

# Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee

Public Hearing  
September 2006

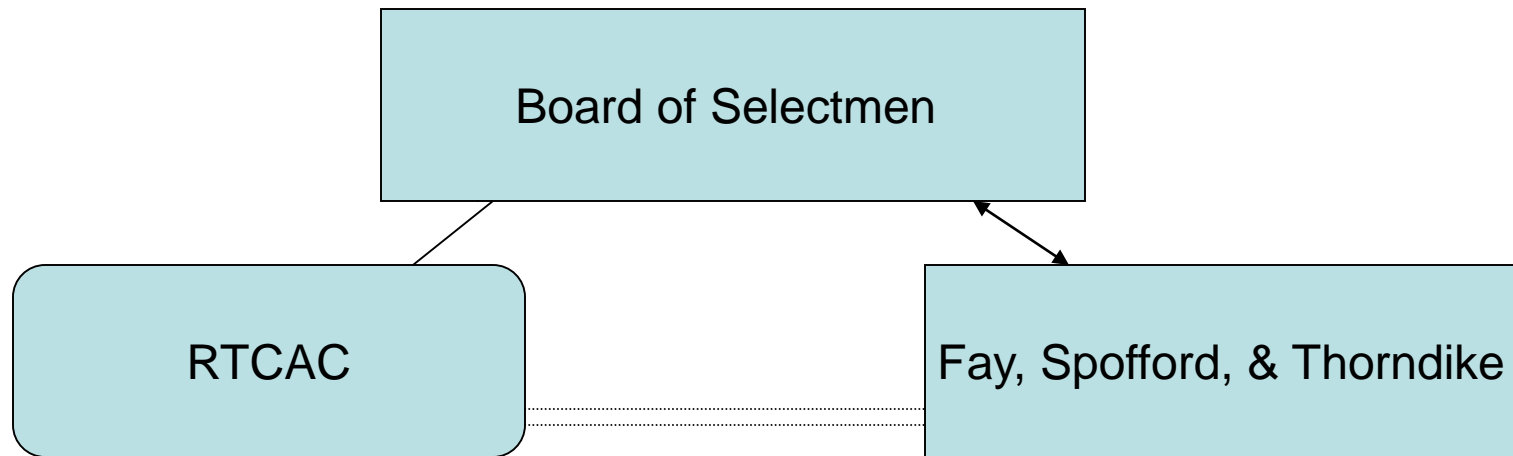
# Purpose of Committee

- Volunteer committee formed by the Selectmen in November 2004
- To examine the conversion of the rail ROW to a recreational path
- To help address the questions and concerns of the community
- To help develop a community vision
- To advise the Selectmen and support town staff

# Event Timeline

- RTCAC formed November, 2004
- Feasibility study funds approved at Town Meeting, 2005
- Trail Neighbors' survey summer 2005
- Technical specifications for RFP for feasibility study spring 2006
- Participation in evaluation team for resulting proposals spring 2006

# Organization



RTCAC is a citizen committee formed by the Board of Selectmen

FST is an engineering firm retained by the Town to conduct a preliminary engineering assessment of the ROW.

# Tonight's Agenda

- Where is the rail ROW under consideration?
- What is the process for converting the ROW?
- What were the results of the Trail Neighbors' survey of 2005?
- What can we learn from studies of other trails?

# Further Agenda

- Time for informal discussions at informational stations
- Time to record any thoughts you may have about the trail on the sheets provided

Please identify yourself and indicate in what manner you are a stakeholder on these sheets

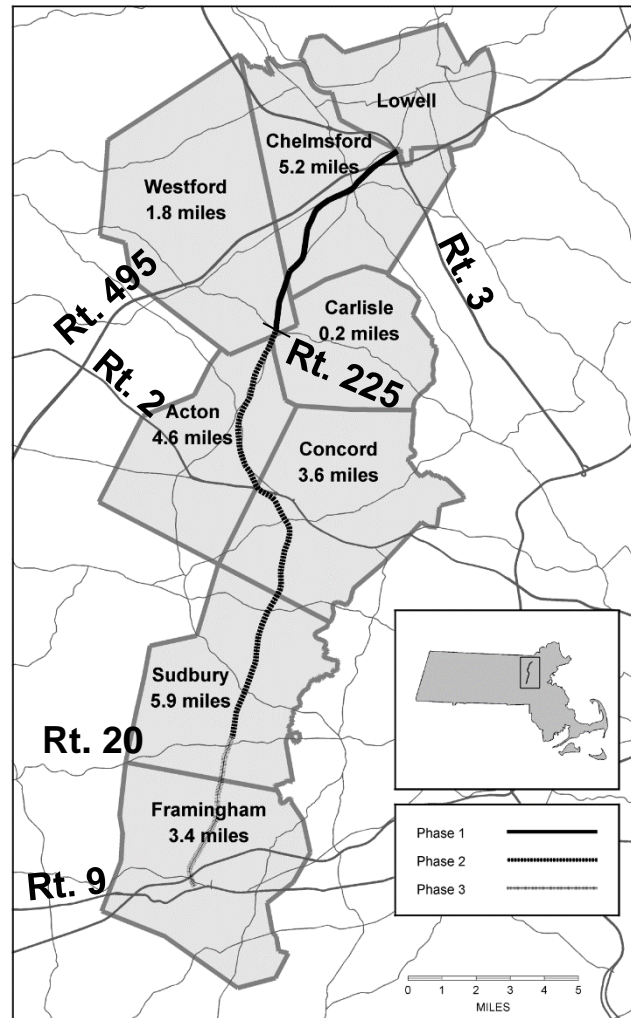
# Future Events

- Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike will be presenting the preliminary engineering assessment for the rail trail to the Town in November
- The RTCAC will continue to meet to investigate the many citizen issues and concerns we have not yet addressed

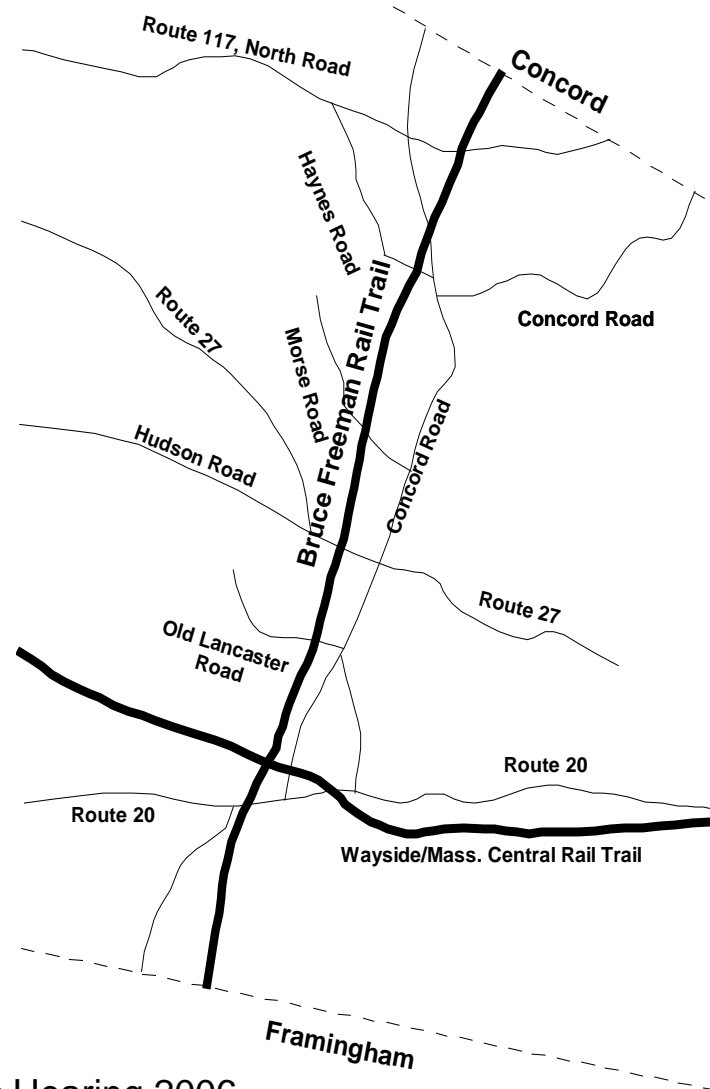
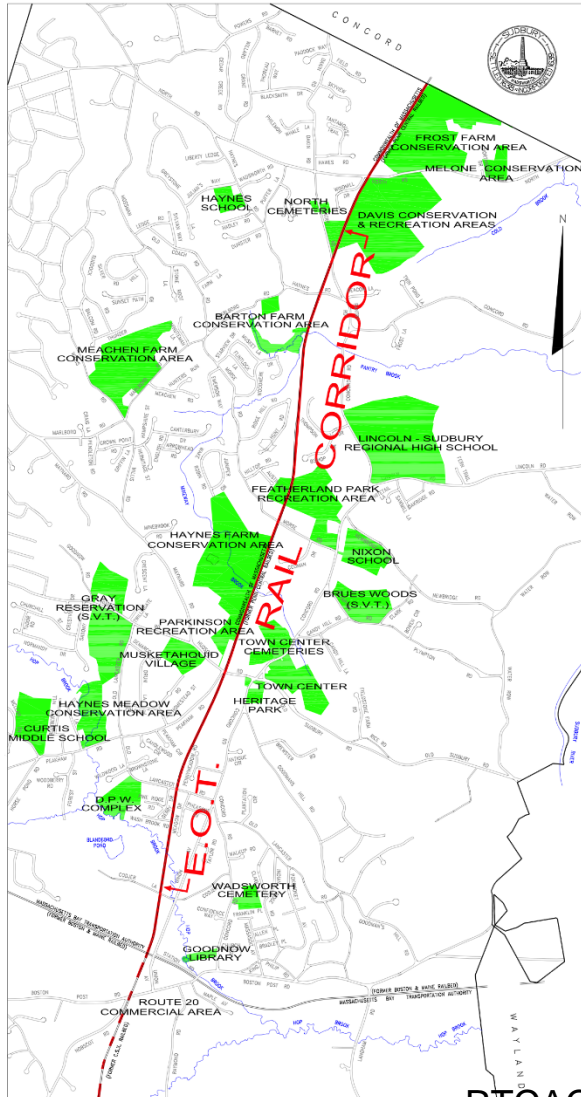
# **Geography of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**



# Three Phases of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail



# Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury

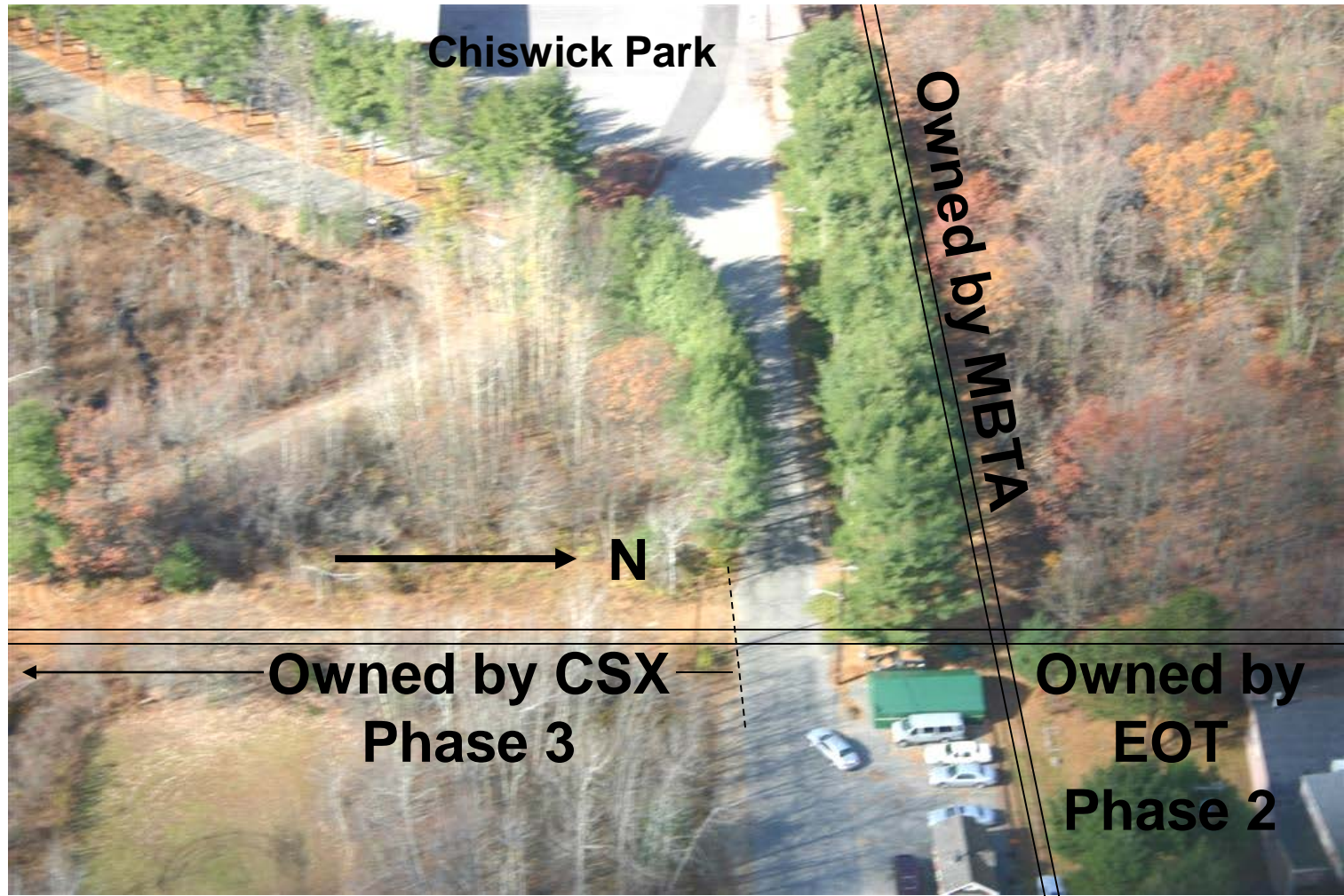


# Route 20 Crossing





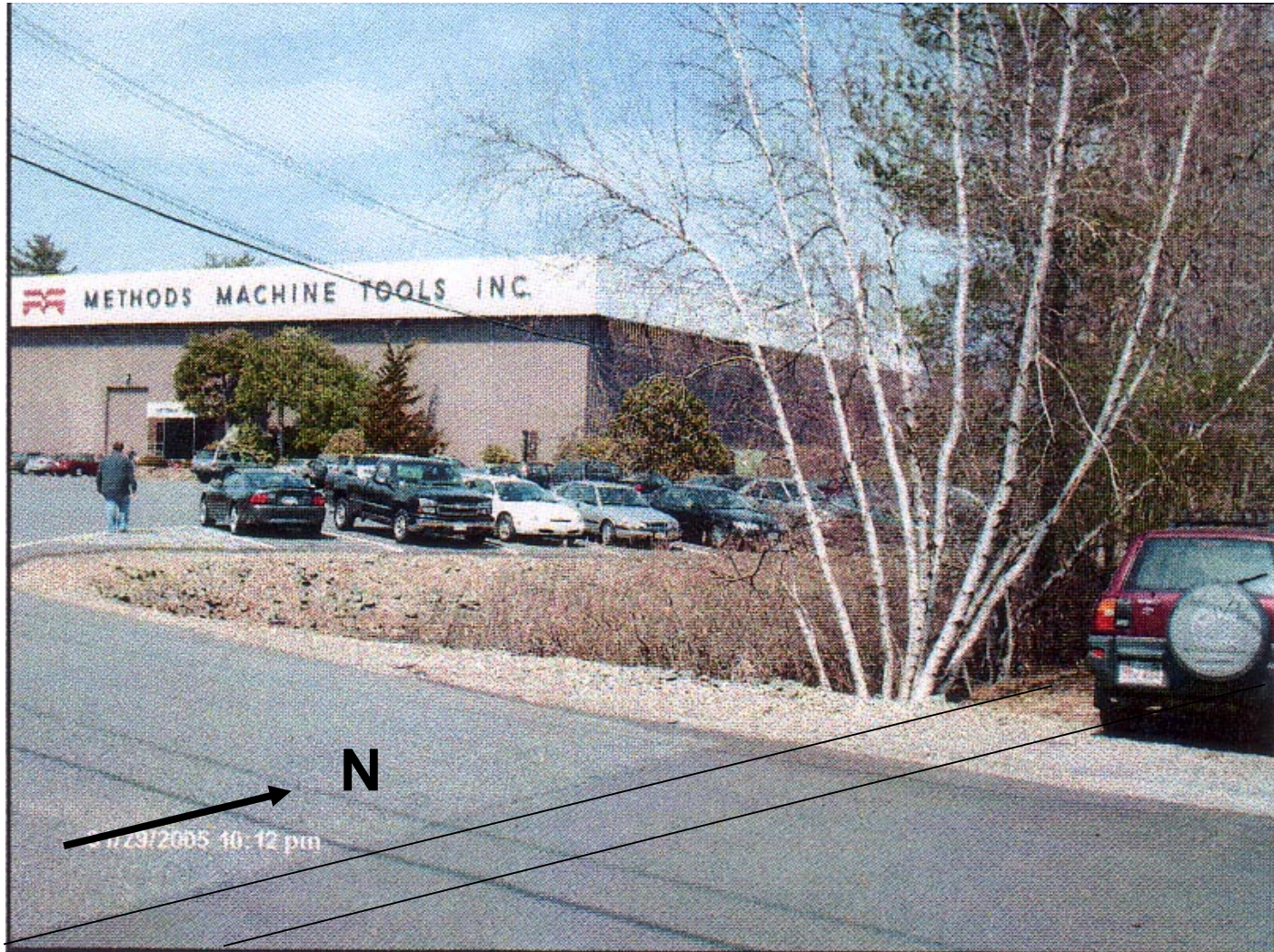
# Crossing of the Bruce Freeman and Mass. Central Rail Trails



← **Union Ave.** →

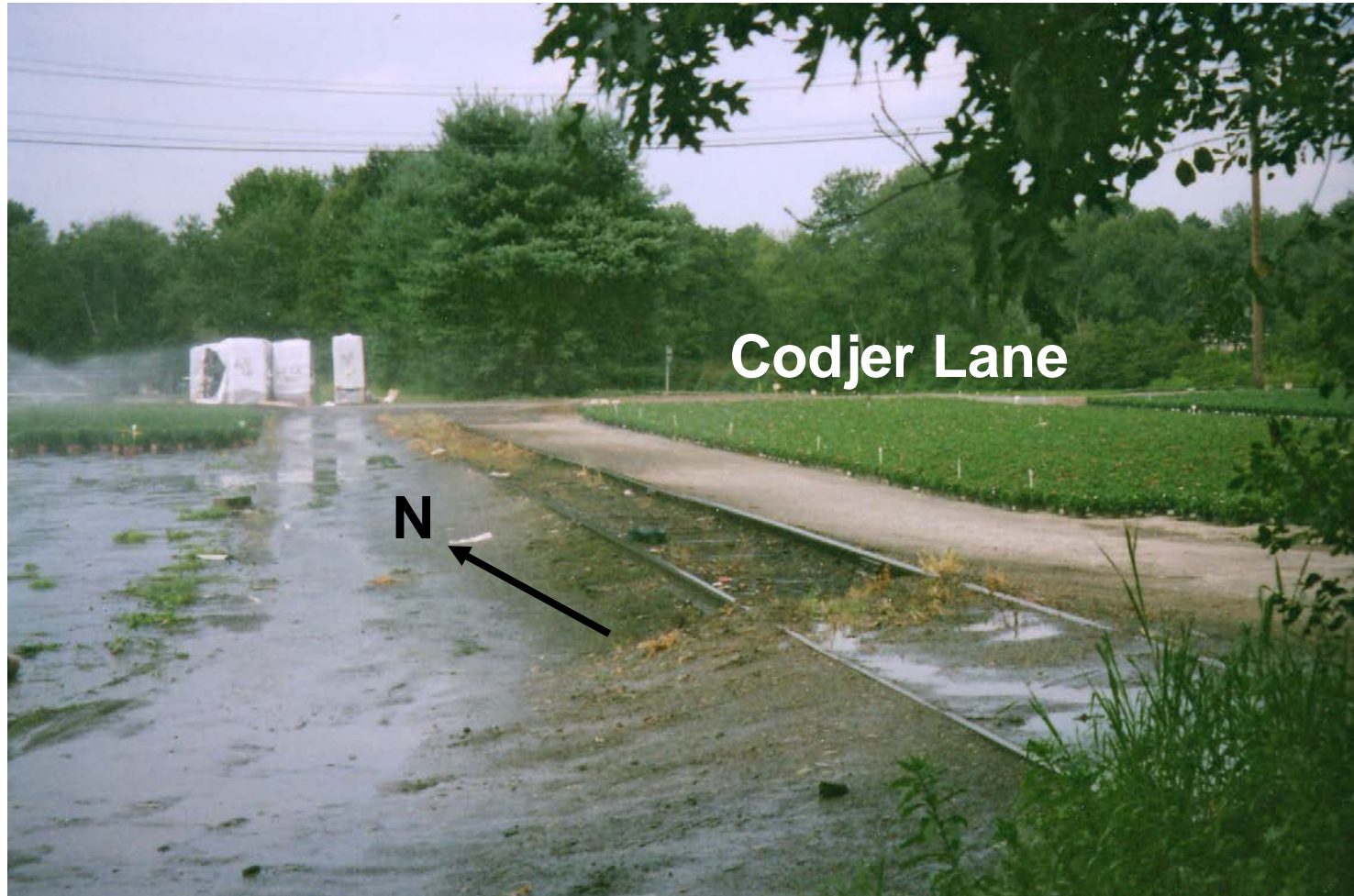


# Driveway off of Union Ave.





# Codjer Lane Crossing



# Hop Brook Trestle





# Hop Brook Trestle



KTCAC Public Hearing 2000



# Old Lancaster Rd. Crossing Looking East





# Crossing of Route 27/Hudson Rd. Looking North



Ti  
Sales

Route 27



# Parkinson Recreational Field North of Ti Sales





# Morse Road Crossing





# Pantry Brook Trestle



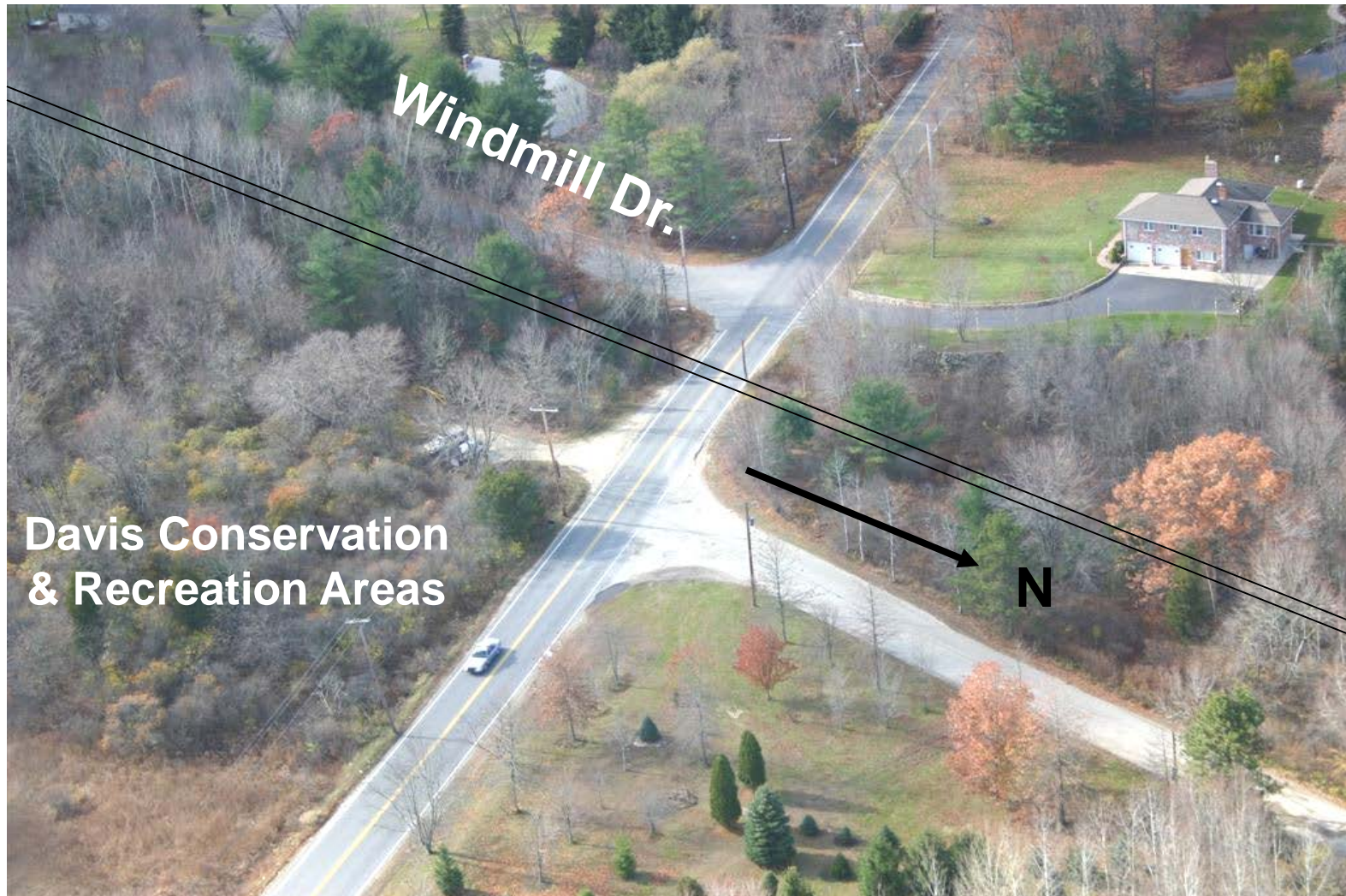


# Pantry Rd. Crossing Looking North





# Route 117/North Road Crossing



# **Process of Converting an Unused Rail Bed into a Rail Trail**



# **Process of Converting an Unused Rail Bed into a Rail Trail**

- **Rail banking**
- **Conversion options**
- **Steps in the conversion process**
- **Status in the towns along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**
- **Design guidelines for shared-use paths**

# **Rail Banking**

**The policy of keeping unused railroad rights of way intact for future use as transportation corridors.**

## **Uses:**

- **Shared-use paths (rail trails)**
- **Utility corridors**
- **Rail or other motorized transportation**

# Conversion Options and Funding

- **Greenway, walking path**
    - Sudbury funds and recreational trail grants
  - **Shared-use path with relaxed standards**
    - Sudbury funds and recreational trail grants
  - **Shared-use path under Federal Transportation Bill**
    - “Enhancements” or CMAQ\* funding
    - Design and construction
      - 10% Sudbury Funds
      - 90% State and Federal funds
    - Built according to shared-use path guidelines
- \* Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

# **Steps in Rail Trail Development Under State and Federal Transportation Enhancements or CMAQ**

- **Optional: Initial feasibility study by the Central Transportation Planning Staff**
- **Feasibility Study (Assessment)\***
- **25 % Design\***
- **Optional: Additional engineering and environmental studies.**
- **Acquisition of right of way (No cost lease from EOT)**
- **Final Design\***
- **Construction Funding**
- **Bidding**
- **Construction**

**\*These items are ~10% of total design and construction costs.**

# Status of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

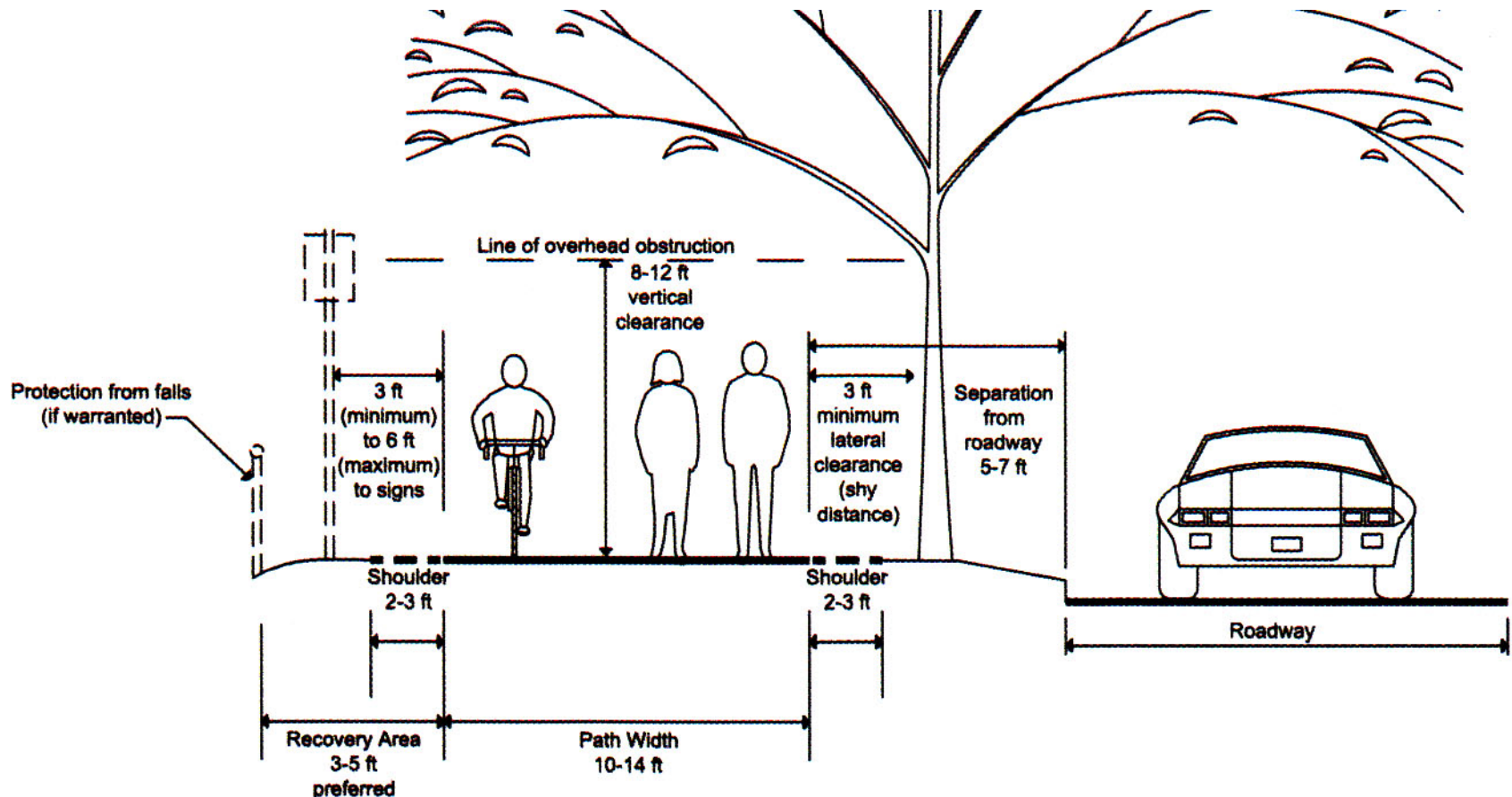
|                             |            | CTPS<br>Study | Feasibility<br>Assessment | 25 %<br>Design | Acquisition<br>of right-of-way                                  | Final<br>Design | Construction<br>Funding | Bidding   | Construction |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------|---|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>Phase I</b><br>7 miles   | Chelmsford | 1987          | none<br>required          | done           | No-cost lease<br>from EOT <sup>#</sup>                          | Done            | Done                    | Fall 2006 | 2007         |
|                             | Westford   | “             | “                         | done           | “   | Done            | Done                    | “         | “            |
| <b>Phase II</b><br>12 miles | Westford   | “             | none*                     | funded         | No-cost lease<br>from EOT <sup>#</sup> to be<br>negotiated<br>“ |                 |                         |           |              |
|                             | Carlisle   | “             | none*                     | funded         |   |                 |                         |           |              |
|                             | Acton      | “             | done                      | funded         | “   |                 |                         |           |              |
|                             | Concord    | “             | done                      | funded         | “   |                 |                         |           |              |
|                             | Sudbury    | “             | underway                  |                | “   |                 |                         |           |              |
| <b>Phase III</b><br>6 miles | Sudbury    | 2006          |                           |                | Negotiations<br>with CSX underway.<br>“                         |                 |                         |           |              |
|                             | Framingham | “             |                           |                |   |                 |                         |           |              |

\*Joining with Acton

<sup>#</sup>Mass. State Executive Office of Transportation

# Shared-Use Path Guidelines

From Mass. Highway “Project Development and Design Guidebook”



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From Mass. Highway “Project Development and Design Guidebook”

## Surfacing

“All paths need to provide a firm, stable, slip-resistant surface in a wide variety of use and weather conditions. In general, surfacing materials for paths in urban areas should be **paved** or consist of other “hard-surface” materials. Paved pathways function best in areas with high use and those that will be cleared of snow in the winter. “Stone dust” and other **unpaved** paths may be suitable in areas with lower levels of use, where the mix of users is more suitable for an unpaved path, or where aesthetic or contextual factors suggest that an unpaved treatment is appropriate. Unpaved materials are not suitable for inline skaters or bicyclists who travel at higher speeds.”

# Trail Neighbors Survey

Survey mailed July 2005  
Sudbury Rail Trail Conversion  
Advisory Committee



# Outline of Process

- April 14, 2005, RTCAC meeting  
Outreach to abutters
  - 1) Informational letter
  - 2) Questionnaire
- In response to public input, not only direct abutters but also trail neighbors received the letter and the questionnaire.

# Purpose of outreach

- **Informational letter**  
to describe the RTCAC and its mandate
- **Survey**  
to determine neighbors' thoughts and concerns about a potential rail trail

# Who got one?

## **Criteria for receiving the letter/questionnaire:**

Questionnaires were sent to property owners for each parcel in which the land shares a border with the rail right of way controlled by EOT in Sudbury (direct abutters.) Additionally, questionnaires were sent to property owners whose properties were on streets which dead-end with a direct abutter to the EOT right of way. One questionnaire only was sent to each address.

**231 households were identified as neighbors.**

# Excerpt from June 3, 2005, letter

This letter is the beginning of a dialogue with Sudbury residents who live near the rail bed. **We would like to determine how you view the proposed trail, and what your concerns and visions for the trail are;** we will also provide some basic information about the proposed trail and the present status of its development. In a few weeks, you will receive a questionnaire that will ask for your vision of the future of the trail and any concerns you may have about rail-trail development. When the Committee has had time to review your responses it will then invite you and your neighbors to an open forum for discussion.

# What the survey was

- An attempt to gather concerns, visions, views, and input about the trail from neighbors
- Recognition that trail neighbors will be directly affected by any proposed trail
- Outreach to introduce the RTCAC to trail neighbors
- A starting point for understanding the issues

# What the survey was **not**

- A vote determining the ultimate disposition of the corridor
- A determination that trail neighbors are more important than other citizens
- A substitute for vision or input from the entire community
- The end of discussion

# Unapproved results published

- On September 15, 2005, an unapproved interpretation of the survey results was published
- That summary misstated the percentages in questions #2 and #3, not considering those wishing more information and/or indicating no choice
- This is the approved summary

# Question #1

|   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Does your property abut the rail bed | 43   | (42%) |
| or do you live nearby?                  | 60   | (58%) |
| Are you a residential                   | 93.5 | (94%) |
| or commercial abutter?                  | 5.5  | ( 6%) |

105 questionnaires returned (45%)



# Question #2

2. For the future of the rail bed, I would like to see

|  |      | % of respondents |
|--|------|------------------|
| • A trail with sufficient width and firmness to accommodate walkers, runners, bicyclists, strollers and wheel chairs | 36   | 35%              |
| • No public access to the rail bed.  | 29.5 | 29%              |
| • A foot path similar to those in Sudbury's existing conservation areas.   | 19.5 | 19%              |
| • My opinion depends on the specifics of a potential trail.  | 17   | 17%              |

105 questionnaires returned (45%)

# Question #3

3. Do you have an opinion about the surface of a potential trail? Would you prefer:

|                     |       | % of respondents |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|
| asphalt             | 28    | 27%              |
| dirt                | 21.75 | 21%              |
| stone dust          | 12.25 | 12%              |
| gravel              | 5     | 5%               |
| No choice indicated | 38    | 36%              |

105 questionnaires returned (45%)

# Question #4

4. How concerned are you about these possible effects of a potential trail? Rate 0 (not concerned) to 5 (very concerned).

|                        | [ 0 or 1 ] | [ 2 or 3 ] | [ 4 or 5 ] |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| litter                 | 21         | 19         | 66         |
| parking                | 27         | 21         | 58         |
| loss of privacy        | 30         | 18         | 55         |
| crime                  | 30         | 22         | 52         |
| large numbers of users | 34         | 20         | 50         |
| property values        | 41         | 16         | 49         |
| noise                  | 41         | 21         | 39         |

# Question #5 (1)

**5.** If the rail bed were converted to a trail, I would use it for

|  |      |     |
|--|------|-----|
| walking  | 63   | 60% |
| bicycling  | 39   | 37% |
| cross-country skiing                               | 29   | 28% |
| running  | 27.5 | 26% |
| strollers, tricycles, other children's conveyances | 15   | 14% |

## Question #5 (2)

**5.** If the rail bed were converted to a trail, I would use it for

|                      |    |     |
|----------------------|----|-----|
| in-line skating      | 13 | 12% |
| snowshoeing          | 13 | 12% |
| horseback riding     | 3  | 3%  |
| skateboarding        | 3  | 3%  |
| a wheelchair         | 2  | 2%  |
| not likely to use it | 25 | 23% |

105 questionnaires returned (45%)

# Question #6

**6.** If the rail bed were converted to a trail, do you think you would use it

|        |      |       |
|--------|------|-------|
| daily  | 17   | (18%) |
| weekly | 31.5 | (34%) |
| rarely | 27.5 | (30%) |
| never  | 17   | (18%) |

# Questions #7 and #8

## About RTCAC

7. Have you attended our meetings?

Yes: 15      No: 85

8. Have you visited our website?

Yes: 28      no: 72

# Survey Comments

- Extensive, passionate, and thoughtful comments by many people
- Environmental and financial concerns in addition to items mentioned in the questions
- No obvious consensus
- More information requested



# Further information

- **Survey** results are available
- **Committee** meetings and minutes are posted on the Town website

**<http://www.town.sudbury.ma.us>**

**Committees → Rail Trail Conversion  
Advisory Committee**

## **Three Key Questions About Rail Trails**

- **Are people happy with rail trails in their community?**

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- Are people happy with rail trails in their community?
- Do rail trails increase crime?
- **Do rail trails decrease property values?**

# Studies of Existing Rail Trails

## **California**

Lafayette/Moraga

## **Florida**

Pinellas

St. Marks

## **Indiana**

Cardinal Greenway

Maple City Greenway

Monon

Pennsy

Prarie Duneland

Rivergreenway

## **Iowa**

Heritage

Wabash Trace

## **Maryland**

North Central

## **Michigan**

Pere Marquette

## **Minnesota**

Douglas

Heartland

Luce Line

Root River

## **Nebraska**

Cowboy

Field Club

Keystone

MoPac

Oak Creek

West Papio

## **New York**

Mohawk-Hudson

## **Washington**

Burke Gilman

# Three Key Questions About Rail Trails

- Are people happy with rail trails in their community? **YES**
- Do rail trails increase crime? **NO**
- Do rail trails decrease property values? **NO**