



For Immediate Release

October 27, 2020

MassDOT Advisory: Mass Central Rail Trail Feasibility Study

*The MassTrails Team announces 30-day public comment period via the
Public Involvement Management Application*



BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is announcing the Mass Central Rail Trail Feasibility Study has been completed and is ready to be released for 30-day public comment period via the Public Involvement Management Application (PIMA) platform. The webpage can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/mass-central-rail-trail-feasibility-study>

On behalf of the [MassTrails Team](#), MassDOT has completed a feasibility study of the 68.5 mile mid-state section of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) between Belchertown and Hudson. The current ownership, condition, and existing use of the original railroad corridor along this Central Massachusetts stretch varies greatly. Some sections have been converted to a shared-use path;

some sections are in public ownership with an intact railbed. Other sections remain active railroads while still others are now in private ownership and the original railbed has been converted to different uses.

“The study is an important step in helping the Baker-Polito Administration move ahead to improve connections in the state,” said **MassDOT Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack**. “We continue to work with cities, towns, advocacy groups, private property owners and non-profits to identify gaps in the transportation system and to build relationships and infrastructure that will better connect shared-use pathways to help people get around, whether they are taking an essential trip or just out for recreation.”

The vision of MCRT is to convert as much of the original 104-mile rail corridor as possible to an east-west, off-road, shared-use path/greenway connecting Northampton to Boston. The mapping of the entire corridor in the field was conducted by utilizing the latest GPS technology coupled with data entry taking place on location via smart tablet. Field data was then combined with the latest statewide environmental and transportation layers through [geoDOT](#) resulting in a state-of-the-art set of nearly 100 maps.

The Baker-Polito Administration supports the effort to identify and develop a connected network of multi-use trails and shared-use paths across the Commonwealth. In 2020, the Administration awarded \$4 million in the second round of MassTrails Program grants to 55 projects to facilitate the construction and maintenance of a variety of public trails throughout the state trails system, such as hiking trails, and shared-use paths. The MassTrails program is managed by the Administration’s interagency Trails Team, which was established by Governor Baker in 2017 to develop a unified vision for a trails network. The Team includes staff members representing MassDOT, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

“The Commonwealth’s network of trails provides important infrastructure that links our neighborhoods, communities, and regions together, and offers tremendous opportunities to explore nature while committing to a healthy, active lifestyle,” said **Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Jim Montgomery**. “The feasibility study will greatly assist in the planning of the Mass Central Rail Trail, and serves as an example of the Baker-Polito Administration’s dedication in enhancing and investing in the state’s natural and recreational resources.”

The MCRT has been identified as a high priority for the Commonwealth’s trail and greenway system. This specific mid-state section has the potential to connect with four existing trail networks in Belchertown, Barre, Sterling and Clinton.

MassTrails welcomes feedback from the public. Please [click here](#) to view the full report and to access the public comment form.

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