



Town of Sudbury

Planning and Community Development Department

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TO: Select Board
FROM: Beth Suedmeyer, Environmental Planner, Planning and Community Development
RE: BFRT Design Project Update
DATE: August 26, 2021

I am pleased to provide this summary of project status in response to the request for an update on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Design Project (BFRT, Phase 2D, MassDOT ID 608164).

Design Schedule

As you are aware, the 75% project design of the rail trail from the Concord Town line to near the intersection of Union and Station Avenues was submitted to MassDOT on May 12, 2021. The MassDOT has completed their comments and the Project Manager provided access to MassDOT's comments on July 8, 2021. Our Design Team has compiled draft responses to MassDOT's comments and attended a comment resolution meeting with MassDOT on August 25, 2021.

The project design must be "shovel ready" by October 2022 to take advantage of the state and federal funds for construction. The project is on track to achieve this milestone. A revised project schedule is available online. The current estimated advertising date remains in June 2022, and we are on target for maintaining the Boston MPO funding for fiscal year 2022. The schedule will be further revised, if needed, following the full MassDOT comment review and resolution.

75% Design Plans and MassDOT Comment Resolution Summary

There are no major issues or requests for changes that would significantly impact the overall success or schedule of the project. The top 4 comments we are responding to are:

1. MassDOT comments indicate the bathroom (proposed at Broadacres Farm), pavilion (proposed at Broadacres Farm), and hydration stations (proposed at Hudson Road, Broadacres Farm, and Davis Field), should not be paid for through the MassDOT/FHWA project budget. The reviewers were not aware that vertical structures (generally prefabricated and unplumbed structures) have been included in other MassDOT/ FHWA budgets for rail trails in other districts. The MPO allocated budget is sufficient to cover these items (and construction still comes in under budget with the inclusion of them).

MassDOT representatives attending the comment review meeting will coordinate with others at MassDOT and let us know if these trail enhancements will be allowed. We feel they are warranted for a modern regional rail trail. If MassDOT indicates they should not be included in the project budget, the items could be included as non-participating, meaning the Town would fund them through some other funding source and they would still be included in the MassDOT construction project. However, we would not want the

consideration of our request to include these items to impact the timeline for project completion. So there will be a balance to consider. If the items are not part of this project, the MassDOT project could potentially still prepare for them with grading, concrete pad installation, electrical conduit installation, water line installation, etc., as these costs to prepare the site could potentially be covered. The Town will need to consider the best approach.

2. MassDOT has commented that they think the kiosks, interpretive signs, and granite posts which Sudbury proposes for wayfinding and interpretations are not essential to the project and should not be included in the MassDOT/FHWA project budget. We believe, but continue to work to confirm, these items were previously included as participating items in the Concord section of the BFR. We will continue to document and confirm this and advocate for their inclusion. Concord is within District 4, so the District 3 reviewers who have made these comments were not involved in the Concord project, and we will present the appropriate information regarding precedents and consistency with the treatments of the BFR corridor for their consideration.
3. MassDOT indicates they do not want stockade fencing included in the ROW unless it is for safety reasons. As we have discussed, we will develop a consistent policy for handling screening adjacent to private properties along the corridor. Rail fence is generally proposed to protect trail users from getting off the trail in sections where the slopes are steep adjacent to the path, and there are no concerns for this. The case can be made for some stockade fencing to provide safety, especially adjacent to the working farms, nurseries, and landscape companies.
4. MassDOT indicates they feel there are too many landscape screening plantings proposed. We will revisit this and refine the proposal after discussing it further with the MassDOT landscape architect. We did propose a high density of plantings at 75% to ensure the budget adequately covers the final refined design, so I don't think this is a major concern.
5. No comments or concerns on the project schedule were indicated.

None of these are huge surprises, and no matter the resolution, we'll be able to work around them. The Town will have further discussions with MassDOT on the potentially non-participating items and provide the requested information. The landscaping and fencing changes will require more sensitive coordination with abutters, but we will be consistent in our approach and identify the limitations MassDOT has imposed.

ROW Process

The 75% review process for ROW has occurred separately from the main Comment Resolution Meeting. We are preparing for a meeting with the MassDOT Highway Community Compliance / ROW staff and Rail Division to further advance the ROW process. Town Counsel has reviewed the draft lease provided by MassDOT Rail Division. F&O has prepared a draft revised ROW Plan which we will review with the MassDOT ROW Team at the meeting. Town Counsel has also initiated the coordination with the MBTA for the construction access permit.

Notice of Intent

We have not received comments from MassDOT on the draft NOI submitted on July 16, 2021. The current schedule shows the submission of the application to Conservation Commission in October, but if we are able to expedite this submission we will.

Chapter 91 Determination

The request for determination is still under review by MassDEP, and we are in ongoing communication with them about their review.

As always, more information on the project and the 75% design plans may be found at the BFRT project webpage. <https://sudbury.ma.us/pcd/?p=354>