

# MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL



## Mass Central Rail Trail Coalition

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Ian A. Bowles, Secretary  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston MA 02114  
Regarding MEPA #13952 Prospect Point, Waltham

February 15, 2007

### Boston

—MassBike  
—WalkBoston

### Somerville

—Friends of the Community  
Path

### Cambridge

—Cambridge Bike Committee

### Belmont

—Friends of the Belmont  
Bikeway

### Waltham, Weston, Wayland, Sudbury, Hudson, Berlin

—Wayside Trail

### Clinton

—Clinton Greenway  
Conservation Trust

### Sterling, West Boylston, Holden, Rutland, Oakham

—Wachusett Greenways

### Barre, New Braintree, Hardwick

—East Quabbin Land Trust

### Ware

—Ware River Valley  
Greenway Trail

### Palmer

—Town of Palmer Trail

### Belchertown

—Belchertown Land Trust

### Amherst, Hadley, Northampton

—Norwottuck Rail Trail  
Advisory Committee  
—MassBike Pioneer Valley  
—Friends of Northampton  
Trails and Greenways

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have noted the mention of the MassCentral Rail Trail [aka the Wayside Trail in Waltham or MCRT] by the developers of the Prospect Point commercial development project in Waltham. We have also noted that the developer has indicated an interest in building out the section of the Wayside Trail near their project.

While a development of the size and scope of Prospect Point raises many local concerns, we are pleased that the developer has recognized the important interrelationship between the project and the MCRT. With attention to proper planning and design, and its strong financial support, Prospect Point can help to avert adverse impacts to the MCRT caused by this massive development, and potentially help make the MCRT an even more robust, safe, and successful regional trail project.

WCD, the developer of Prospect Point, has indicated an interest in building out the section of the Wayside Rail Trail that transects the project and working with the City of Waltham, trail users advocates and other interested parties to develop the rail trail. We welcome WCD's interest and offer some specific suggestion how its offer could be most useful to all parties and the ultimate success of the MCRT and Prospect Point.

Here are the key points and specific comments from the project proponent's ENF:

- p.4- "As part of the development, WCD will construct an initial segment of the Wayside Rail Trail, a long-planned project that will generally follow former rail right-of-way from Belmont to as far west as Berlin. A portion of the former rail right-of-way, approximately 1,850 feet, passes through the site. Figure 5 ... WCD will work with the City of Waltham, cycling advocates, and others during the EIR process to formulate the ultimate plan."
- p.6-"As part of the project a key link in the Wayside Rail Trail will be constructed. When complete, this trail will provide a recreational trail link from Belmont to as far as Berlin."
- p.6- "Both the Land Use and Open Space portions of the Waltham Plan emphasize the need to develop the east-west Wayside Rail Trail, a long-planned project that will generally follow former rail right-of-way from Belmont to as far as Berlin. An opportunity exists at the project site to construct an initial segment of the Wayside Rail Trail. The Proponent plans to build a key central portion of this rail trail as part of project construction."

The ENF notes a very large increase in traffic this project would bring to the area (5,000 new parking spaces and 30,000 new vehicle trips per day on Route 117/Main Street) which will magnify the challenges of making the MCRT crossing of Route 117 a safe one for trail users.

As part of the developer's review process before MEPA and other state and local agencies, we believe that WCD should be required to work in concert with the City of Waltham, appropriate state agencies and other local groups to ensure that an optimal solution to the Rt. 117/Main St. crossing is devised and included in the eventual construction plans for the MCRT. Such crossings might include a pedestrian bridge over the roadway, a tunnel, or perhaps a well-engineered at-grade crossing. Knowing that a crossing such as a bridge or tunnel could be costly, but potentially necessary to ensure user safety at this busy location, the developer should be required to contribute sufficient funds that may be needed to ensure a crossing that meets the specifications and needs of the City of Waltham, and conforms with applicable state and federal requirements.

