



Here's some bulleted updates about the Mass Central Rail Trail—104+ miles long from Boston to Northampton.

- We are at 53 miles open right now. We'll be about 75 miles open by the end of 2024.
- MassDOT knows that it is feasible to reassemble the rest of the entire corridor, but it'll be expensive. The easy to build out sections are always the first to be built out—and it's been ongoing for 40+ years.
- What remains to be done are the complicated sections that include: 5 long ago removed ex-RR bridges that will need to be replaced. A 1,000-foot tunnel needs to be renovated. A few miles of corridor needs to be purchased or easements given along with other complications.
- Here's a link to the Three Volume MassDOT feasibility study done about this question in 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/.../mass-central-rail-trail-feasibility> . Each of the 3 volumes are found on that site.
- The interesting thing about the MCRT is that it intersects with 17 other trails. 9 of these are highly polished and finished (or soon to be finished) bikeway projects that will bring a connectiveness to a network in an urban/suburban area that that isn't seen elsewhere in the U.S. Here's a link to that. <https://tinyurl.com/17Trails>
- Within 150 miles of Northampton lies the densest network of dead steam railroad corridor in North America. The network here led to huge antediluvian mill complexes that are no longer producing heavy things. They are now converted to apartments, condos or startup businesses. The dead RRs are being re-discovered as a way to get around town without a car. Long, built out corridors are ways to explore a neighboring community or even longer, multi-day journeys.
- That facet—long-distance, off-road touring—is largely unknown here in southern New England.
- We know that the usual way a long trail gets finished is by an entity commissioning an extensive report that predicts what the benefits of a fully completed trail would be in terms of economic impact, health impacts, transportation, community development, climate impacts, etc. etc.
- Norwottuck Network put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) this spring, searching for a consultant to produce the report that answered that basic question. <https://www.nnetwork.net/rfp>
- On that page you'll also see a two-page infographic about this project.
- Four firms responded and we hired one, Kittelson & Associates out of Boston was to do the report. It is getting underway right now. Here's what their work proposal will entail. <https://www.masscentralrailtrail.org/kittelsonproposal>
- If you are interested in being interviewed by Kittelson or even interested in a role where you could be an interviewer in the field? On one of the MCRT's open sections? OR interview folks on some of the intersecting trails, like the BFRT please contact me at: CraigDP413@gmail.com.
- For a live, scalable map of all the open and under-construction sections of the MCRT, go to this link: <https://www.tkmaps.com/MCRT/>