CONNECTIVITY OF THE TRAIL SYSTEMS BETWEEN THE TOWNS

....”

DPW Director Statement



TOWN OF CONCORD

Concord Public Works
133 Keyes Road ~ Concord, MA ~ 01742
Phone ~ 978.318.3206

November 3, 2020

Reformatory Branch Trail Maintenance
C/O David Manugian, DPW Director
Town of Bedford Department of Public Works
314 The Great Road
Bedford, MA 01730

Re: Minuteman Bikeway Extension, Bedford, MA
Transportation Improvements Project
MassDOT Project File Number 607738
Connection to Concord

Dear Mr. Manugian,

The Town of Concord recognizes the regional significance of the Minuteman Bikeway Trail and supports the Town of Bedford's work to extend the paved trail to the Concord Town line. Concord also supports Bedford's intent to provide a grade separated crossing to convey the trail underneath Concord Road (also known as State-numbered Route 62), which would allow users to more safely and comfortably connect to the existing unpaved Reformatory Branch Trail that continues into Concord Center.

In order to establish and maintain connectivity of the trail systems between the towns, the Town of Concord plans on continuing its maintenance of the Reformatory Branch Trail as a multi-use, all season recreational trail. The Town of Concord looks forward to continued collaboration with the Town of Bedford on this important regional corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists of both towns.

Sincerely,


Alan H. Cathcart
Director

Cc: Stephen Crane, Concord Town Manager
Marcia Rasmussen, Concord Director of Planning & Land Management

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How are Public Forums and a Study conducted?

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- ▶ Town staff solicits Requests for Proposals (RFPs) from consulting firms experienced in mobility planning, active transportation, natural resource protection & sustainability, and public safety.
- ▶ Proposals are reviewed by the Concord Select Board and town staff and a consulting firm is chosen.
- ▶ The chosen firm performs the Study, including:
 - ▶ Conducting comprehensive and public open meetings among Concord residents, trail abutters, trail users, Town committees & departments, environmental experts & conservation groups, and other governmental agencies.
 - ▶ Documenting the desires and concerns of impacted stakeholders.
 - ▶ Identifying and presenting a variety of alternatives for trail improvements which balance the needs of all stakeholders.
 - ▶ Compiles findings in a Study report.
- ▶ Town officials review and publish the Study report.

Article 46 does not propose construction

ARTICLE 46

- ❖ Article 46 funds a planning process. The Article does NOT propose construction or specific solutions. The Planning Process *shall* consider: current uses, natural resource protection, accessibility for persons with mobility challenges, and public safety and convenience, consistent with the Town's Sustainability Principles.
- ❖ The RBT presents **different constraints** than neighboring multi-use trails including the **protection of critical habitats** for the threatened Blanding's Turtle and threatened Britton's Violet species and its proximity to the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Government requirements allow for a **wide range of approaches and solutions**.
- ❖ Article 46 does NOT propose any construction, development, removal of trees, trail-widening, destruction of sensitive natural habitats. The Article recognizes the RBT is in use now and seeks to create a process to begin to plan its future.
- ❖ Approval of Article 46 would fund an **expert-led, fact-based, and thoughtful civic exercise** on how to maximize the RBT's benefits in a more **inclusive** fashion for ALL of Concord's residents as well as the environment, while furthering The Town's **sustainability** goals.

What is a typical Multi-Use Trail timeline?

- ▶ Multi-use trail improvement projects typically take many years from concept to completion.
- ▶ For example, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) 3.6-mile section in West Concord began in 2004 and will be 100% complete (to Powdermill Road) in 2022.
- ▶ Residents and Stakeholders had multiple opportunities to make comments, propose ideas, and come to decisions:
 - ▶ 2004 Decision to do a feasibility study
 - ▶ 2008 Town Meeting (Article 27): 25% Design
 - ▶ 2012 Town Meeting (Article 39): Land Acquisition
 - ▶ 2014 Town Meeting (Articles 36 & 39): 75% Design
- ▶ Public forums and debates, open committee meetings, and multiple Town Meetings were available for all stakeholders to make their voices heard. The result is a fantastic resource for Concord and the Region.

- ▶ The historic railway right-of-way has been identified as a transportation corridor & multi-use trail, *multiple times*, by previous long-range Town planning efforts and is currently used by walkers, runners, cyclists, birders, and other visitors.
- ▶ Trail use will continue to increase in volume, putting further pressure on the existing RBT, when Bedford's project is completed.
- ▶ The RBT provides no mitigation or protection for threatened wildlife. Contemporary planning and design practices overseen by the Town can improve the habitat.
- ▶ Sections of the trail are not accessible for people with mobility challenges and can be impassible for many others. The RBT is not "just fine the way it is" for many.

Let's PLAN the future of this
amazing community asset.



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