

HNTB Corporation
Engineers Architects Planners

31 St. James Avenue, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02116

Telephone (617) 542-6900
Facsimile (617) 428-6905
www.hntb.com

Date
12/18/20

To
Peter Sutton, Bicycle and
Pedestrian Program Coordinator,
MassDOT



PROJECT
CORRESPONDENCE

From
Leah Epstein, Public Involvement,
HNTB

Subject
MCRT PIMA Comment Summary

Comments collected from 10/27/20 – 12/08/20:

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
1	Our family frequently uses and enjoys the rail trail in its existing locations, both as bicyclists and pedestrians. We are very much in favor of extending it.	Duane Jenness	Worcester	10/27/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
2	The MCRT will have positive impacts on all of the communities it travels through. Positive impacts include opportunities for exercise, community building, and tourism. Having recently moved here from the midwest, I've been disappointed at the lack of rail trails, and look forward to the completion of the MCRT!	Zach Sawyer	Waltham	10/27/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
3	As a Waltham resident, any continued progress on the MCRT development is incredibly exciting. As a citizen of the Commonwealth, I am pleased to see the feasibility studies come together to guide future funding and eventual development of the corridor. While I am hopeful for the final MCRT to pass through the tunnel and across the dam in Clinton, please know that the completion of the trail itself in a safe and accessible manner is of the utmost important. This might be a wonderful feature of the trail, but should not preclude the final development of the entire efforts for the trail development.	Myles Steinhauser	Waltham	10/27/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
4	As an alternative to the proposed on-road section along MA-32 between Gilbertville and Creamery Rd, might it be possible and/or preferable to make that section a rail-with-trail alongside the MCRR line? Looking at the property lines in Google Maps, there appears to be plenty of room without even having to move the tracks.	Charles Olson	Somerville	10/27/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Regarding your question, due to much of the original right-of-way now in private ownership, the feasibility study recommends using a small stretch of parallel roadway to avoid any potential private land acquisitions.
5	In Segment 3, the study does not appear to address how the trail will get from the top of the Wachusett Dam to the tunnel portal. There's a significant grade on that section of MA-62 (and you then have to get back up to the level of the tunnel), so perhaps it would make sense to build an elevated structure that ramps up gradually from the end of the dam to the alignment of the tunnel, then turns right and bridges over 62.	Charles Olson	Somerville	10/27/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
6	Would LOVE for this trail to get completed. Part of feasibility is cost and I don't see those dollar amounts anywhere. I wish the planning took into account capital and annual maintenance costs to determine construction type and timeline. I think this is a priority but know keeping the costs low will make this project more viable. It just concerns me when costs are not thought of from the beginning.	Aaron Ladd	Ashland	10/29/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.
7	I support this project.	James Maxwell	Athol	10/29/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
8	Anything that can be done to make this a reality is appreciated. Rail trails provide a great recreation opportunity to a large portion of the population	Fred Meyer	Princeton	10/29/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
9	I support this project. with roads being increasingly dangerous for us cyclists, more connected paths would be incredible. Have longer sections would also eliminate the need to use a car to shuttle to sections. my cycling club is very much in favor. I'm curious when work might begin. Thanks	Tim McCrohon	Worcester	10/29/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Under the purview of Wachusett Greenways, two sections of new trail are under construction in Holden and West Boylston. In Clinton, under the purview of Clinton Greenways Conservation Trust, a one-mile segment is anticipated to open in spring 2021.
10	THis is an awesome project. Central mass desperately needs this rail trail as the golden thread that binds our outdoors communities together	Jan Jacobsz	North Grafton	10/29/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
11	Hi, I'd like to see if there could be any thoughts on sharing the trail with horses - non paved sections, area for trailer parking. thank you!	Carolyn Beckstrom	Berlin	10/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Careful consideration will be given to all travel modes during the initial design phase of a particular section, including horseback riding.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
12	I am a Palmer resident and a senior and am very excited about this possibility coming through town. You hear about these shared use paths quite often and our neighboring towns have them but this connection would really make this a great addition to this area! I look forward to riding/ walking this trail as soon as possible and will certainly talk it up. It came up today on the Palmer Master Plan Transportation/Mobility forum of which I am the chairperson and we will definitely have this possibility entered into our new upcoming plan. Thank you!	David Golden	Palmer	10/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
13	I am a regular user of the Mass Central Rail Trail (bike & walk) and wanted to comment here that I am so pleased to have this resource available. Thank you for all of the efforts to bring this project together, it's a massive amount of work. I would especially love for there to be more segments of the trail that allow dogs and, where possible, segments that do not cross roadways.	Kathleen Maiser	Holden	10/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
14	I am a strong supporter of the MCRT and all bicycle infrastructure improvements. I served on the NRTAC and am now on the New Norwottuck Network board. The report is excellent. I am glad that the governor has given strong support to moving the project forward and that public support continues to rise. At one time MA was at the forefront of bicycle infrastructure in the US but in the past decades we have been coasting on past achievements. The MCRT is the next step in	Andrew Morris-Friedman	Hadley	10/31/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	bringing our state in line with developments in other northeastern states. The MCRT will be the spine from which the ribs of a larger and more complete alternative transportation system will grow connecting our communities in new ways that help our local environment, improve public health and fight global warming. I would like to stress that the rail trail be available for all riders on all types of bikes, traditional and e-bikes. We don't improve public facilities or increase public support by excluding or banning people. The boom in cycling due to the Covid pandemic will only increase public support for projects like the MCRT. The time to move forward with this is now. I look forward to the day when I can ride from Williamstown to Provincetown. I just hope that it doesn't take so long that I have to do it in an electric wheelchair.					
15	Love using the rail trail for walking and would love to see it strengthened.	Kristian Carter	Rutland	10/31/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
16	I am a passionate advocate and volunteer for the MCRT. I also am a regular cyclist, walker and runner on the trail averaging 1 to 2 days per week of some type of access. I wholeheartedly support the state's efforts to connect the full 104 miles of the MCRT and will continue to actively engage as a volunteer, committee member and financial supporter of this wonderful effort.	Brian Jette	Hubbartson	11/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
17	<p>I'd like to first express my appreciation to the many people, within MassDOT, MassTrails, the EOEEA, VHB, and all others that made this Feasibility Study possible. Great job for a great cause!</p> <p>Please make it even greater by making the revision suggested below.</p> <p>Some of us have been around the MCRT visioning and development process since Bob Durand released Commonwealth Connections: A Greenway Vision for Massachusetts, 2001 <1>. It's a grand vision worthy of its priority status in the Commonwealth and the investment of local communities and people.</p> <p>My own investment was inaugurated then, back in 2001. Indeed I was there when Bob cut the ribbon on the trail and announced new support at the state level. I had just purchased land in Clinton, a mere mile away from the trail near South Meadow Pond. As a participant, I began an interaction with people similarly interested in seeing the vision come to fruition. Our section from the corner of S. Meadow Rd and Main St to the nearby DCR office was the first completed section of the MCRT, since the rail removed left it traverse-able. Craig Della Penna was advocating in his role with the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy for passage through Clinton and the tunnel left abandoned when the line was moved to make way for Wachusett Reservoir.</p>	Richard Kerver	Clinton	11/9/20	Yes	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section.</p>

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Over the years since, I have attended many public meetings, listened to Craig regale on the history of the B&M Railroad, and helped as I could to complete sections of the trail, sometimes with shovel in hand, sometimes behind a computer screen as MassGIS specialist. I am as familiar with the Clinton-to-Sterling section of the proposed trail as anyone. Please see attached historical notes from 2002 for the coalition On-Trac-Mac <2>, submitted as our conclusions then are still relevant today, perhaps more so. The map included details an alternative route for the MCRT connecting Clinton and Sterling. This route is absent from the draft Feasibility Study. Please correct the draft with this alternative route.</p> <p>There has yet to be a definitive route for the MCRT in this neighborhood. Hence all possible alternatives must be fully considered, including those routes envisioned by the local enthusiasts closest to the section considered. That consideration is first and foremost the responsibility of the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) through which the MCRT traverses. For both Clinton and Sterling, that is the Montachusett RPC, who has delegated trail planning to the Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition (MRTC). There are of course hardships and difficulties associated with bringing to fruition any of the alternatives which the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Feasibility Study details. One critique of the above alternative is the relative steepness of the terrain, which might preclude ADA access, a prerequisite for sections of the MCRT. But there is no expectation that the local communities involved might pursue multiple alternatives overtime, some of which are ADA compliant and others which provide a higher degree of difficulty for the more athletic.</p> <p>This alternative, let's call it the Northernmost connector, has advantages. Apart from more directly connecting the Town centers of Sterling and Clinton, a major expectation for trails utilizing state and local resources for completion, is linkage. Linkage provides connections between local towns and their rich cultural, historical, natural and ecological resources which provide a significant part of their recreational value. For instance, see DCR's Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative <4>.</p> <p>The Clinton to Sterling section traverses a landscape rich in these well-preserved resources. This includes Meadowbrook Orchards <5> and the creamery at Rota Spring Farms <6>, among others.</p> <p>When our On-Trac-Mac group walked our trail, we stopped at Rota Spring for their delicious local-made ice cream from local cows, seen grazing on the local pastures of the local farm. I can think of no greater highlight to a hike uphill than this, and our</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>team concurred, hence the alternative route we mapped. We approached the family who owns the farm and asked for permission that our trail traverse the farm, which they gladly granted. What more glorious a route than one through our local farms and the open space so defined? Indeed, the entire history of Central Massachusetts is anchored by our farms. The economic value of the MCRT when complete should accrue in part to our local small-hold farmers.</p> <p>Yet the viable alternatives are now being defined by this Feasibility Study. At no time was our input solicited prior to its internal finalization as definitive draft. While we applaud the inclusion of Wachusett Greenways and Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust peoples as part of that initial solicitation, the requirement of inclusivity should demand more, to the benefit of all concerned with seeing the process of MCRT trail development through to its logical conclusion. In numerous conversations with Peter Sutton, we have however been relegated to mere commentators at this moment in time. How disappointing.</p> <p>We hope that you will do not just the right thing, but the thing most beneficial to the best possible Feasibility Study and include ALL viable alternatives for routing the MCRT through this section of Segment 3.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
18	I support the construction of all three sections covered in the report. The map on page 23 of the document "Segment 1—Belchertown to Bondsville (Palmer)" could be improved by adding the missing parking lot at RT-181.	Thomas Kelleher	Acton	11/11/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.
19	Trail needs to be open for all to use just not the chosen few. Snowmobiles need to be included for winter use. Atv's would be nice also in summer	William Golaski	Florence	11/12/20	No	Thank you for your comment. Consistent with trail use guidelines throughout the state, motorized vehicles (such as all-terrain vehicles) would be prohibited.
20	I support the Feasibility Study to increase a bike and pedestrian shared use path, to connect the different communities with a walking biking route option. Once these paths are developed, often, they open up more options for people with disabilities and those who do not own a car, for transportation or safe walking routes, especially in rural areas, where there are a lack of continuous sidewalks. Please include in future studies the need for connecting routes outside this Rail trail to community centers, transportation facilities, etc. Also be sure to review the interacting street crossings, with proper pedestrian crossing signals which are accessible to individuals who are blind and visually impaired and traffic calming measures (raised crosswalks or islands, to be sure there is proper yielding of traffic with signalized and un-signalized crossings.	Meg Robertson	North Reading	11/12/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
21	My name is Anna Kusterski. I am a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist who works with individuals who are legally blind to help such individuals travel independently. I am also an avid hiker and love being outdoors. I would like to express my full support in planning off-road shared paths along the MCRR corridor. Such pathways not only provide recreational options for residents but also provide additional pedestrian access to many individuals with disabilities who may otherwise be unable to get to areas within their towns due to lack of sidewalks, crosswalks or safe pedestrian friendly roads.	Anna Kusterski	Holden	11/12/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
22	I fully support this project as an improvement in or additional opportunity for accessible and safe travel opportunities for blind and visually impaired pedestrians.	Erin Buckley	Beverly	11/13/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
23	snowmobile use would enhance winter usability and groom the trail for all winter sports. also a tremendous asset for ma. tourism.	Tony Shaw	Harvard	11/15/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Consistent with trail use guidelines throughout the state, motorized vehicles (such as snowmobiles) would be prohibited.
24	Strongly supportive of this project. I am a Planner for the Town of Amherst and a resident of Northampton. Rail trail connections are vital to the quality of life in the Pioneer Valley and important for economic development - drawing tourists and visitors to our downtown areas. This would be a great project to help with	Benjamin Breger	Amherst	11/18/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	economic recovery after the COVID pandemic.					
25	I have been a regular recreational cyclist on the MA Central Rail trail on the new section from Wayland to Weston; on the Sections in Sterling, and in Hudson. It is a valuable addition to these communities, enhances outdoor access, and recreation. I applaud this work. I would encourage continuing to open the trail, even in unpaved so that use can begin, even if pavement is added later. One thing that would be very helpful would be to have routes marked to connect existing segments and have them posted at each end of available segments so that riders can extend their rides.	Bruce Leicher	Harvard	11/18/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
26	Trying to reach the wiki-map that was mentioned in today's presentation.	Thomas Kelleher	Acton	11/18/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
27	At 5 Corners in Berlin, it is desirable to recognize that Derby Road is the best access to the Wachusett Aqueduct. Many people have used this as a bike route for the last 30 years. There is a proposal for a multi-use trail on this that would provide links to Northborough, Marlborough and Westborough. Additionally, the proposed BWALT trail from Framingham to Worcester would provide links to the Upper Charles Trail and the Blackstone River Bikeway.	Donald Burn	Westborough	11/18/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
28	<p>Recommendations for the layout of the CMRT from the Wachusett Dam east through Berlin by Walter Bickford for Berlin Conservation Commission, Nov. 20, 2020 Wachusett Dam: Heading easterly from west end of Wachusett dam, the most practical route would cross the dam. For safety sake, there need only be a chain link dome over and the entire length of the top of the dam. A hiking/biking trail across the dam would not in any manner threaten the integrity of the dam. Once across the dam, the trail should follow the west side of route 70 north. An inclined walkway leading up to the west end of a pedestrian bridge that spans route 70 to the entrance of the tunnel needs to be constructed The two routes heading easterly from the dam to the five corners area in Berlin: Clearly following the original CMRR bed through the tunnel to the five corners would be the most interesting and practical: a real crowd pleaser, a draw, highly desirable. The tunnel combined with the dam and route 70 crossings and the pedestrian bridge over the five corners in Berlin would make for a fascinating stretch of the CMRT. The contention in the report that this route would result in more conflicts with private property owners is incorrect. A simple count of dwellings along both layouts reveals this. Indeed, this layout</p>	Walter Bickford	Berlin	11/20/20	Yes	<p>Thank you for your comments. Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section.</p>

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>would generate substantially more support than opposition. Specifically, the residents at the Wachusett Woodlands, LLC development in Clinton would greatly appreciate the quick, easy access that this route would provide where it crosses the entrance road to Woodlands. In addition, recently built sidewalks along Berlin Street provide a large population of Clinton residents with easy, safe access to the CMRT at this same location. Please note that the town of Berlin expended substantial funds to out-bid an abutter for a section of this route and, also, obtained a ROW over a section that another abutter did purchase, in anticipation of the CMRT following this route. With respect to following the MDC tunnel ROW, a hike along its route would quickly reveal extremely steep, difficult, slopes, exposed bedrock, and steep ledge. It is difficult to hike the steepest sections; biking is out of the question. It would needlessly intrude into one of the last, large, relatively remote, natural areas in the vicinity. The larger number of private property owners along this layout in Berlin would rightfully generate more resistance than the CMRR route; it would not generate additional advocates as would the CMRR route. The five corners: Passing over this intersection would require an extravagant pedestrian bridge – though not nearly as</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	extravagant as the bridge over route 2A in Acton for the Bruce Freeman Trail. Five corners to Highland Street: Once across the five corners the trail should leave the CMRR bed on its north side and join the bed of the original county road that was discontinued when the CMRR was built. Said county roadbed heads easterly and parallels the CMRR bed about 50 to 80 yards to the north side. This avoids crossing the back yards of several residences. The county road crosses Coburn Road just north of where the CMRR bed does and gradually angles southerly towards and joins the CMRR bed. The county road is all on DCR flood control and Berlin conservation land. Rather than return to the CMRR bed where the county road first encounters it, the CMRT should stay as far as possible to the northern side and rejoin the CMRR bed behind where the old Berlin Highway Barn is on Carter Street. This last short stretch would protect as much as possible an elegantly restored, very historic home owned by an influential couple who strongly oppose the trail. It would also minimize conflict with another residence. Through Berlin: From this point, the CMRR bed provides the most logical, inexpensive route easterly to Hudson.					
29	I kept seeing the word shared use path. I am hoping that in areas where there is current	Becky Kalagher	Douglas	11/23/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Careful consideration will be given to all travel

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	equestrian use, that it will be considered as part of the shared use path and continued access is going to be made to allow equestrian use. And that the eventual design will include surfaces conducive for equestrian use on the shared path and bridges. It is a great project that should be enjoyed by all non-motorized users where feasible. I know that this is just at the feasibility stage and it has a long way to go, so good luck with future planning.					modes during the initial design phase of a particular section, including equestrian use.
30	just testing the form.....	Thomas Kelleher	Acton	11/23/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
31	Developing and finishing the Mass Central Rail Trail will be wonderful for the state. As for me, my property abuts the DCR land on Broad St in Holden where the trail may be constructed. Broad St has been developed with residential houses and the speed limit is currently 50 MPH. As the rail trail will need to cross Broad St, I would recommend either building an underpass on Broad St for bikers/walkers to safely pass, or drop the speed limit to 30 MPH is this 1/2 mile section to reduce the possibilities of injuries/accidents on Broad St.	Bryant Bonner	Jefferson	11/24/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
32	This project would get a lot of great use from the cycling community. I rode several sections around Sterling this weekend and enjoyed how it linked to	Jon Bicknell	Medfield	11/24/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	other terrain / trails in the area ! I support the idea !					
33	I enjoy MCRT nearly every week in Holden and Rutland. My only request would be to provide more sections that are dog friendly.	Rolland Strasser	Holden	11/24/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.
34	I love the idea of connecting the rail trails. My family regularly uses the sections in West Boylston, Holden, and Rutland to walk and bike on. I believe that this project would improve the quality of life for people living in Central MA.	Mike Wilander	Holden	11/24/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
35	Preserving the clinton tunnel and including access to it on the cmrt should be strongly pursued. It will be the highlight of the trail. Yes I am a strong proponent of the trail.	Kathy O'Neill	Marlborough	11/25/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
36	I could not find any information in the proposal about the surface treatments planned for the MCRT. Please don't pave it! Gravel biking is exploding in popularity, and the existing unpaved/gravel/stone dust segments of the MCRT are perfect, and provide access to many dozens of unpaved roads in the towns the rail trail passes through. The Clinton tunnel is a hidden jewel. I really hope you can find a way to include this tunnel in the finished project. Even just leaving the tunnel as-is and dumping enough gravel in the east end to make it dry enough to pass through as a spur off	Dan Foster	Stow	11/29/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	of the main trail would be a major draw for the MCRT.					
37	The 0.7 mile ROW section in Belchertown between Cheryl Circle and Federal Street is incorrectly categorized as obliterated in two places. Also, there is a nice small bridge abutment set that spanned a single lane cow path, and the abutments are in good condition. The span is gone. That bridge is not shown on the project document set. The first incorrectly marked obliteration is starting just west of Cheryl Circle, towards the west. The second location incorrectly marked as obliterated is roughly the middle of the 0.7 mile segment, where it is closest to the active rail line. The entire portion between Cheryl Circle and Federal street is kept clear of deadfall and live foliage by local people. I ride a bike through there a few times a year, and I see and greet neighbors hiking or walking their dogs. I rode through last week just to verify the status. There are three things about this section that would be a loss for the MCRT if this section were bypassed. The first is the nice bridge site with a short span across the cow path. The abutments are in very good condition, and it would be easy to replace this bridge, compared to a site with a long span, or damaged or missing abutments. The second feature that would be a loss to bypass would be a nice section	Michael Akrep	Greenfield	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comments. Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section. Additionally, any inaccuracies in the feasibility study will be followed up with new field work and/or site visits.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	of 30'-40' high earthen viaduct that crosses a low forest floor. The third important characteristic of this section is that it is either very old or was only used for smaller rail equipment like a trolley line, as opposed to heavier freight. The viaduct section is very narrow, and the bridge is really small scale. The small scale features really make this section stand out. Yes, the ownership of this section is partially private. The owners have allowed this section to be open for years. Hopefully if you ask nicely, they will give permission for the MCRT to pass across their land. I suggest that this section be walked to verify its condition.					
38	This is such an awesome project. We support it wholeheartedly!	Noah Kuhn	Amherst	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
39	This is an amazing and important project that will be transformative in my life.	Edie Elin	Northampton	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
40	Any way to integrate Springfield into this?	Michael Hanscom	Springfield	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Integrating access to Springfield is not within the scope of work for this particular study.
41	I think it's important to complete the MCRT to provide recreation and carbon-free transportation options for residents.	Matthew Reilly	South Hadley	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
42	I can see that a lot of planning has gone into this trail. I'm in favor of any increase in the miles of off road bike paths. My mother used to talk about taking the train to Boston from Northampton. And now it will be a greenway. How wonderful.	David Foley	Holyoke	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
43	Please invest in central mass outdoor programs like this. Central mass is often overlooked and underfunded. Our roads and access to recreational facilities are quite limited in relation to the resources near cities. I support any funding we can get for this project. I would prefer a gravel path and limit the amount of tarmac used to keep the areas more natural.	Robert Tamm	West Brookfield	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Careful consideration will be given to all trail components during the initial design phase of a particular section, including appropriate surface type.
44	My wife and I cycle of rail trails throughout Massachusetts, including the CMRT from Princeton to Rutland. We are very much in favor of extending the CMRT across the state.	Gary Kolanda	Sterling	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
45	My husband and I bike on the existing trail from Northampton to Belchertown, weather permitting, most weekends. We see a diverse group of old and very young folks enjoying the beauty of MA. The proposed rail trail project will benefit the Commonwealth's citizens and out of state visitors tremendously. Economic impact will support restaurants and inns as riders plan overnight stays on the expanded trail.	Joan Gravel	Conway	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
46	I think moving forward with this project is long overdue. As a long-time resident of	William Laramée	Belchertown	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	Belchertown I have with much excitement watched the trail use grow from year to year. I think now is the time to modernize the environment and safely connect western MA to the greater Boston network.					Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
47	I live about 300 yards from where the proposed trail will cross route 181 in Belchertown and am excited to hear about this project. The trail is already being used and a pedestrian and bike path already, and to have improvements made to make it accessible to everyone going forward would be great.	Ryan Johnson	Belchertown	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
48	I'd like to advocate for constructing the trail through the old rail tunnel in Clinton. Besides the MCRT itself, there are many great bike routes east and west of Clinton, but riding through the downtown is difficult. A dramatic tunnel/bridge/dam combination could also bring more visitors to Clinton, which needs economic help.	Matthew Johnson	Concord	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
49	Please please please get this done, there are so many trails in Palmer unused it's sad.	Rich Clark	Palmer	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
50	I believe the proposed bridge locations at Tanner airport are still being studied by EQLT There is a missing bridge not shown on your map at 42 23 20.6 N 72 03 26.6W	Mark Mattson	Oakham	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. The missing bridge identified will be included in the final draft of the study.
51	Although there are challenges to funding, property acquisition. and construction,	Paul Cacolice	Westfield	11/30/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	such multi-modal transportation has already shown itself to positively impact areas for those that choose to commute or recreate on these pathways. This path would allow for non-motorized traffic to move to flatter and safer means, making the roadways safer for motorize vehicles as well. I certainly would be utilizing this pathway for recreation, and if completed to Boston, for trips there. I live close to a completed trail in western MA, and have noted increased property values, and decreased crime. This series of projects should happen and have my taxpayer-support.					Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
52	This is the absolute right thing to do. A Rail Trail brings communities together, it increases property value, encourages people to exercise, gives residents a safe alternative to biking along busy roads, and gives us an awesome recreational venue. I am so excited at even the prospect of this happening. Please make it so.	Paul Nelson	Belchertown	11/30/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
53	I think this is a great idea and I am in favor of it.	Jennifer Ayre	Belchertown	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
54	Let's turn this dismal waste of millions of human hours of hard toil and labor to build train infrastructure, now useless, into something for posterity, something for future generations to enjoy. Let us	Kent Byron	Petersham	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	appreciate and notice the preciousness of simple walking and bike rides that are safe. Let us notice the deep wisdom and common sense of preventative health and being in nature. Let us see if trade and commerce between towns can happen on bicycles. This rails to trails plan is a brilliant idea that can help heal the woes of humankind. Yes, it's that big of a deal. Please let it happen. Future generations will thank you. I thank you. Millions of people will thank you. This is a quality of life issue. Gratitude!					
55	As someone who grew up in Western Mass (near Northampton) and now lives in Boston area, I think an off-road shared-use path connecting the two would be a fantastic use of the original MCRR corridor.	Marisa Otis	Brookline	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
56	I am a retired person with mobility problems. My wife and I have been using most sections of the Central Mass Rail Trail for several years and truly look forward to any further improvements. We have invested in some special bicycles and have witnessed many families enjoying the trail. We believe any investment in this project will benefit many people. Massachusetts has done a great job with this trail thus far and we would love to share our opinions in the future.	Joseph Sinagra	Rutland	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
57	Absolutely fantastic idea! My family has enjoyed all the bike trails throughout MA. Gems, all of them.	James Ermini	Petersham	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
58	Great idea, it would be asset to our state!	Yvette Rowan	Amherst	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
59	E-bikes are increasingly popular and open up the desire for longer (and safer) trails for many more people. We should be building trails as quickly as feasible.	Steven Cormier	Palmer	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
60	Great idea. Great way for public to expand on outdoor exercise and other fitness opportunities	Jonathan Blanchard	Chicopee	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
61	These comments can be provided in a word document or .pdf if required. Public comment on behalf of the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust on Mass Central Rail Trail Feasibility Study I-495 Hudson to Belchertown. The Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust (CGCT) is working with the town of Clinton and organizations from neighboring towns on the development of the Mass Central Rail Trail in Clinton. As one of the organizations working on the development of the state-wide MCRT, we welcome the attention that this study brings to this critical middle section. Because we have been considering the various options and challenges for the	Frannie Hodge	Clinton	12/1/20	Yes	Thank you for your comments. Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section. Additionally, any recent trail-related developments will be updated in final draft of the feasibility study.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>development of this trail in our area, we are familiar with the original path of the Central Mass Railroad and some of the alternatives. It is helpful for the wider trail community to have access to this information including the detailed maps. There have been several developments related to the trail in Clinton since the feasibility study was completed and we have specific comments on some of the items that were called out in the Clinton section of the trail. Some updates and additional information since the feasibility study was completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CGCT completed a purchase and sale agreement with Boston & Maine Railroad in March of 2018 for the acquisition of the rail bed that runs from Route 70 to the Berlin town line. • This acquisition is planned to be completed in December of 2020. This was made possible through a MassTrails grant as well as grants from the Clinton Home Foundation and the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. • As part of the acquisition process, the CGCT commissioned an inspection of the tunnel. This inspection confirmed that the tunnel is stable and with remediation would be suitable as a shared use path. • After the acquisition, the tunnel will be secured until that remediation can be completed. • The CGCT will have the development rights for 					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>this section of the MCRT. Future phases of trail development include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Initial trail opening for the section between the Rauscher Farm and the Maffei Farm (Spring 2021) o Design phase for tunnel remediation – we will request bids for survey, field, and design services for the required repair work in the tunnel. o Implementation of required remediation, which may be multiple phases o Route 70 crossing Design phase o Surface and drainage for the trail itself o Route 70 crossing implementation o Development of a connector to Wachusett Greenways sections in Sterling (closely coordinated with DCR Watershed) <p>Additional comments: Our first choice, wherever possible, is to continue the MCRT on the railroad bed as completed in the early 1900's when it was moved to accommodate the Wachusett Reservoir. The feasibility study calls out some alternate options for the section between Clinton and Berlin • The Wachusett Reservoir Aqueduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o We believe that this will make a wonderful hiking trail. It is not ideal for a rail trail as it is quite steep. o This trail is not currently permitted by Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) as an aqueduct trail. The CGCT in coordination with the towns of Clinton and Berlin will request a permit for this trail o We see it as a connector to the 					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>MCRT, but not a viable path for the MCRT itself. Trail near the Woodlands: The feasibility study states “At the entrance to the Woodlands development (west of Berlin Street), the corridor could not be located and is assumed to be obliterated.” We know exactly where the trail is near the Woodlands. A small section of the original CMRR was sold to the Assembly of God church and the church built a structure on the trail. Much of the section of trail acquired by Assembly of God was sold to the Tall Pines Realty Trust, the original developer of the Woodlands. While permitting the driveway for the Woodlands, as required by MGL 40/54A, Tall Pines Realty Trust agreed to the trail right of way and safe crossing of the driveway. “The trail will be designed to provide a bypass around the church and parsonage structures within the railroad bed, thus allowing connection between Central Mass Railroad segments.” Trail around the Wachusett Reservoir The existing trail along the Wachusett Reservoir is already approved and open for bicycles from gate 42 to gate 39. We plan to include this approved path as we work on design options for a safe crossing of Route 70. Safe crossing of Route 70 One of our ideas is a design contest for engineering schools to come up with a plan for this crossing. If we pursue this</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>idea, we plan to include DCR Watershed, MWRA and MassTrails as judges as we do not believe that any plan will be implemented without the approval from these critical stakeholders. The abutments for the original trestle bridge still exist and would be wonderful to incorporate into a new design for this section. Path from DCR Wachusett Reservoir Trail to Sterling The study identifies both paths that we have considered. • Following the existing active railroad bed, which would mean rail with trail. We realize that a path around the Chase Hill Road overpass would be required. • Another path is to follow Route 110 on the Wachusett Reservoir side. This is currently grass and relatively flat surface. o This option has been reviewed with the Wachusett DCR Watershed director. o Safe crossing of Route 110 will be required in order to join Wachusett Greenways sections. Wachusett Greenways believes that they have a path to Chase Hill Road. Berlin sections: When working with Pan Am Systems on the acquisition of the railbed sections that they own in Clinton, they agreed to sell the Berlin sections (approximately 10 acres) at the same price. We recommend that Berlin trail advocates pursue this purchase as soon as possible. Options for Berlin Five Corners to Highland Street: The abutments still</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	exist for an overpass at Five Corners. Once past Five Corners, there is an alternate path on an old county road, which would place the trail slightly away from existing homes. This is something that trail advocates in Berlin have suggested as well. Wachusett Greenways Section of the MCRT Sections of the MCRT to the west of Clinton are being developed by Wachusett Greenways. We will continue to work closely with Wachusett Greenways to ensure that we have a viable path connecting already developed and planned sections of the MCRT.					
62	As both a cyclist and a pedestrian, I completely support the work being done to increase and improve the trails.	Andrea Tarr	Belchertown	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
63	This project is way overdue. The sections that are done are great for public use now. I have mostly used the Northampton to Pelham piece and often wished it went further. Current across state rides can only be done on major routes, increasing the likelihood of accidents and injuries, this would get people off major thoroughfares. It would also encourage folks to a healthy lifestyle of riding, walking or jogging. This would go after root causes of unhealthy living and lower healthcare expenses for residents across many spectrums and extend lives. An across state multi use trail would create a	Richard Kozikowski	West Springfield	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	niche economy in itself, with businesses being able to be created along the trail. It would also attract out of state riders. There are no down sides to this project. It would also show off Massachusetts history, especially the remnants of past railroading evidence in the form of walls, markers and tunnels, plus the views you can only get from a train or rail trail. I know these projects take time having to deal with land acquisitions, multi town meetings, construction and some public opinion that the funds could be better spent elsewhere. But I hope this project moves along quickly, I wish it was done already so I could ride on it now!					
64	As an active cyclist and currently use the Western MA rail trails, I support this project and would love to see a protected trail I could use to travel towards Boston.	Brendan Sullivan	Belchertown	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
65	The MCRT from Belchertown heading west has been a huge success. The section from Warren Wright Road east has some issue that can quickly be overcome by rerouting some sections to low traffic roads. Much of this section is currently heavily used by snowmobiles, horses, walkers, cross country skiers and bicycles. We encourage continued multi-use of the trail. Improvements to bridges and parking area need to be examined and a means to cross the Swift River as the trail enters Palmer will need to be constructed.	Lloyd Ortman	Belchertown	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	This section seems like a logical place to begin improvements considering it connects to an active, well used section of the trail.					
66	We have used rail trails extensively in several states, and have repeatedly experienced nearly every rail trail in Central and Western Mass. We feel they are a great asset to the public. They contribute to good health and enhance appreciation of nature and the environment. Any additions to the network that we can reach easily as a day-trip from home will be wonderful for us to explore, since we've got nearly every inch of rail trail mileage existing near us memorized! We primarily bicycle but sometimes have walked sections that were particularly interesting (wildlife, ponds, scenic areas, etc.) We encourage extension of the rail trail network without reservation. They're great.	Sydney Taylor	Orange	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
67	This project is so important! Pedestrian and cycling trails offer much needed safe transportation access to folks without cars. They are also essential in encouraging people to get outdoors and exercise, especially right now during the COVID-19 pandemic. I live in Lexington, and one way that my young son and I have been able to safely get out of the house and see family during this pandemic has been to use the Minuteman	Elizabeth Starr	Lexington	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	Trail nearly every day. We often see people walking or cycling on the trail with groceries, with children, school bags - it is used by many every day for both practical and recreational purposes. Rail trails also make it possible to get out and explore the state in a safe way. I really hope this project moves forward!					
68	Great project! Keep on it for hikers and bikers, non motorized...though would be good to require that bikers have either bells or horns that they not surprise the hikers.	Rebecca Tippens	Colrain	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
69	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important initiative. As an older citizen trying to maintain a healthy, active lifestyle - walking and bicycling the current MCRT has become part of my daily life. The large numbers of trail users, enjoying many different forms of exercise on the trail speak to the need and desire for this type of recreation. Enjoying access to the natural beauty of New England in a safe and healthy way is critical to the physical and mental health of its citizens. Please continue these efforts on our behalf. Thank you!	John Fabrizio	Framingham	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
70	I strongly support the Mass Central Rail Trail in its entirety, and request that the MassDOT do whatever it can to create, support, and enhance efforts to build an off-road shared use path across the State that is safe and effective for all users.	Stacie Smith	Arlington	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
71	This off-road shared path would provide such benefits to the residents of the Commonwealth and attract tourism. I am an avid recreational biker and live near the Northampton branch of the MA Central Rail Trail. If the trail extended east I would absolutely cycle to visit family in the Boston area and invite friends from out-of-state to experience the trail. I have traveled to many other areas to bike on long distance rail trails (Great Allegheny Passage, Prince Edward Island cross island trail) and it's such a dream to have one in our Commonwealth.	Aleta Mills	Northampton	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
72	I want to share my enthusiastic support for the continued work on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Enabling long and scenic bike rides is hugely important for public health and well-being in Massachusetts.	Jessica Sedan	Arlington	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
73	I support this project and would love to use this trail when fully complete!	Frank Gerratana	Cambridge	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
74	As an avid cyclist and, frequent user of the Norwottuck Rail Trail, I fully support the completion of the construction of the MCRT as soon as possible. Cycling has become increasingly popular over the past several years and most certainly during the current pandemic. Rails trails provide safe, easy travel over long distances for those that prefer to not cycle	James Hahn	Granby	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	amongst motorists in traffic and so, the completion of the MCRT would be a huge benefit for not only cyclists but for other users as well.					
75	A western-eastern mass path would be incredible!! Please consider doing it.	Alexander Psilakis	Franklin	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
76	MassDOT should make the MCRT its highest priority rail trail and complete it ASAP for the benefit of the entire Commonwealth. There are many reasons to complete the unbuilt pieces of the MCRT between Belchertown and Rutland: - Lack of public transport combined with significant population that cannot drive or does not own cars. - State highways (181, 32, 9) on which it is dangerous to ride bicycles or walk. - Higher than average levels of obesity among population when compared to state as a whole. - Beautiful region of Massachusetts which will attract bicycle riders and hikers to enjoy our Quabbin countryside and Quaboag Valley. - Generate economic growth around tourism. - Incentivize relocation of families and younger people from overpriced eastern Massachusetts to small towns west of Worcester. In terms of the specific route options described in the MCRT Feasibility Study, I want to emphasize the need to segregate the rail trail as much as possible from automobile	Ben Hood	Palmer	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	traffic. In the Belchertown, Bondsville, and Ware sections of Segment 2, this means utilizing the currently unused sections of the rail ROW with existing or re-built bridges crossing the streets, rivers, and state highways. Trail connections along state routes 181 and 32 should be avoided, or, if absolutely unavoidable, should be separated and greatly distanced from the roadways; otherwise these areas will discourage use by hikers and walkers, and be, at best, unpopular with bicyclists.					
77	I think this project would be a huge benefit to the communities it would run through and the surrounding ones. Having safe, fun and family friendly outdoor locations is very much needed in all of these areas.	Ashley Reardon	Three Rivers	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
78	I live in Palmer. Two years ago, I put a map of the MCRT on my fridge, and since then I've walked all but a few of the smallest official and unofficial sections west of Route 495. I can hardly believe that I might be able to start my hike in my own town, without getting in my car. Obviously, I support any improvements to the trail. In particular, I would advocate that the trail NOT run alongside our local highways, and if it does, to create as much distance from the roads as possible, even if this requires splitting the bike and pedestrian routes. I would also highly recommend that at-grade highway crossings be avoided, as people routinely	Anne Miller	Palmer	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	drive much faster on rural roads than posted speed limits. This is true virtually everywhere in rural America. Thank you.					
79	I'm a homeowner in Northampton, MA, and want to state my overwhelming and energetic support of forming a Northampton to Boston rail trail. We have a great local and regional network of rail trails here and having a long-distance trail to Boston would be a fantastic option for travel (Yes! I've biked from Northampton to Foxboro, Somerville and Taunton, and a bike path would be revolutionary), tourism and exercise access for people across the state. This effort is a state-wide public good that should be implemented as soon as possible.	Adam Trott	Northampton	12/1/20	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
80	The 495/MetroWest Partnership is a non-profit organization serving thirty-five communities, which are home to over 600,000 residents and approximately 1 in 10 jobs in the Commonwealth. The Partnership seeks to address regional needs through public-private collaboration by working to enhance economic vitality, improve quality of life, and sustain natural resources. The Partnership focuses on helping to alleviate regional constraints and limitations, and conducts numerous initiatives on transportation, workforce housing, and economic development, among other regional concerns. The	Jeremy Thompson	Westborough	12/1/20	Yes	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>495/MetroWest Partnership commends the MassTrails team for their feasibility study of the 68.5 mile mid-state section of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) between Belchertown and Hudson. The Partnership has long supported efforts to integrate the Commonwealth's greenways and rail trails into a cohesive, interconnected network, which will unquestionably improve statewide mobility, reduce GHG emissions and bridge social equity gaps. We recognize rail trail infrastructure as a critical and cost-effective component to downtown revitalization and long-term regional economic development strategy; particularly when trails are designed to link commercial centers, mixed-use districts, public facilities, existing public transportation stations, and recreational areas. A prime example of such, is the Assabet River Rail Trail which connects downtown Hudson and Marlborough. The 495/MetroWest Partnership continues to advocate for funding to various segments of the MCRT – Wayside corridor through the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization's rolling Transportation Improvement Program. The Partnership has also used its role on the Central MA Metropolitan Planning Organization's Advisory Committee to advocate for a host of rail trail expansion and complete</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	streets projects. As it pertains to the Feasibility Study, the Partnership is particularly hopeful that Segment 3J: Five Corners Intersection, Clinton to I-495, Berlin will be constructed along State Route 62 to connect with a future segment of MCRT – Wayside in Hudson. The Feasibility Study lays the groundwork for a truly transformative plan; we look forward to hearing feedback from the public engagement process.					
81	Please build this, more projects like this are a great benefit to people near them providing recreation. People that do use bicycles as a means of transportation will have a safer way to travel	Arthur Gauthier	Belchertown	12/1/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
82	I love using the MCRT closer to Boston and am thrilled at the prospect of it connecting all the way to the Pioneer Valley! It would be a great opportunity for me and my family to spend more time in central Mass.	Josh Rosmarin	Watertown	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
83	I am so excited about this project! We have such beautiful land in western Massachusetts but few areas to enjoy it in. This would not only provide a place for people to visit but it would also pull desperately needed tourists to the area.	Keri Pitcher	Wales	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
84	I would love to see this project move forward, and hopefully, one day connect to the Grand Trunk abandoned railbed in Brimfield. This would be a tremendous asset to the community as we have seen	Kate Garvey	Three Rivers	12/2/20	Yes	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project. Members of the public are encouraged to advocate for

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	with the Norwottuck Rail Trail! How can the public help this project move forward?					the advancement of the trail in their communities through scheduled public meetings and engagement with local officials.
85	Really excited for this project but in particular segment 3H and the Clinton tunnel. No real issues with some of the other segments. Given the traffic density in the area I would prefer the trail be built as soon as possible even if that means some of the trail has to be shared with on street segments (i.e. section 1B). If a majority of this trail is completed, I would definitely use it for recreational riding from Waltham to Amherst and back.	Adam Crossman	Waltham	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
86	I'm so excited to see this rail trail work in discussion! I wish we had more and longer ones here in MA. Though I live in Cambridge, I would definitely drive to do the rail trail if it were worth my time. I regularly ride 50 miles on the road but would love to do this through via a rail trail forest. My request is that the longest path is built as soon as possible!! I have a toddler now, and I hope he will be able to ride this trail. Thanks!!	Adriane Musgrave	Cambridge	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
87	Having a complete trail from Amherst to Boston would be absolutely fantastic! I bicycle all over the US and love riding on rail trails. In 2019 I biked from San Francisco to Boston and rode several hundred miles of trails on my 5000-mile route. We need many more beautiful trails	Timothy Oey	Sunnyvale, CA	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	and more people biking and walking instead of driving motor vehicles. Thanks!					
88	Do it!! This would be amazing. One of my favorite parts about Mass is the rail trail system. The benefits are huge to public health and local economies as well as property value. I hope the state progresses non car-centric infrastructure here and elsewhere ASAP	Kellan Simpson	Boston	12/2/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
89	I write this email to express my personal viewpoint on one segment of the route for the MCRT. I would like to voice my support for a route that utilizes the rail bed on the east side of Rauscher Farm through the abandoned rail tunnel then across Rte 62 and the millpond below the dam via a reconstructed pedestrian bridge to connect with the former rail corridor on the north side of the Nashua River. Given that the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust is pursuing acquisition of the rail corridor including the tunnel on the south side of Rte 62 with funds from a MassTrails grant and that pedestrian use is already allowed on the north dike of the Wachusett Reservoir, it seems like the decision to allow the shared use path along this route would make sense from a design and approval process. While the cost of a new bridge over the millpond would be expensive and the engineering would have its own set of issues, they would not be insurmountable, and it would be a tremendous draw for users of the	Dick O'Brien	Leominster	11/24/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>trail. Additionally, as many of us who walk the existing gravel path on the dike can attest, the views here are spectacular. I also think that the engineering issue of attempting to go over the top of the dam or to go down to the millpond and back up would be much more challenging and complex than the bridge alternative.</p> <p>I am a strong supporter of the State's goal of making more connections to our system of shared use paths. I would love to see it be an alternative to our state highway system and connected to our neighboring states. That may someday come to pass. This segment of the MCRT could be a spectacular section that would attract local users, other state resident users, and tourists to our region in Central Massachusetts. In this instance, I would look to choose the option that makes the greatest impact to the users and the communities involved. I believe the bridge route is that option.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration and thank you for all the effort you have put into this project and other bicycle and pedestrian projects across our state.</p>					
90	The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is providing comments on the Feasibility Study of the 68.5 mile mid-state section of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) as presented by MassDOT, the	PVPC	Springfield	11/18/20	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project and looks

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) on Wednesday, November 18th, 2020. PVPC is only providing comments on the sections in Belchertown, Palmer and Ware (Segment 1 and 2). It is our understanding that the study assesses the condition of the corridor, intersecting trails, ownership, and alternate routes at constrained sections. All recommendations are preliminary.</p> <p>General comments:</p> <p>1. The report does not define the types of use anticipated along the trail, however the alignments presented provide some concepts for use. Along the 68.5 miles the character of the trail varies significantly from central business district to miles of vast open space. In addition to people walking and biking the trail may be an appealing place for equestrians, snowmobiles, and other motorized recreation. It may be helpful to define the “user” for each segment as alignment traverse’s rural countryside or detours on public roads and through town centers.</p> <p>2. This rail trail will provide access to many schools, residential, employment, and recreation areas. The recommendations for trail alignment and future design should address the need to make these important connections while continuing to provide safe off-road access to destination and proper</p>					<p>forward to partnering with PVPC on next steps. These specific comments and suggestions require further investigation to assess how they would be considered for future development as the feasibility study moves into the project development phase.</p>

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>wayfinding should be considered. Several “on-road” _alignments in Ware should be reconsidered and alternative considered as referenced in the Separated Bike Lane Design Guide.</p> <p>3. Parking should be a primary consideration in selecting a preferred trail alignment. Most users will drive a car to access the trail. Parking along the shoulders of streets that intersect the right-of-way is not a viable option. There is however on-street parking in downtown Ware, and in the center of Belchertown and Bondsville. There may be existing public and private lots near and adjacent to the right-of-way that may be willing to share their parking facilities on weekends. The Lowes/Walmart parking lot in Ware is one example.</p> <p>4. The scope of work for the feasibility study does not address costs for policing and maintenance. Communities should be made aware of these costs from similar locally managed trails. The life cycle cost for the trail should also be a consideration if replacement/re-construction is applicable. There are many models for trail stewardship. “Friends Groups” _and trail organizations that can contribute significantly toward maintenance and fundraising and these groups should be actively engaged in the decision-making process moving forward.</p> <p>5. During the presentation, MassDOT acknowledged that the design and</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>construction costs are anticipated to be state funds or a combination of state and federal funds with a potential local match. As project advances through the planning and design stages it would be helpful to have a clearer picture of these funding commitments within the constraints of available TIP/CIP resources.</p> <p>6. During the November 18th presentation MassDOT mentioned that the “next step” _would be working with the individual communities. Including respective RPA’s in project would also be beneficial to streamline future efforts to align projects on the TIP and meet deadlines. development may streamline future efforts to align projects on the TIP and meeting deadlines.</p> <p>7. The study referenced potential easements and/or lease agreements needed from the railroad. Railroad acquisitions require patience, persistence, and flexibility in the design (without compromising on key elements of the shared use path, such as safety). Will the community be negotiating with the railroad or will MassDOT/ EEA be heading up right-of-way negotiations and legal agreements?</p> <p>8. Will the local community be managing the design process and the work of the engineer/designer or will MassDOT/EEA be the lead? If local communities take the lead</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>it is important that they understand contractual obligations for work-order changes and final construction costs.</p> <p>9. Does MassDOT/EEA provide communities with a standard specification for “soft surface” _trails? It has been our experience that natural surface trails have maintenance costs and if not managed can erode into adjacent wetlands. A “standard detail” _specification would be helpful to communities prefer a crushed aggregates and other natural surface trail.</p> <p>10. Does the study provide projections for the number of trail users for each section of the Mass Central Rail Trail? There is count data for similar trails and this information would be useful when making design decision for at-grade crossings, parking capacity, and the selection of trail surface materials.</p> <p>11. A major advantage of an off-road trail is that it provides a place for users to travel that is separate from motor vehicles. Trail users share road space with motor vehicles only at the road crossings. On the Central Mass. right-of-way, bridges and tunnels further reduce interaction between trail users and motor vehicles. It is essential that the at-grade intersections be designed as safely as possible, keeping in mind the need to minimize the impact on roadway traffic flow.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>12. Projects programed by the Pioneer Valley MPO are evaluated bases on Environmental Justice to ensure that low-income residents and communities of color have meaningful participation in decision making processes, are not disproportionately affected by potential negative impacts, and benefit fairly from projects and programs. Federal agencies are directed to address EJ by Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Has the influence of EJ populations been included in the Mass Central Feasibility Study?</p> <p>Segment 1A: Map PDF link Location: Norwottuck Rail Trail, Northampton to Warren Wright Road, Belchertown Proposed Changes: • The recommendation for this existing, established section of MCRT is to utilize the ongoing maintenance plan and to install standard signing and marking for road crossings and trail identification as for other sections of the MCRT.</p> <p><i>Comment: Consideration should be given to bicyclists accessing the along Warren Wright Road where the New England Central Railroad tracks cross the pavement at a diagonal. Diagonal tracks present a serious hazard for road bikes.</i></p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p><i>This section of the Norwottuck Rail Trail is currently listed on the TIP for resurfacing. To receive federal aid, projects need to be programmed and meet all requirements of federal aid projects. Programming is the annual process of compiling projects into regional and statewide plans for construction funding.</i></p> <p><i>At the regional level, the MPO prioritizes projects into its transportation improvement program (TIP). MassDOT compiles regional TIPs and statewide funding programs into its State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), making them eligible for federal aid. Projects can be programmed for construction as early as the preliminary design phase. Early coordination with the MPO and MassDOT District Office clarifies project evaluation and scoring criteria. Once the project is programmed, continued advocacy at MPO meetings is needed to advance the project.</i></p> <p>Segment 1B: Map PDF Link</p> <p>Location: Warren Wright Road, Belchertown to Federal Street, Belchertown</p> <p>Proposed Changes: • The lengthy areas in diverse private ownership dictate that an alternate route will likely be necessary for this section. Co-locating a rail-with-trail within the New England Central RR Right-of-way is not an option due to active RR traffic and narrow cross sections. A possible alternate route is a rail-to-trail along the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>former MCRR corridor east from Warren Wright Road, and then negotiating access through to Goodell Street. The possible alternative would follow Goodell Street and then Federal Street to the southeast before rejoining the MCRR corridor south of Arcadia Lake.</p> <p><i>Comment: The right-of-way challenges on this important section are well documented. The negotiation of right-of-way lease and easements from private landowners can be a challenging task for municipalities. MassDOT and DCR have extensive experience in these negotiations and contractual arrangements. Moving forward will this expertise be made available to assist communities in securing needed right-of-way for this important project?</i></p> <p>Segment 1C: Map PDF Link</p> <p>Location: Federal Street, Belchertown to State Street, Belchertown Proposed Changes: • A potential route is to create a rail-to-trail along this entire length, negotiating access through the few private parcels. A rail-with-trail would need to be created near the State Street bridge, adjacent to the active NECR, and land would need to be purchased from NECR or an easement established. Existing unpaved segments of footpaths would be formalized, and at-grade road crossings clearly signed and marked, considering sight distance difficulties on some of the smaller roads. At Federal Street,</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>a grade crossing may need to be established, but this depends on the manner of MCRT connection further north.</p> <p><i>Comment: The Town of Belchertown is creating a network of trails in and around Lake Wallace, Foley Field and Carriage Grove. The Mass Central Rail Trail should complement to this effort and enhance the planned trail system. Assistance from MassDOT with NECR easements is critical. The Pioneer Valley region has numerous “rail with trail” _projects (as proposed) that have proven safe and effective.</i></p> <p>Segment 1D: Map PDF Link</p> <p>Location: State Street, Belchertown to Franklin Street (State Route 181), Belchertown Proposed Changes: • The potential option is to negotiate access to or purchase of land from NECR south of State Street and construction of a rail-with-trail path south to where the two rail corridors diverge. Beyond this point, the publicly owned corridor can be formally designed as a rail-to-trail, including road crossings with appropriate markings and signage, and trail identification signage.</p> <p><i>Comment: While the significant parcels have been secured for public use by the Belchertown Land Trust, negotiation with the NECR (or any railroad) can be problematic for municipalities and assistance from MassDOT and DCR is warranted.</i></p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p><i>The at-grade crossing at North Washington Street has poor sight lines. Trail users also need adequate warning of an upcoming intersection.</i></p> <p><i>The at-grade crossing of the Segment 1D at Route 181 (Franklin Street) is of concern. This State numbered route has a posted speed of 45 mph (higher observed speeds) and an extensive shoulder. The paved width at the location of the Route 181 crossing is 49 feet. The width combined with the trail's angle of crossing create to potential conflicts. At this time Is MassDOT/DCR considering a grade separated crossing for this location?</i></p> <p>Segment 2A: Map PDF Link</p> <p>Location: Swift River to Summer Street Proposed Changes: • Rail-to-Trail along the former MCRR (now MCER) right-of-way</p> <p><i>Comment: A significant railroad bridge structure is no longer standing at this location on the Swift River and a grade differential exists creating steep slopes. Many of the footings for the bridge are still in place. The only alternative proposed is an on-road route. If easements could be negotiated, a replacement bridge over the Swift River would offer spectacular views of the streambed and avoid higher speed vehicular traffic on Route 181 (Franklin Street).</i></p> <p>Segment 2B: Map PDF Link</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Location: Summer Street, Palmer to State Route 32 at MCER, Ware Proposed Changes: • Connection along Summer Street and River Street to State Route 32.</p> <p>• Side path along State Route 32 from River Street to intersection with inactive MCRR corridor.</p> <p><i>Comment: An abandoned Springfield Street Railway right-of-way exists parallel to the Mass Central and State Route 32 ending at Forrest Lake in Palmer. The corridor is identified on the MassDOT Rail Inventory (ID # 702). This streetcar corridor to Forest Lake may provide an opportunity for a “rail with trail” and an alternative to the proposed heavily traveled section of Ware Street (Route 32).</i></p> <p>Segment 2C: Map PDF Link</p> <p>Location: State Route 32 at MCER to Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center, Ware Rail-to-trail along former MCRR corridor to Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center property.</p> <p>Proposed Changes: • Ramp up from State Route 32 to Former MCRR corridor grade.</p> <p>• Rail-to-trail along former MCRR corridor.</p> <p>• Reconstruct bridge crossing of the Ware River.</p> <p>• Rail-to-trail along former MCRR corridor to Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center property.</p> <p><i>Comment: The reconstruction of the bridge crossing of the Ware River is justified and</i></p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p><i>provides several alternatives for safe connections.</i></p> <p>Segment 2D: Map PDF Link Location: Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center, Ware to Ware River east of Robbins Road, Ware Proposed Changes: • Rail-to-trail from Ware River to Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center parking lot. Pedestrian access through to the retail store parking lots should be a consideration. • Develop a separate bike/ped path through the shopping center parking lot to reconnect the corridor. • Upgrade signs and markings at roadway grade crossings.</p> <p><i>Comment: There is property to the south and east of Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center (adjacent to the Ware River) that would provide an alternative alignment, avoiding the Walmart/Lowes parking lot driveway entrance and providing scenic views of the river. When the property owner is approached for an easement (from the bridge) this alternative river alignment to the back of Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center (and reconnecting with the existing Ware River Rail Trail) may be an appealing option.</i></p> <p>Segment 2E: Map PDF Link Location: Ware River East of Robbins Road, Ware to North End of Ware River Reservoir, Ware Proposed Changes: • A new shared use path from existing path on Robbins Road to</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>the Ware River, construct a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge over the River opposite Laurel Drive then along an on-road bikeway and sidewalks through downtown Ware to Grenville Park. Comment: <i>Designer should consider a sidepath as an option to an on-road bikeway. Many trail users do not feel comfortable riding on-road with mixed traffic.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-street connection via Robbins Road, West Street (State Route 32) and other surface streets with the goal of linking to Grenville Park. [This is the option included in the alternatives matrix.]. <p>Comment: <i>There are clear recommendations for a replacement bridge at Laurel Drive and connections through Grenville park (both warranted) however the other proposed changes described for Segment 2E do not provide sufficient detail. Segment 2E is one of the most significant segments of the Mass Central and further study is warranted.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared use path through Grenville Park and along an existing trail through a privately-owned parcel adjacent to Ware River Reservoir to reconnect to MCRR corridor. <p>Comment: <i>As mentioned previously, the negotiation of right-of-way lease and easements from private landowners can be a challenging task for municipalities. MassDOT and DCR have extensive</i></p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p><i>experience in these negotiations and contractual arrangements. Moving forward it would be helpful if this expertise were made available to assist communities in securing needed right-of-way for this important project.</i></p> <p>Segment 2F: Map PDF Link Location: Ware River Reservoir, Ware to Gilbertville, Hardwick (Map Pages 11-15) Proposed Changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _Rail-to-trail from the Ware River Reservoir to the southern end of the MCRT as constructed and managed by East Quabbin Land Trust. • _Rail-to-trail from Church Street north to a point just south of the Ware-Hardwick Covered Bridge. • _Ramp up to the roadway grade of Old Gilbertville Road and continue on-road facility to the bridge. • On-road connection via Spring Street from the covered bridge to North Street <p><i>Comment: The extension of the EQLT trail north from Church Street to Hardwick will be a valuable addition to the bikeway network. PVPC has previously worked with Ware, Hardwick and MassDOT to restore the covered bridge and the bridge is a popular attraction for visitors.</i></p>					
91	We remain in awe of the progress which Wachusett Greenways has exemplified over the years, and merely cheer their team	Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition	Fitchburg	11/25/20	Yes	Thank you for your input. These specific comments and suggestions require further investigation to assess how they would be considered for future development as the feasibility study moves into the project development phase.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	onward! Their vision and hard work are evident and very much appreciated.					
	<p>MRTC GENERAL COMMENTS:</p> <p>There was discussion of the “Off-Corridor Northern Spur”. Sterling is one of the member communities in the MRPC region. Brian Cline was the chairperson for the Open Space Committee during the 2010 cycle, during which there was much investment in consideration of the trails and the MCRT. Wachusett Greenways was also involved. In general, Sterling was supportive of WG efforts to complete the spur and hopes to complete the spur northward towards and eventually connecting with Leominster.</p> <p>There has, however, not been a time when Sterling did not recognize the need to also push the MCRT Eastward towards Clinton. Until now, the Eastward push has not been a priority either for Sterling or Wachusett Greenways. In context with this Feasibility Study, there is a renewed focus on completing the MCRT Eastward. Sterling has long been a mecca for bicyclists. At times, the USA Olympic bicycling team has trained in the area, since the gently rolling hills and rural character of the town are conducive to riding and muscle strengthening exercise. There is hope for additional shared-use off-road paved trail.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	The Northern Spur is seen as a main connector for the region's trail system.					
	<p>"As suggested by Wachusett Greenways" Wachusett Greenways has long been held in esteem for their work on trails accessible to the Sterling Community in the region. But the Town of Sterling has reasserted its authority over trail planning and development through its Open Space Planning and Implementation process, in conjunction with MassGIS staff, and with the MRPC trails coalition. We feel we're in the best position to satisfactorily resolve controversy and complete the MCRT through Segment 3F. Richard Kerver, Brian Cline, Dick O'Brien and the Sterling Open Space Committee have met several times to discuss how to build out the MCRT in Segment 3F. Richard Kerver has provided his response in a document titled ResponseKerver.pdf. That document outlines the effort in 2002 in a coalition pulled together by him, which involved everyone committed to the MCRT build out at that time. In the interim years, the MRTC was formed, and has since been the context for continued dialog and planning.</p>					
	<p>"The top of the dam is not presently open for public access." This is known, so does not add any information for consideration. As a "feasibility study", additional information of use would ascertain and elaborate on the reasons why, and the process that would be</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>required to change that. Dams throughout the world are open for transit, whether vehicular or pedestrian only. This dam at one time was open. We believe it was closed in 2001 as a safety precaution, for the dam. This state of affairs can and should change. “Possible Options” Over the course of the last twenty years, there has been much discussion of various options for passage of the MCRT over the Nashua River (and/or dam), in the context of the Clinton Open Space planning process, with the Clinton Board of Selectman and the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust (CGCT), and at various Golden Spike conferences. In particular, the CGCT has convened trail enthusiasts in the region, and raised funds to acquire the historic rail bed from Pan Am Inc. As of the 2020 MassTrails grant cycle, CGCT has been awarded the necessary funds to complete the acquisition, which may happen as soon as December. This includes the historic tunnel.</p> <p>This means that the next several years are critical for resolving the “possible options” to the one “best option.”</p> <p>“Formalize the service road on the eastern flank.” No, please don’t. The service road is currently the default option and in use. But there is little support for formalizing the option, which would preclude other options.</p> <p>“The grade of the service road will need to be verified to see if it meets ADA</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>standards.” The region consists of hills and the MCRT crosses varying terrain. Some sections of the MCRT near urban centers can be made ADA compliant. But any “grade” provisions should be evaluated project-by-project and not be applied as unconsidered policy.</p> <p>“State Route 62/70 poses significant width difficulties for provision of a shared use path alongside the road.” Doing so would be difficult as the road slices the flank of the hill, so a path either on the downside or upside would be a major construction project. We feel that the expense of construction funds would be better spent on the other options.</p> <p>“Explore options to open public access to and across the top-of-dam.” Please do this, as part of the DRAFT Feasibility Study. In consideration of the relative importance of further consideration of this and the other options, we require additional information regarding “feasibility.”</p> <p>There are many in our community that feel this is the best option for passage of the MCRT over the Nashua.</p> <p>“ [This is the option included in the evaluation matrix.]” We don’t know what this means.</p> <p>What exactly is the level of support within MassDOT, MassTrails, and the EOEEA for the over-the dam option? Over the years, there has been discussion with the DCR in</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>an attempt to open access to the dam and build the necessary bridge on the western flank over the spillway. We feel now is the best time to resolve the controversy, so as to enable and move forward with the preferred option.</p> <p>“This option would need to link either uphill or downhill along State Route 62/70.” Some careful planning is required to insure bicycle and pedestrian safety over Route 70. The least cost option would cross Route 70 at grade, with a pedestrian cross walk, and then a gentle reinforced trail on the hillside to the West entrance to the tunnel. Rails on this short trail then around the tunnel entrance, across the dam, and over the spillway could be identical, to tie the whole together architecturally and artistically. Best practices for safe pedestrian crossing would be implemented. For instance, the crosswalk could be raised as speed bump.</p> <p>The second option would build a pedestrian bridge from the tunnel, across Route 70, and then a ramp over to the top of the dam. There are some in our community that feel this may be the best option.</p> <p>“Difficulty of Implementation” We concur with the relative difficulty of the “Top of Dam” vs “Bridge Reconstruction” options for passage over the Nashua. But “implementation” considerations should also take into consideration the political process of approvals. For instance, there are many</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>residents in the area with views of the Nashua and the dam, who may prefer the view as is, without a bridge.</p> <p>The bridge would take many years and many of us would like to see completion of the MCRT in our lifetimes. Avoiding difficulties where viable options exist seems prudent.</p>					
	<p>“The tunnel is in poor condition.” As part of the acquisition process, the CGCT commissioned an inspection of the tunnel. This inspection confirmed that the tunnel is stable and with remediation would be suitable as a shared use path. After the acquisition, the tunnel will be secured until that remediation can be completed.</p> <p>The water leaks would need to be plugged and lighting added. These improvements would be straight forward. There is no apparent reason preventing the tunnel from being part of a completed MCRT.</p> <p>“Additional structural survey will be needed to assess the full viability of the tunnel.” The tunnel is viable, in our well-considered opinion. We do agree funds would be well spent with a structural survey by qualified structural engineers.</p> <p>“A designated Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program area. ” We are well aware and requested a preliminary review by NHESP – their comments as follows:</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>The proposed section of trail is within habitat for the Marbled Salamander. For more information about the species, please see the link below. As this relates to the trail, a design/ layout that minimizes tree clearing (especially canopy removal), impervious surface, and impacts to hydrology is preferred. Water quality is also of the upmost importance. Based on our discussion, a stone dust trail that stays on the existing rail bed and minimizes the extent of clearing is likely a permissible design. Further, keeping people on the trail (or on other established trails) is encouraged. As the design moves forward, it would be good to know if any culverts/bridge improvements are proposed and if any parking areas would be located within Priority Habitat. Current plans provide ADA compliant access points at the Woodlands and a short trail to Rauscher Farm, with parking.</p> <p>“Assumed to be obliterated ” We have walked this section and investigated all the obstacles here. There are two homeowners who have purchased the portion behind their homes, but one also owns some land behind that and was happy to show us an alternate path that he'd allow the trail on. A beaver has been active in that area, too. Two other big parcels: one is for sale, but the land has a trail easement on it and the Woodlands agreed to a rail trail easement.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>“Multiple bridge abutments are visible at several points around the intersection.”</p> <p>There are opportunities to make use of the historic MCRR abutments to rebuild a pedestrian bridge, that would avoid the roadways and maximize the safety of passage.</p> <p>The Clinton Greenway Land Trust: Correction: Conservation Trust, not <Land> Trust. See above – the CGCT is currently finalizing purchase. There have been many visual inspections and walk-throughs of the tunnel, each ending with a favorable review. Segments 3H and 3G are moving forward, with the tunnel, to Berlin Town Line, on the border with Rauscher Farm. We hope to complete at the same time as the Wayside trail is complete to Berlin Town Center.</p>					
	<p>“Construct the MCRT through the tunnel.”</p> <p>As above, this is the option that is currently moving forward. Hence, the other options would best be scratched.</p> <p>“Difficulty of Implementation” Though understandably difficult, the result we feel will be worth the various efforts of our constituents on behalf of the “Commonwealth Connections” being made.</p>					
	<p>“An alternate to the Clinton Tunnel should that for some reason be determined to not be practical or feasible.” Please refer to previous comments, that our preference is for both the historic railbed through the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Clinton Tunnel and the Wachusett Aqueduct corridor, not “alternates.”</p> <p>“Feasibility of the aqueduct option.” We feel the Aqueduct Corridor is already viable, and that it should remain so, perhaps with the suggested MOU with the MWRA. From a trail use point of view, integral loops are great. As envisioned, the Aqueduct would connect with the MCRT at two points: near the dam and near Five Corners, with great views and natural heritage throughout. So destined to be one the great trail loops for MCRT enthusiasts.</p> <p>As an option that obviates the preferred route along the historical rail bed and through the tunnel, however, it should not be further considered as an off-corridor alternative.</p> <p>“Agreement from MWRA”. The MassDOT, DCR, MassTrails, and the EOEEA should do what is necessary to obtain a Memorandum of Understanding with the MWRA with regards to all matters MCRT. We suggest and offer our services in consultation drafting an MOU.</p> <p>“Recommend exploring these options with DCR Water Supply and MWRA.” Given the historical continued obstruction to progress in the silo formed by the MWRA, the matter should be referred to the Governor for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for immediate resolution.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>“A shared use path would add one more layer of complexity to this already challenging intersection.” We agree with data and analysis. Since this is the first segment, East to West, past the Wayside Trail, which is in fast-forward, this segment should be considered a priority. There may be renewed opportunity for the Towns of Clinton and Berlin to work together completing this segment of the MCRT. There are historical animosities that may need to be overcome, however. The Tall Pines condominium development in Clinton, on the border with Berlin, created tensions. The Town of Berlin has managed to successfully preserve its natural, rural and farm character, and considered that development a threat. Gordon Taylor and Larry Kunz, who live in nearby Bolton, are cyclists. Cyclists applaud the idea of putting a bridge on the old abutments over this junction, it’s a difficult spot for bicycles already, and if the trail goes at road level it will get much worse unless there is some traffic control or the bridge. We do not see a ramp up to the bridge(s) from road level on the map - it would be very helpful to also have a way of getting on to the trail here. We’d also like to see a connector to the Berlin Park and Ride lot at I-495. As well as bicycle safety improvements into and around the Shops at Highland Common. Shopping by bicycle is</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	an opportunity here, a trend which we can encourage throughout the MCRT. We encourage a closer look at connectors between the MCRT and local places of interests.					
92	<p>VOLUME 1: BELCHERTOWN</p> <p>The complications in Belchertown are mostly related to residential property owners acquiring small portions of the corridor many years ago—before 161 C reporting requirements. In recent years a Belchertown-based, “Linear Thinking” _local land trust was built and through strategic patience they have acquired—and gifted to the town—large portions of the ROW. The narrative by Dan Fitzpatrick — founder of the Belchertown Land Trust— will be useful as a “road-map” _in reassembling the corridor on the northern and western end of the corridor there. What needs to be done there is pretty simple really.</p> <p>* An emergency, quick-action fund through an agency within EOEEA needs to be set up with perhaps \$500K and have it ready to use by communities—all along the corridor to allow for a quick purchase of corridor that comes onto the market to be sold. The communities can then purchase the segment of corridor and agree to payback either all or</p>	Craig Della Penna	Northampton	11/29/20	Yes	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project. These specific comments and suggestions require further investigation to assess how they would be considered for future development as the feasibility study moves into the project development phase. Comments addressing broader issues have been forwarded to the MassTrails Team for consideration.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	some agreed upon portion of the state investment.					
	<p>VOLUME 2: BONDSVILLE TO RUTLAND The complications in the Bondsville section of Palmer, Ware, and New Braintree are mostly related to commercial entities. For example:</p> <p>* The railroad in Bondsville isn't formally abandoned and it still has track in-place. However, there isn't any hope of a viable rail-served user coming since a plan for an intermodal facility at a defunct airport didn't get approved. CSX didn't want this to happen and every-one in the RR industry knew that. It was a non-starter from the very beginning. More recently the land instead became a large solar array. The owner of the dormant track is the owner of the railroad that operates as a lessee on state-owned track from Palmer to So. Barre. His interest in the dead RR in Bondsville should be bought out by the state. He is under-capitalized and will welcome the infusion of cash to better sustain his existing business. Also, it should serve as a warning that this railroad has had at least three and maybe more owners in the past 10 years. This churning and burning-out of operators is a common occurrence on state-owned corridors in both Massachusetts and Vermont. The current owner of the MCER will likely welcome the sale in Bondsville. And I might add, it'll likely be cheaper for the state to buy the dead</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>corridor, sell the track for scrap, and fix the bridges for trail use as opposed to the investment for rail use. Never mind the reality that a higher-and-better outcome for the community will obviously be the trail.</p> <p>* In Ware we have the same RR, the MCER operating a plastic pellet transloading facility taking material from railcars to trucks. This facility though busy, does have room to accommodate the trail coming across the currently out of service rail bridge and then alongside the transload and then crossing to the east, at the northern end of the transload. There are a number of bike-ped crossings of a railroad protected by crossing arms and warning lights/bells around the country and Mass DOT won't need to be 'inventing the wheel' _so to speak.</p> <p>* At the Kansaki Paper Company, a route through neighborhood streets will work and successfully get past this impediment.</p> <p>* At the north and east end of Ware at Church Street, the East Quabbin Land Trust who operates in the area is developing the MCRT, but it seems that the owner of a segment here, National Grid isn't being as helpful as they might be. Or let me say it this way—as helpful as they are in similar circumstances in New York State. Since National Grid owns more miles of former RR corridor in the state than private RRs do and since they participated in the re-write of the state's</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Recreational Use Statutes—and showed up for the photo-op with then Governor Patrick in 2009, I think they should be invited-in as a stake holder on the Governor’s Trails Team.</p> <p>* In New Braintree, there is a small, 1950s era, general aviation airport recently sold from the Tanner/Hiller families to a Chinese company. I’m not really sure if DOT’s Aeronautic Division has alerted DHS on this as it does seem to be worthy and notable that a Chinese company is training pilots here in the US. The runway for the airport utilizes the exact ROW of the former RR. The trail will need to be put on the north side of the runway between the runway and the Ware River. This too is a section of the MCRT that the East Quabbin Land Trust is working on and it would be useful for DOT to have a role in the effort to get the trail built next to the airport’s runway. Once again, MassDOT won’t need to be ‘inventing the wheel’ _as there are other places around the country that provide examples.</p>					
	<p>VOLUME 3: RUTLAND TO HUDSON</p> <p>As you’ve seen, each volume has a different issue where complications and difficulties arise. Volume 3’s issue is mostly related to issues in the municipal and state realm where the rules governing both the sale of former railroad corridor and construction near or on top of former railroad corridor have been ignored, never known about, or</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>creatively gone around by putting in a pop-up agency that operates outside of the rules governing the public interest in this realm. And as an extra complication, there is a boundary in Berlin where this is the western most ownership of the MBTA and the B&M RR connects and continues west to Clinton.</p> <p>* Just in the 21st century alone, there have been two instances where the B&M RR was approached by adjacent landowners in Berlin wanting to purchase short sections of the ROW. The first one was in 2006 when I was alerted by someone in the state government that the municipality wasn't stepping up to block the sale. I went into town and started asking questions. The town had no idea of the pending sale and did quickly move to buy the 700 feet at question, at that time. The other instance was a few years later in about 2010 when a Select-woman in town wanted to purchase a section of the corridor to take down the elevated ROW passing through her front yard. The town also purchased that segment—preserving it for the future trail. These sorts of purchases should also be eligible for the special emergency fund for communities that don't have readily available funds.</p> <p>* Also in 2006, there was a sale of about 30 feet of the MBTA owned section of the ROW. Here, a diamond-tipped cut-off saw was used to cut the section of track and ties and drag it off to the side, bulldoze out the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>berm, and creating a driveway to build a house. This was done under to watchful eyes of the MBTA's privatized RE department who a few years earlier, told me to my face that they'd never, ever sell across a ROW that would create a buildable lot. I stumbled onto this 'situation', took several pix of it and sent it to the T's pri-vatized RE Dept and told them that they needed to lease the Wayside segment (the T owned segment) to DCR to make it a trail. A few months later, they did offer up a lease to DCR. A few years later, I was contacted by the homeowner asking why it was taking so long to get the trail built. Wait till you see my memoir.</p> <p>* Around 2017, a parcel of land — landlocked behind the dead railroad in Berlin came on the market and for a long time, it never gathered any interest. Until around 2018, when it went under-contract to be sold. The pending deal was conditional on getting an easement across the dead RR corridor. I thought, no problem, we'll just show up at the hearing and either block the sale or ensure an accommodation for the trail. This section of corridor was just east of the east abutment for the long-gone bridge over the Five Corners section of Berlin— along West St. This was west of the Coburn Road crossing. East of Coburn Road, it was well known to be owned by the MBTA. West of Coburn Road, it was always</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>assumed to be owned by the B&MRR. The B&M generally took the rails out when trains stopped running because they knew that the train would never be back. The T always leaves the rails in place. There were no rails west of Coburn Road. But it turns out that the T owns the ROW west of Coburn Road—and the MBTA’s privatized RE Dept apparently doesn’t follow the same rules that govern private sector railroads. There was no public notification of the attempt by the developer wanting to buy a section of the RR RoW that would create frontage for the acreage on the other side of the dead RR. No public hearing? No problem the privatized RE Dept of the T merely quietly, and privately canvassed the same people within state agencies who would be notified in a genuine 161C or 40/54A hearing, but without the possibility of the public even ever knowing about it. Easy peasy. Shocking but true. The next stop to preserve the integrity of the corridor would be to have a genuine 40-54A hearing. That was going to be interesting because the town of Berlin had never, ever held a 40-54A hearing. Not in over 40 years with plenty of situations where one should have been held. Another example of bad oversight by the office where these programs are seen as the proverbial “Annoying, Red-headed Step Child”.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>So I went to the hearing for the Berlin Planning Board to alert of them of the need for the 40-54A hearing and how this development might negatively impact the coming trail. Needless to say, the Planning Board members were stunned to learn of the 40-54A program and the developer, Mr. Gould was outraged to learn of mechanism that ostensibly protects former RR corridor. Nevertheless, a 40-54A hearing was arranged, but no one came to speak about the coming trail because no one really knew that the public hearing took place. Unless you happened to be reading the legal notices in the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. This is of course much different from the standard, 21st century public reporting process within EOEEA called MEPA where there is a bi-monthly web-based posting of all hearings about various kinds of development, all over the state. If the program within DOT was moved to EOEEA, there'd be greater awareness, transparency and less opaqueness. And the staffers wouldn't be seen as the "Redheaded Step Child" office.</p>					
	<p>Here's a short list of easy to do's for the state to take the lead on, that will not only expedite the buildout of this corridor, but will make it easier to preserve and protect former railroad corridor across the state. Don't forget, when the state bought hundreds of miles of dead corridors in the 1970s, they had no idea what they could</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>be used for. Now we know what benefit these are to have operational as linear parks right where people live, work, and play. And as New York knows, these projects bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the state.</p> <p>1. Set up a quick-action emergency fund of \$500K that would allow communities to quickly buy former railroad corridor and later reimburse the Commonwealth. Make this funding available also through the 161C process as well.</p> <p>2. Move the oversight of the 161C and 40-54A programs out of DOT's Rail and Transit office where these programs are seen as the proverbial "Annoying, Red-headed Step Child".__Move these programs into somewhere within the EOEEA secretariat. Don't forget, that when these programs were created in the mid-70s there was not yet any real environmental or protecting agencies within the state. There is nothing within the psyche or DNA of a DOT that has any protecting mindset. EOEEA does. These programs need to be a standard part of MEPA's disclosure process.</p> <p>2A. Moving it out of DOT won't be hard. It is only a few staffers really. Here's a great example of moving an entire state office. Over 20 years ago, the MBTA's RE office was moved overnight, en mass to a new office on Winthrop St where they set up</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>shop under the flag of Transit Realty Associates. More recently, the state has moved it away from TRA to a new firm—GreyCo. There have been sales of former RR corridor—outside the purview of 161C and 40-54A. All sales of former railroad corridor, whether owned by a private sector railroad or a public RR—or a utility operating in Massachusetts who owns former RR will need to be under the eye of this EOEEA based future protective office.</p> <p>3. The dormant RR in Bondsville needs to be bought by the state and working with the state's lessee, find a satisfactory way to get through the plastic pellet transloading facility. Both tasks are only going to happen with the DOT taking the lead.</p> <p>4. Stakeholders on the Governor's Trails Team needs to be expanded. National Grid needs to be one of the stake holders at Trails Team meetings. Other necessary additions should be the Mass Office of Travel & Tourism, and the lead staffer on the relocated office handling 161C and 40-54A issues.</p>					
93	<p>Segment 2B: Summer Street to River Street to Rt 32 is dangerous for bike/hike travel: no shoulder on Rt 32, curves, high speed and no lights (early morning/late day travel). <i>Alternative:</i> Summer Street to Emery Street to Babcock Tavern Road to Old</p>	Denis Ouimet	Ware	11/14/20	Yes	<p>Thank you for your comments. Consideration will be given to all viable routing during the initial design phase of a particular section. Additionally, any recent trail-related developments will be updated in final draft of the feasibility study.</p>

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>Belchertown Road to Gibbs Crossing Shopping Center. Bridge is currently out but scheduled to be replaced on Old Belchertown Road. Now would be an ideal time to include rail trail lane/sidewalk. Is Old Boston and Maine R/R track open and available here? Would make for ideal connection from MCRT in South Belchertown, thru Palmer to Ware. Tracks haven't been used in decades.</p> <p>Segment 2C: Reconstruct bridge on Old Belchertown Road to include rail trail traffic. Avoids Route 32, active rail line in Palmer and private landowner who has already threatened a lawsuit if we use ROW for trail at Ware town line.</p> <p>Segment 2D: Segment near shopping center was awarded \$38,000+ to Ware and is currently out to bid for drainage work (culvert pipe dumps onto trail at that point from above neighborhood) and stone dusting part of the trail.</p> <p>Segment 2E: Construct bridge over Ware River at Quaboag Apartments; it's parallel to Laurel Drive; one owner instead of two; there's wide space at landing (apparently was supposed to be a third building there?) with</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>potential room for parking, picnic tables and/or perhaps an ADA compliant fishing pier (like 2 examples in Grenville Park across the river) plus a canoe launch since we're downstream from the mill dams at this point. <u>By bridging the river here, we solve multiple problems:</u> Avoids Routes 32 and 9 and their corresponding traffic; MCRR is wiped out by mill buildings, Ware's WWTP, Kanzaki Paper Co. and missing bridges/track from 1938 hurricane. Brings MCRT onto South Street straight across intersection of Main Street (Rt 9) to Church Street and Grenville Park (73 Church St.). Great amenity to have for tenants next to complex. Would love a similar bridge to Schell Bridge in Northfield. Ware River is 180' here.</p> <p>Segment 2F:</p> <p>EQLT was awarded \$98,000+ and has completed paperwork to avoid wetlands and is in process with National Grid for use permission to build out the trail.</p>					
94	<p>My thoughts: 1) Bolton section. This is very short and obvious, if very overgrown route, but might be a bit controversial because it goes very close to some houses as it approaches Lively Road. When Larry and I were there last year we had to sneak down somebody's driveway</p>	Gordon Taylor	Bolton	11/10/20	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>to get out because the railroad bed is so overgrown. I also believe that there are some wetlands and a resource area around there which might be important; regulations now are different to what they were when this railroad was in operation. They are also probably different to what they were in the early 1970s when 495 was built.</p> <p>2) Berlin Section : I don't live there, but I have visited a few of the places where the trail will go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Sawyer Hill Rd to the 495 underpass this is very straightforward. I don't see why anybody could quibble with just following the old railroad bed. • From Carter St to Sawyer Hill Rd I can imagine problems, but not with the route. It goes behind several houses and in at least one case goes through a cutting very close to somebody's yard. It's is a great route for the trail, but I can imagine that the abutters will object. It is also very overgrown at present and very wet - the drainage issues need to be fixed. Also there is a quarry in operation near Sawyer Hill Road and the Trail route - the safety precautions during blasting might be a factor. • I do not know the route from 5 Corners to Carter St, but there are houses in that area so I would expect that abutters will object. 					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>• 5 Corners: as a cyclist and walker I applaud the idea of putting a bridge on the old abutments over this junction, it's a difficult spot for bicycles already, and if the trail goes at road level it will get much worse unless there is some traffic control or the bridge. I did not see a ramp up to the bridge(s) from road level on the map. Is this planned? Because it would be very helpful to have a way of getting on to the trail at this place.</p> <p>• From 5 Corners into Clinton I can see why the Wachusett Aqueduct is an attractive option and it's probably as flat as the old railway bed, but I would prefer the railway bed for a couple of reasons (see my notes about Clinton). No matter which route is taken here Route 62 has to be crossed at some point. This is a busy road and decent crossings are needed; bridges would obviously be preferable, but this may not be practical given the terrain and the volume of traffic might not warrant a big investment.</p> <p>3) Clinton Section : I don't live here either, but I will take the liberty of commenting on the section that goes from route 62 westwards. I have walked and bicycled the section west of the dam as far as Route 110 and it looks fine to me, but should be paved and drained properly, beyond that I have no opinions.</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have no opinions about the use of the Wachusett Aqueduct vs the railroad bed - I have never walked either so I don't know. • I do have opinions about the tunnel; it should be used. I like that it connects to Rauscher Farm which is often worth a visit and might be a good place for walkers and cyclists to take a break. However, there will be arguments about the inside of the tunnel being a magnet for illicit activities etc. Frankly it already is; and taking the trails elsewhere will change nothing. Putting a properly maintained and well-constructed trail through there might reduce the shenanigans, because more people will use it and it will be harder to hide in there. The Bruce Freeman tunnel under Route 3 in Chelmsford does not seem to have any issues and is well used, but I must make it clear that this tunnel is much, much shorter than the Clinton tunnel. • The tunnel should be lit, properly paved and the drainage problems fixed. • It would be excellent to ride out of the tunnel on to a tressle across the valley just like the trains used to do and given what the State is spending on the Route 2 bridge for the Bruce Freeman Trail this is certainly not out of the bounds of possibility, especially if the existing abutments can be used. However in addition to cost, I can imagine that Clinton residents might not like changes to the view of the dam and the little park there. 					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>• If the dam is to be used to cross the valley, another option would be to have the trail come out of the tunnel over Route 70 and then down a ramp to road level at a point where users can ride or walk up to the dam without having to deal with the traffic on the road. I have ridden my bike up this hill many times and it's not a pleasant place to ride: provision of a bridge out of the tunnel and a bike trail parallel to the sidewalk would be an improvement.</p> <p>Maybe even make it a long, elevated trail that is actually almost flat up to the dam with the sidewalk underneath.</p> <p>• Using the Aqueduct to avoid the tunnel might be OK, but the option shown shows a road level crossing south of the dam. I seem to remember that traffic can be heavy and moving quickly at that point. Not a good thing, unless there is decent control (like pedestrian signals).</p> <p>• Forcing bicyclists down to the bottom of the valley and back up again is a non-starter as far as I am concerned. It is OK for walkers but riding down the main road and then crossing it at the bottom is a bad idea. So a rebuilt trestle or opening the top of the dam are the only viable options in my opinion.</p> <p>4) Sections West: I don't know much about the route beyond 110. I have walked some of the existing dirt-surfaced trail in West Boylston and my only comment is that it</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>was wet and slippery on the day I was there, but it was Winter, so my impression is badly tainted.</p> <p>A few additional comments and thoughts. Personally, I do not feel comfortable that the towns along the proposed route have been included formally. For instance, I have not heard that Bolton's Town planner, Master Planning committee, Town Administrator, Conservation Agent and Open space planning have been included.</p> <p>1) There should be a connector to the Park and Ride lot at the junction of 495 and 62 on the Berlin-Hudson-Bolton border.</p> <p>2) Also on the Berlin-Hudson-Bolton border, there should be a safe route from the trail to the Highland Commons shopping area where there are many stores. Shopping by bike is an excellent thing to encourage. It's possible on most of the trails nearby. Is there a safe way of getting to the stores in Clinton from the MCRT? I'm sure that there will be a connection to the stores in downtown Hudson by using the MCRT and the ARRT (Assabet River Rail Trail).</p> <p>3) The trail maintenance requirements must be highlighted, and a commitment made to on-going repairs.</p> <p>4) I have mixed feelings about stone dust. Stone dust can develop potholes just like everywhere else. The pothole and tree root</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>issue on the Nashua River Rail trail should not have occurred. It strikes me that it is probably a combination of poor construction (tree roots) and deferred maintenance. This does not seem to be a problem on some other paved trails like the Minuteman and Bruce Freeman (BFRT).</p> <p>5) The Minuteman, Nashua River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail are great examples of trails that are useful for commuting with connections to places like the “T” at Ayer, and in the case of the BFRT Lowell bus + train station and West Concord station. Are there any bus and train stops that will easily be accessible from the MCRT. There must be bus routes from the Montachusett area that intersect with the trail.</p> <p>6) Bicycle racks would be a good idea at places where the trail intersects with other nodes of transport.</p>					
95	This is such a great opportunity to improve the network of bike trails in Massachusetts. I fully support this, and hope this becomes a reality, and connects all the way to Boston.	Joshua Dankoff	Jamaica Plain	12/02/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
96	The existing rail trails which converge in Northampton are a wonderful resource beloved by residents of the surrounding towns for walking and cycling and were a key part of my decision to relocate to this area this summer. As someone who does not own a car, they've been a wonderful way to explore the area, run errands, accomplish	Christopher Stratton	Northampton	12/02/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>car-displacing grocery shopping trips over to Hadley, and with the added willingness to brave roads in between Easthampton and the Westfield trailhead, have even allowed me to do several hundred-mile rides looping down into Connecticut on the developed Farmington Canal Line rail trail system. Much as the existing trails are wonderful, the abrupt end of the eastern branch in Belchertown limits their scope to a few towns of the Pioneer Valley. So building out as much of the former Mass Central route towards Boston as possible is key so that the residents of others towns can enjoy this kind of resource, and be connected in a human-powered way to the towns already served by the existing trails. Although it may present challenges in places where the right of way has been lost, continuity of trails is extremely important - a brave adult cyclist may be willing to use roads to cross a gap, but for families with young children even a very brief road stretch may present a barrier to the rides they can share. In building out trails, it's also critically important that they be thought of, designed, and managed as true transit infrastructure able to displace vehicle trips, and not merely recreation amenities. Key concerns in this are the use of surfaces which drain well in wet weather and are not subject to flooding or damage when waterlogged, and which are compatible with snow removal in the winter. It's also</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	absolutely key that design and management be done with an awareness that for nearly half of the year, conventional evening commutes occur after sunset, so sunset closing policies make a trail unusable for commuting and reduce it to little more than a recreational park. It's also very important that when the day-to-day management of a trail network is delegated to a variety of individual towns, there should be a central status website for notices of closures in any section for any reason, otherwise those attempting longer rides may unexpectedly come upon a new closure sign or temporary fence at an hour when it is no longer safe to turn around and return the way they came. Very much looking forward to being able to ride from Northampton to Boston - or at least, to enjoy experiencing many segments of that historic route!					
97	This would be awesome, especially for families	Lorinda Baker	Three Rivers	12/03/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
98	Belchertown is currently connected almost exclusively by high speed roads (Rt. 9, 181, 202) and roads with narrow or poorly maintained shoulders. There are minimal bike lanes of any kind (save the new road construction by the former State School). It is my firm view (and that of many of my neighbors) that this extension could be one step in the direction of fixing that and hope	Daniel Baecher	Belchertown	12/03/2020	Yes	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project. Members of the public are encouraged to advocate for the advancement of the trail in their communities through scheduled public meetings and engagement with local officials.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	that swift progress can be made with this project. I live in a house that was formerly occupied by an opponent of the Belchertown extension when it was previously proposed years ago and I know that the views of many people in the "Tri-Lakes" area have shifted since the last attempt. Please let us know how we can be part of making this change happen to our town (and the towns nearby!) The release of this feasibility study has given us all hope, and we want to keep the momentum moving!					
99	I just want to support the completion of this project. I specifically support bicycle improvements as cycling is an activity that I enjoy and rail trail cycling is really nice. I would like to have more rail trails in MA. Some rail trails in the metro Boston area can get really crowded with pedestrians, so please consider separate trails for cyclists and pedestrians in congested areas.	Elisabeth L. Daley	Lynn	12/03/2020	Yes	Thank you for your comment. Careful consideration will be given to all trail components during the initial design phase of a particular section, including appropriate trail width.
100	We recently purchased and moved into a property that straddles the rail trail and includes a right of way across the path. We have noticed that the trail has been heavily used since the pandemic started in the Spring and that the large majority of people are respectful. However, based on our observations of trail use the rules regarding bicycles and dogs are not well understood. We have witnessed multiple cases of loose dogs not under the control of their owners, and some of these dogs have come onto our	Bryan Donovan	Jefferson	12/04/2020	Yes	Thank you for your comments and keen insight as a direct abutter of the trail. The various prohibited users described will be brought to the attention of the managing agency for further review and reevaluation.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	property. We are a dog-friendly family but our understanding based on signs at the trail heads are that dogs are not allowed, whether leashed or not. Bicycles are ridden on the trails daily in spite of the signs at the trail heads that prohibit them. In the late summer / early Fall we also observed for the first time "one wheelers" (like these https://onewheel.com/) being used on the trail. These are motorized and quite fast when someone skilled is riding them. I assume that these, as with any motorized vehicle, are not allowed on the trail. We would like to be respectful in how we use the trails and expect others to do the same. We think that the rules for the trails (if there are any restrictions or limits) need be more prominently posted as well as enforced consistently over time.					
101	First, thank you for collecting data and conducting this feasibility study. I found it very informative and telling of the work that needs to be done to progress the rail trail. Moving forward, I think it would be helpful to understand more of MassDOT's next steps in some form of an action plan or similar document. A few comments that I had are related to access and some clarification. I think it would be important to include proposed trail access points, via parking areas or connections to local resources (i.e parks, shops). In future studies, I think it could be useful to look into extensions of the	Central MA Regional Planning Commission	Worcester	12/04/2020	Yes	Thank you for your comment. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project and looks forward to partnering with CMRPC on next steps. These specific comments and suggestions require further investigation to assess how they would be considered for future development as the feasibility study moves into the project development phase. EQLT is the East Quabbin Land Trust and are first referenced on page 3 segment 2F.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	trail network that loop to create shorter walks/rides to further accommodate more novice or intermediate MCRT users. Additionally, I was unfamiliar with the term EQLT path on the map documents. That being said, I wasn't sure if the proposed on-road extensions were being included on the maps, in which case they should. Again, I think this work is a great step for multi-modal access in MA, especially in the CMRPC region as we aim to progress regional access to multi-use trail systems.					
102	Can't wait to use it! I hope it has some bathroom facilities along the way.	Andrew Wells-Bean	Burlington	12/04/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
103	A once in a lifetime project for us and future generations to enjoy our scenic beauty	Barbara O'Donnell	Thorndike	12/04/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
104	I am highly supportive of the Central Mass Rail Trail and I think the feasibility study is promising. Although I think that the path should stay on the original right as way for as long as possible, even a trail with occasional on-road segments would be of high recreational value to cyclists and runners who seek to train. If the west end of the rail trail were extended, I would use it on a monthly basis at least.	Cameron Dougal	Indian Orchard	12/05/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
105	As a Western Mass resident and user of the current MCRT facilities I welcome the potential expansion of this network. I use the	Tom Davidson	Florence	12/05/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	trail for both recreation and commuting. Connecting the MCRT from Belchertown to Palmer opens the possibility of connections with the East-West Commuter rail expansion in coming years (this would be true as well for the Ware to Palmer corridor). I urge you to move forward on this project and look forward to its completion.					Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
106	I fully support this, and hope it takes off. I am fortunate to live in the western part of the state, where we have an abundance of trails. But, cross- state travel by bicycle safely is needed. I am glad this is now given a priority. I understand it can be hard to get small towns to get on board, but they should look at how much more money it will bring in- both with the commuters and the likelihood that people want to live in the towns. With COVID, bike and all recreation has skyrocketed- safe areas are crucial.	Tim Cary	Easthampton	12/05/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
107	I have been a cyclist for 20 years and would love to see this project completed. My wife and I currently use a few of the sections plus other rail trails.	Tom Robert	Charlton	12/05/202	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
108	I would like to comment on the Clinton/Berlin portion of the trail, specifically the Wachusett Reservoir crossing, the Clinton tunnel, and the Five Corners crossing, mainly to voice my strong support for full rehabilitation of the railroad ROW of these segments. Though the costs of full rehabilitation versus workarounds may be high, I believe they are crucial to the	Chris Aparo	Newton	12/05/2020	No	On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team thank you for your comments. They will be considered as part of any future planning or project development processes.

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>full success of the MCRT as a logistical resource, a historical artifact, and an alluring feature of the region. Furthermore, the interconnected nature of these three crossings virtually demands that all three be fully rehabilitated, or else the whole Clinton-Hudson segment diminishes significantly from its potential. I say this as a fan of the trail and the railroad that preceded it, and as a person who has personally traversed the entirety of the ROW from Hudson to Clinton and can clearly picture the possibilities generated by full rehabilitation versus the disappointments of partial efforts. The Clinton Tunnel: The tunnel, as many have already said, would be the crown jewel of the MCRT. I have traversed the tunnel many times; it is a favorite "hidden treasure" to show my friends, and while I would miss the eerie silence, blackness, and creative graffiti the current incarnations boasts once it became rehabilitated and added to the trail, I also acknowledge it would be an absolute crime for the MCRT to finalize a route that bypasses this landmark. I do not feel like I need to even press rehabilitation of the tunnel, as there are few who will oppose it. My arguments, therefore, are saved for the other two crossings. The Wachusett Dam Bridge: Rehabilitation and use of the Clinton tunnel MUST be paired with reconstruction of the bridge at the Wachusett Dam. For anyone who has personally visited the tunnel</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>and the dam area, this is a no-brainer. Regarding logistics, just past the tunnel lies the first abutment, with Rt. 62/70 fifteen or so feet directly below it. Any alternative to rebuilding the bridge would require a method of getting down to road grade and then crossing the busy roadway, and that's just to get to the rim of the dam basin, much less cross it. Any crossing of the dam basin without a rehabilitated bridge currently requires a long, steep descent down into the basin and then up the other side. While crossing the dam would be a logistically satisfying way to traverse the basin, the aforementioned concerns with reaching and crossing Rt. 62/70 still make this option less than desirable. From a historical and attraction standpoint, the benefits of rebuilding the bridge are clear: maintaining and reusing the existing abutments and railroad ROW would add significantly to the trail's historical significance, as the trestle went part and parcel with the tunnel in historical records describing the most significant landmark of the entire railway. To fully reconstruct it would be a dream to those seeking to relive a part of Massachusetts transportation history (an aspect of the trail's allure as a whole that should not be overlooked), and to fail to do so would be a tragically missed opportunity. To anyone else, the spectacle of the bridge high over the dam basin from below, and the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	<p>view of the dam basin, reservoir, and town from the vantage point of the bridge itself would be an attraction well worth the cost of construction. The Five Corners Crossing: While the Five Corners Crossing's fate may seem at first glance to be totally unrelated to that of the tunnel and bridge, I would like to push for the rebuilding of this bridge as well, largely due to logistic concerns. Were the tunnel and dam bridge to be properly rehabilitated, the allure to approach these landmarks from the East would be significant. Already, the town of Hudson is shaping up to become a significant rail trail hub, thanks to the intersection of the popular Assabet River Rail Trail and the inevitable extension of the MCRT through the town. As a result, the Hudson-Clinton stretch of the MCRT will probably become the most popular and highly trafficked section of the entire trail. To force an at-grade crossing at or near Five Corners (even if the intersection was redesigned) would be an inconvenience and hazard for both trail-users and drivers that needs to be avoided if possible. The abutments are already present, and the ROW is high above the roadway, meaning the rewards of rebuilding the bridge to continue along the ROW grade as opposed to descending to street level to navigate an inconvenient and potentially dangerous crossing are well worth the cost. To sum it all up, the Hudson-Clinton stretch of the</p>					

#	Comment	Name	Town	Date	Request a response?	Draft Response
	proposed MCRT is full of potential to become a significant, enduring feature of the Massachusetts landscape that the state can be proud of, but it also has the potential to become a messy system of workarounds that solidly exemplifies the simmering disappointment of "what could have been." We owe it to ourselves and all those who will enjoy and appreciate this creation to make it everything it can be, and that is why I am advocating for the full rehabilitation/reconstruction of the Clinton Tunnel, the Wachusett Dam bridge, and the Five Corners bridge.					
109	I would like to see the segments from Barre to Wheelwright and from Creamery Road to Ware completed, which would build on the very popular segments already completed. The longer each segment is, the more valuable it is as a recreational resource and possibly an economic driver for the town through which it passes.	Mike Perkins	Barre	12/06/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.
110	I think this is a wonderful project, and I hope it happens. The idea of riding my bike on safe bike paths from Western Mass to Boston is very exciting.	Dana Wilde	Northampton	12/08/2020	No	Thank you for your comments. On behalf of MassDOT, the MassTrails Team appreciates your input and support for this project.