



Northampton, Hadley and Amherst comprise the Norwottuck Rail Trail segment of the MCRT. This western-most section of the corridor was bought by DCR in 1980 and after years of planning and development, it opened in 1993. Management and maintenance is handled by DCR.

Belchertown voted down the trail in 1997. A few years later, a local land trust was formed and then slowly, over time, most of the 9.5 miles was purchased and reassembled into a future trail. More recently, the land trust's holdings have now been donated to the town. The project is managed by the town's Cons-Com. A local Friends group is now active there too.

The Bondsville village of Palmer undeveloped section about 3 miles long. Efforts are beginning that will make it available to be built out as a trail.

East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) develops parts of the corridor in Ware, Hardwick and New Braintree. They have opened about 9 miles of this section.

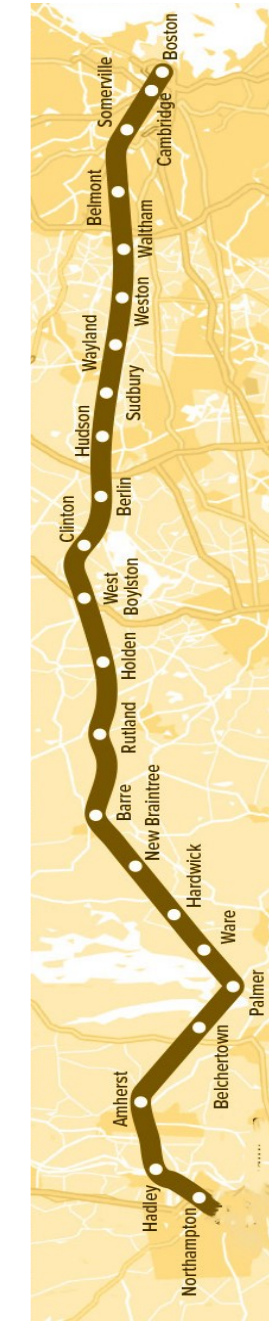
Barre, Rutland, Holden, and West Boylston and Sterling are communities of Wachusett Greenways (WG). A lot of this 30-mile section is owned by DCR's watershed protection agency. 17 miles of the WG segment are now open. Funding over the years has mostly been via Rec. Trail grants from DCR along with a large and energized volunteer component.

The town of Clinton and the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust recently purchased the old RR including a 1,000 foot tunnel. Together they are working on a plan to renovate the tunnel and make it a part of the trail.

The Wayside segment of the MCRT is comprised of Berlin, Hudson, Sudbury, Wayland, Weston, and Waltham. This will be a DCR-managed and maintained project. Only 2-3 years from completion

Belmont and Somerville are moving forward as individual projects at the community level.

Cambridge and Boston are mostly open now, as municipal projects.



**How the idea of a 100+ mile MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL has progressed over the years**



BY THE NUMBERS				
<b>MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL DATA</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>53±</b>	<b>90.5±</b>	<b>13.5±</b>
	Number of miles from Boston to Northampton	Number of miles open today	Number of miles owned by a protecting entity	Number of miles owned by a non-protecting entity

**How the idea of the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL becoming a 100 mile trail has progressed over the past 40+ years.**

## A TIMELINE OF THE JOURNEY THUS FAR TO PIECE TOGETHER THE CORRIDOR

**1980:** The Mass. State Parks agency-DEM-purchases the western most 8.5 miles of the corridor and begins a 13 year process to plan and develop the corridor.

**1988:** The Fisk family completes a walk from Northampton Union Station to North Station Boston and they write a never-published manuscript. A copy of this was given to a top DEM official, who kept a copy in his office and referred to it often.

**1993:** The Norwottuck Rail Trail opened. It was one of the last formal, paved, bikeways in the US to be built at the old design width of 8 feet. In 2015, the trail was widened to 10± feet.

**1995:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) was formed and they purposely decided to build out their sections as a soft surface—stone-dust trail, and not a paved trail. This was a momentous decision. Receiving small grants through the DCR grants process— that also encouraged a volunteer component—meant this would be built much faster. The other alternative, going through the transportation funding process looked much more complicated. They have completed 17 miles so far and have built or re-done 10 bridges. Their service area includes 30 miles of the corridor that is largely owned by DCR's watershed protection agency.

**1995:** Both the six-community Wayside Rail Trail project and the Belchertown Rail Trail began to be talked about.

**1997:** Both Weston and Belchertown voted down their rail trail projects, with a smorgasbord of reasons, but one main reason in Belchertown was state's requirement to pave. At that time, Mass was the only state in the US to require pavement. If you were using federal dollars you had to pave. Local equestrians almost everywhere opposed paving and in Belchertown, they led the effort to fight against the paved trail.

**1997:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) opened their first mile of the MCRT in West Boylston.

**1998:** Commonwealth Magazine did a story about the fight in both Belchertown and Weston. <https://tinyurl.com/CommonwealthMagStory>

**1999:** DCR released a report that called for more trail projects and encouraged piecing together the \*Mass Central Rail Trail\* corridor. <https://tinyurl.com/GreenwayVision>

**1999:** In 1999, WG hosted the first "Golden Spike I" event, in West Boylston, where Congressman Jim McGovern spoke enthusiastically to the vision for a statewide, E-W trail. <https://tinyurl.com/GoldenSpike1>

**1999:** The Federal Highway Administration encouraged all states to hold a Millennium Trail Contest. Norwottuck Network (NN) was named the winning entry for Massachusetts. <https://www.nnetwork.net/about-us>

**2000:** The Belchertown Land Trust—a linear-thinking land trust—was formed and they purchased their first section of the MCRT. A 2.5 mile section for \$100,000. They continued on for 15+ years. Quietly buying sections of the dead RR, where they could, when they could.

**2002:** A 2nd event, Golden Spike II was held in Waltham at Bentley University, and over 400 advocates, gubernatorial candidates, and policy makers turned out.

**2004:** An anti-trail group (Protect Sudbury) was founded to fight against both the N-S and the E-W trails. (N-S trail is the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. E-W trail is the MCRT. Both trails intersect in Sudbury.)

**2006:** Shortly after the discovery of a theft of a short section of the former railroad corridor in Berlin, the MBTA offered up a lease to DCR—to lease the 24 mile Wayside section of the MCRT

**2007:** 3.2 miles of the corridor in Hardwick was purchased by the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) to develop that section of the trail. This includes 3 rare bridges. One was the last of its type still standing in southern New England.

**2011:** After several years of negotiations, the MBTA and DCR entered into a lease agreement for the entire 24 mile Wayside section, including the eastern half of the corridor in Berlin. The west side in Berlin is still owned by the B&M RR.

**2017:** Norwottuck Network (NN) launched a free, monthly E-newsletter about news along the MCRT, that quickly ramped up to over 10,000 subscribers in 8 states. And a little more than a year in, Constant Contact names it in the top 10% of all their E-newsletters world-wide.

**2017:** In order to accelerate trail development, Massachusetts Governor Baker forms the Trails Team. It is made up of staffers in the 3 agencies that have a role in developing the network of rail trails in Mass. To ensure 'silos' get taken-down, they meet every two weeks in the Governor's suite of offices in the statehouse. They are succeeding. Things are accelerating.

**2017:** Wachusett Greenways opens the 17th mile of their segment of the MCRT. <https://tinyurl.com/WGMission>

**2017:** The Belchertown Land Trust donates to the town, 5 miles of the MCRT, increasing town owned sections to be nearly 7 of the 9.5 total miles. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org/by-the-numbers>

**2017:** Friends of the Belchertown Greenway was formed. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org>

**2018:** EQLT purchases a farm in Ware that includes another mile of the MCRT corridor in Ware and begins to develop it.

**2018:** The 7th Golden Spike event was held in Northampton. <https://www.gs2018.org/>

**2019:** NN was re-launched with a broader mission and a more geographically encompassing board.

**2019:** Weston and Wayland segments of the Wayside section of the MCRT open. Eversource's grid enhancement project makes it easier and less expensive for DCR to build the trail.

**2020:** Protect Sudbury fights the Eversource plan in Sudbury to build a more resilient and robust grid by

putting it underground, under the future trail.

**2020:** The Town of Clinton along with the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust purchase the 1,000 foot tunnel and a remaining mile or so of dead corridor still owned by the B&M RR. <https://tinyurl.com/TunnelClinton>

**2020:** MassDOT commissions a feasibility study of the MCRT and hires VHB, a nationally recognized consulting firm, to identify the missing pieces and come up with a plan to develop work-arounds until the expensive missing pieces can be filled in.

**2021:** The VHB study is finalized and released. <https://tinyurl.com/MCRT-Study>

**2021:** Protect Sudbury loses at the SJC in their case against the Eversource project. <https://tinyurl.com/SJC-ruling>

**2022:** Protect Sudbury loses twice at the Surface Transportation Board in Washington DC. <https://tinyurl.com/STB-ruling>

**2022:** Protect Sudbury files a lawsuit at the Mass Land Court claiming that the MBTA doesn't the corridor. Case should be heard in 2023

**2022:** EQLT enters into a lease agreement with National Grid and builds out another 2.3 miles of the corridor in Gilbertville. Late 2022 another 5/8th of a mile is under construction.

**2022:** Golden Spike 2022, the 8th GS conference. This one held in Gilbertville on July, 30 with nationally known speakers. <https://www.gs2022.org/>

**2022:** NN hires Kittelson & Associates to produce a report that will answer the big question; *What would a completed trail be worth to the Commonwealth and the communities along the way. It will be released in early 2023.* <https://tinyurl.com/MCRT-RFP>