

Rail Trails: Getting Started and Challenges

Dick Williamson: Trail development with federal transportation funds.

Robert Weidknecht: Acquiring unused right of way from a railroad company.

Kate Day: Working with Iron Horse to develop a rail trail.

Colleen Abrams: Community based development of a rail trail.

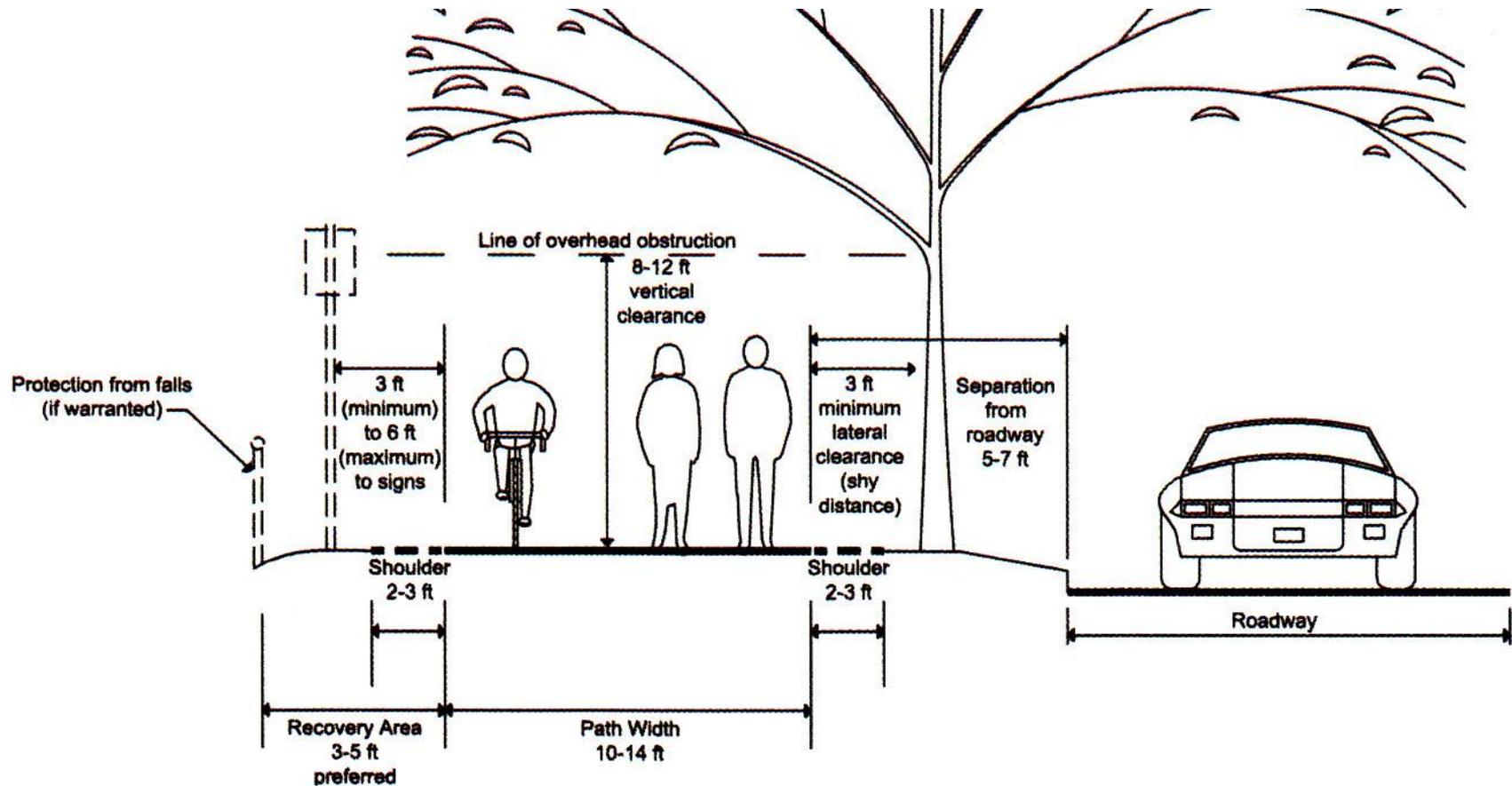
Trail Development with Federal Transportation Funds

**Bruce Freeman
Rail Trail
Westford, MA**



Shared-Use Path Guidelines

From Mass. Highway “Project Development and Design Guidebook”



Trail surface must be smooth and firm enough to meet ADA guidelines.

Geometry

- **Railroad ties are about 8 feet long.**
- **Minimum flat surface for a rail trail is 14 feet.**
 - **Minimum: 10-foot-wide travel surface.**
 - **Minimum: 2-foot shoulders on each side.**
- **A lot of earth moving is required.**

Resulting Rail Trail

- **Well engineered.**
- **Safe.**
- **Low Maintenance.**
- **Well drained.**
- **Accommodates the widest variety of users.**
- **Lowest cost (?) to the local community.**

BUT

Follow the Money

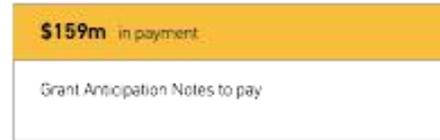
Apportionment of Costs

- **Local community**
 - 10% of total cost (design plus construction)
 - Satisfied by funding the design.
- **Commonwealth: 20% of construction cost.**
- **Federal transportation bill: 80% of construction cost.**
 - Transportation Enhancements OR
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

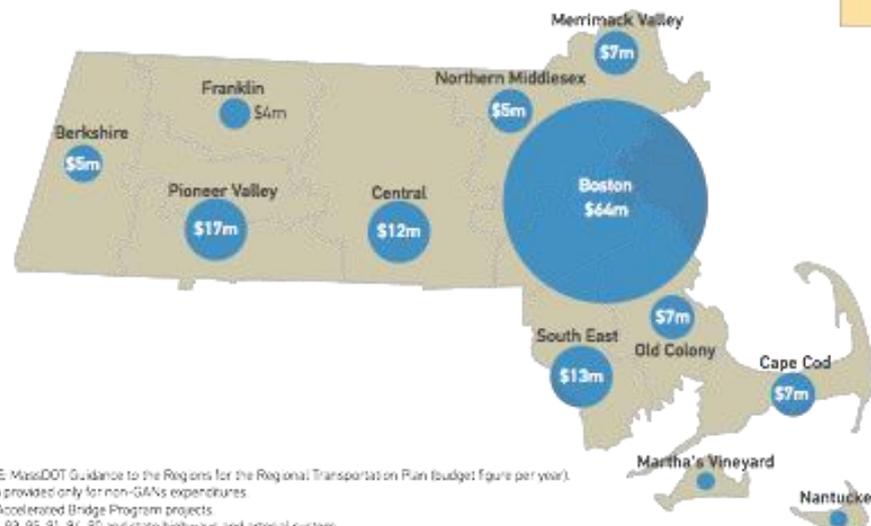
Construction Cost of a MassHighway Rail Trail

- **Approximately \$700K per mile**
 - Not counting bridges
 - Comparable to a lane-mile of conventional road.
- **Typical design cost (10%) about \$70K per mile.**

Federal Funding for MassDOT



MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization



SOURCE: MassDOT Guidance to the Regions for the Regional Transportation Plan (budget figure per year).

1. Match provided only for non-GANs expenditures.

2. Non-Accelerated Bridge Program projects.

3. I-495, 93, 95, 91, 84, 90 and state highways and arterial system.

4. Some of this could be flexed for transit.

Tortuous Lengthy Process

- **Must work through local, state and federal bureaucracy.**
 - Must be programmed by your MPO.
 - Numerous hearings and design reviews.
- **Funding for rail trails is in direct competition with all other surface transportation efforts.**
- **Mass. has perennially ranked last in use of Federal Transportation Enhancements funds.**
- **Example: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**
 - First hearings held in 1988.
 - First seven miles finished in 2008.
 - Construction of next eight miles scheduled after 2021.

Optimism

- **Evolving transportation policies.**
 - **Green DOT.**
 - **Emphasis on multimodal transportation.**
 - **Emphasis on health, active transportation.**
- **Change in use of Enhancements Funds.**
 - **MassDOT will take out \$3.5M.**
 - **These funds will match 1:2 enhancements projects scheduled by the MPOs.**