



# Town of Sudbury

## Rail Trails Advisory Committee

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### MINUTES

**April 2, 2025 AT 7:30 PM**

### VIRTUAL MEETING

**Members Present:** John Drobinski (chair), Glenn Pransky, Ken Holtz, Laurie Eliason, John Sugrue

**Absent:** Lana Szwarc

**Others Present:** Marcia Rasmussen, Planning & Community Development Department

Meeting called to order 7:30PM

#### Update from Chair:

- Chair Drobinski informed the committee that there are two open positions on the Rail Trails Advisory Committee (RTAC). He mentioned that there were three applications submitted so far for the open seats. The committee would need to interview the candidates, and make a recommendation to the Select Board. Ms. Eliason asked the chair if there was a deadline for application submission for the two open seats. Ms. Rasmussen responded, explaining that the policy for open seats is that the town will advertise for at least 30 days, the committee will hold interviews, and then make a recommendation to the Select Board.
- Chair Drobinski informed the committee that the Select Board voted unanimously to send a letter to the state regarding the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT).

#### Staff Update:

- Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Phase 2D:
  - The ten small interpretive panels for the granite posts were reviewed by the Sudbury Historical Commission at their March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, receiving positive feedback from Commission members.
  - Graphic Designer Lynn Horsky/Process finalized the panels for the four kiosks, which includes an orientation map along with historic and natural history information. These panels will be installed in the four kiosks along the rail trail at the Diamond intersection, the Hudson/Peakham intersection, Morse Road/Broadacres Farm, and, Route 117/North Road. Delivery of the final panels and installation happened April 1, 2026.
  - Individuals visiting the rail trail have observed concrete breaking up (or spalling) near the Hudson Road/Peakham Road intersection. MassDOT and town staff will be examining other concrete locations on the trail to see if there are additional areas of concern.

- Traffic back-ups in Sudbury Center on March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> were due to a failed pedestrian button on the rail trail at the Hudson Rd./Peakham Rd. intersection. Electric subcontractor, Daigle, was called in to replace the button; work was completed by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday.
- MassDOT has not yet signed off on the construction work and Town staff have not yet conducted a final walk-through. The new traffic signals at the Hudson and Peakham intersection have not been certified by the MassDOT traffic group because there are still issues with the Opticom system for emergency vehicle over-ride. The work must be accepted by MassDOT before the trail can be open to the public.
- The Request for Proposals for the Parkinson Field Driveway project is being finalized and will be advertised on COMMBUYS, the Central Register and the Town's website.
- A confirmed completion date has not been identified, but the contract calls for work be completed by June 30, 2025.
- G. Pransky noted there had been complaints about the crossing lights not working. M. Rasmussen responded that Daigle was aware of the issue and are taking steps to correct it.
- G. Pransky said there was a historical artifact, a derailer device removed from the Ti-Sales property a couple of years ago, and the contractor kept it for safe keeping. He said we should look into having the artifact returned so it can be displayed. M. Rasmussen said she would look into it.
- K. Holtz asked about the cross-walk button that failed, and if anyone knew what the issues were. M. Rasmussen said it was a faulty pedestrian button.
- J. Drobinski asked when does MassDOT's responsibility for traffic signal systems functioning end, and the town's responsibilities begin? Ms. Rasmussen responded when the traffic group says there are no more issues and MassDOT certifies the traffic signals.
- M. Rasmussen reported the Commission on Disabilities asked about partnering with the RTAC on an adaptive bike program through All-Out-Adventures. Resident John McQueen suggested checking with Acton, which has contracted with an adaptive mobility supplier, as a possible model. Ms. Rasmussen said she would reach out to Acton for more information and may invite the Commission to the May meeting to discuss interest and options.
- G. Pransky's trail observations reinforced the value of trail amenities and inclusion, and the Committee identified locations such as Davis Field, Morse Road, and Parkinson Field as possible sites for adaptive-bike activities.
- Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Phase 3:
  - M. Rasmussen reported that the Mass legislature has enacted and sent to the Governor a bill to extend authorizations for local boards and committees to hold public meetings remotely or in a hybrid format through June of 2027, and, assuming this is true for State agencies, the 25% Design Public Hearing is scheduled for May 15, 2025. She indicated that we are waiting to hear back from Framingham about the possibility of coordinating an in-person public information

session and meeting for both the City of Framingham and Town of Sudbury prior to the Design Public Hearing to give residents an opportunity to view plans and ask questions.

- M. Rasmussen said Fuss & O'Neill has finalized revisions to the 25% design plans in response to comments and input from MassDOT in November 2024.
- M. Rasmussen stated she was attending the regularly scheduled meetings of the Boston MPO to stay aware of discussions and recommendations to be included in the 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Plan.
- M. Rasmussen noted the Inter-Municipal Agreement between the Town of Sudbury and City of Framingham for access to the former CSX right-of-way has been finalized and will be signed soon.
- Massachusetts Central Rail Trail (MCRT)
  - M. Rasmussen reported that the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) anticipates Eversource will hand off the project to DCR as of April 1, 2025, and the next phase of construction will begin April 7, 2025. The contractor selected was ET& L Corporation located in Stow, MA. The Contractor is expected to begin fine grading and paving later in April.
  - M. Rasmussen asked whether DCR has a traffic engineer to review the temporary access routes between the end of the Sudbury section and Wayland; DCR Project Manager Amber Christopherson said she would ask the State's consultant for guidance. The Committee also discussed working with the East Coast Greenway on potential alternate route connections.
  - The Select Board approved a letter of support for completion of the Mass Central Rail Trail; M. Rasmussen will forward it to DCR, MassDOT, and state representatives.
  - G. Pransky suggested the committee should begin thinking about a MassTrails grant application, especially for connections and possibly signage. M. Rasmussen agreed that planning should also consider local funding, including a possible CPA application later this year.
  - A concern was raised about whether the trail will be open during construction. G. Pransky relayed that during paving, DCR may want people to stay off the trail for safety.
  - Members also discussed whether the project should include consistent crossing treatments, such as HAWK signals or push-button warning systems. G. Pransky noted that consistency would help users understand crossings along the corridor.
- **Observations from other Rail Trails**
  - G. Pransky presented his observations from visits to 15 rail trails along the East Coast and in the Midwest, chosen because they are roughly comparable in size and character to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail: suburban, multi-town, mostly paved, and in use for 10+ years.
  - He said the trails offered useful lessons for Sudbury on:
    - Dog waste management
    - Maintenance costs and practices
    - Trail connections to neighborhoods and businesses

- Crossing design and signage
- G. Pransky reported a consistent finding that signage alone does not solve dog waste issues. Trails that had dog waste bag stations and disposal containers were noticeably cleaner. He said those communities typically place waste stations near parking lots and intersections, where town crews can service them easily.
- He cited a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy maintenance study and said average maintenance costs for paved rail trails are about \$2,000 per mile per year.
- He emphasized that successful trail programs are proactive, keeping up with:
  - tree roots and freeze-thaw damage
  - litter removal
  - fence repairs
  - mowing and signage
  - periodic cleanup of invasives and debris
- G. Pransky also observed that communities near trails often eventually demand more connections, not fewer, and that those connections can raise property values and support local businesses. He cited examples where trail access to shops and restaurants worked well when there was good signage and a safe crossing. In contrast, he showed examples where nearby businesses were underused because the route from the trail to the street was not clearly signed for cyclists.

- **Member Reports & Updates:**

- The Committee agreed that future planning should consider trail connections, especially around the Mass Central / Bruce Freeman corridors, nearby neighborhoods, and business districts.
- L. Eliason highlighted traffic speed concerns near the Diamond / Union Avenue access area, suggesting the town should consider signage and driver awareness for slow-speed circulation near future trail crossings and parking areas.
- Members discussed the fact that some current erosion-control measures, such as hay bales, will remain until the project receives a completion certificate from Conservation. M. Rasmussen noted that additional work at Morse Road may keep some controls in place longer due to a separate grant-funded scope.
- The Committee will interview applicants for the 2 open positions at the next meeting and then make a recommendation to the Select Board.
- M. Rasmussen will send out a rotation list for taking minutes.
- M. Rasmussen will look into:
  - the reported crosswalk light/button issues
  - the historical derail device removed from the spur
  - possible DCR/MassDOT contacts for the support letter
  - the adaptive bike program and possible May agenda item
  - the Diamond intersection porta potty location and any design constraints
- G. Pransky will send M. Rasmussen names of contacts at DCR/MassDOT.
- The Committee agreed to continue discussing trail connections, grants, and amenities as the Mass Central project advances.

- **Public Comment:** None

- **Minutes Approval:**  
March 5, 2025
  - Motion to Approve by G. Pransky, Second by J. Sugrue. All voted in favor.
  - Future Meeting Dates
    - The Committee confirmed the next regular meeting for May 21, 2025.
    - They also discussed possible June dates, with June 18 identified as workable, and noted that July 2 could be an option if needed due to the July 4 holiday.
    - The Phase 3 25% Design public hearing remains tentatively set for May 15, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.