

11/13/06  
November 13, 2006

### Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)

## PROJECT APPLICATION FORM



**Applicant:** Town of Acton **Submission Date:** November 13, 2006

**Applicant's Address, Phone Number and Email** **Purpose: (Please select all that apply)**

Don P. Johnson, Town Manager  
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978-264-9612  
manager@acton-ma.gov

- Open Space
- Community Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

**Town Committee (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Name:** Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) – Design Funding(2<sup>nd</sup> installment)

**Project Location/Address:** East Acton - Concord line (Acton Indoor Sports) to North Acton - Carlisle line

**Amount Requested:** min. \$ 125,000.00 up to \$202,000

**Project Summary:** (In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project).

This application requests funding of a second installment for engineering design services for the BFRT. Previously, the total cost of the Acton trail segment was estimated at \$4.4 million. Acquisition, except legal costs, is assumed at \$0. Most of the project funding will be obtained through the Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant Program (or similar). Currently, federal funding for design and construction makes up 75% to 80%. Acton would be responsible for initial engineering costing about 15% of the total, previously estimated anywhere between \$180,000 and \$660,000. The State would pay up to 10% of the project cost.

The Town has selected the firm Greenman-Pederson, Inc. for a lump sum price of \$245,000, subject to signing of a contract, to prepare the MassHighway 25% design work of the basic trail between Acton Indoor Sports in East Acton to the Carlisle town line in North Acton. It does not including designs for parking lots, trail spurs, or work for additional funding applications for the 100% design.

The Town has so far appropriated \$250,000 of CPA funds for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail - see narrative.

**Estimated Date for Commencement of Project:** We expect work on the design to begin this fall or in early winter.

**Estimated Date for Completion of Project:** The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has now scheduled federal construction funding for FFY 2010. Construction will take approximately two years.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)****Narrative:****1. Project Summary and Scope**

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) will be a multi-use path on the former Penn Central Railroad right-of-way, now owned by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation (EOT). The BFRT is planned to extend 22 miles from Sudbury to Lowell. In Acton, the trail will run for +/-4.6 miles from the Concord line in East Acton to the Carlisle line in North Acton (Figure 1). North of Acton (Westford to Lowell), the trail is in design or under construction. East and south of Acton (Concord to South Sudbury), it is in various planning stages with a possible extension into Framingham.

The total cost of the Acton trail segment is presently estimated at \$4.4 million. This is still a very preliminary number, but the cost is not likely to go down. Acquisition, except legal costs, is assumed at \$0. Most of the project funding will be obtained through the Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant Program (or similar). Currently, federal funding for design and construction makes up 75% to 80% of total project cost. Acton would be responsible for initial design previously estimated between \$180,000 and \$660,000 (or up to about 15% of the total). The State would pay up to 10% of the project cost.

**2. Funding History and Work Status**

The 2000 Annual Town Meeting appropriated from general funds \$25,000 for a feasibility study. These funds have been expended, and the study has been completed.

The 2005 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$75,000 of CPA start-up funding for:

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. EOT right-of-way acquisition:                 | +/- \$20,000.00 |
| 2. Rex Lumber negotiations, surveys, appraisals: | +/- \$30,000.00 |
| 3. Road crossings – feasibility study:           | +/- \$15,000.00 |
| 4. Begin right-of-way survey:                    | +/- \$10,000.00 |

The 2006 Annual Town Meeting appropriated an additional \$175,000 of CPA funds as a first installment for design of the rail trail.

Total CPA funding support: \$250,000.

No actual work has begun to date except that the Town has spent considerable time and effort on resolving rail trail acquisition issues, including drafting, redrafting, negotiating with, and advising stakeholders on the proposed Rail Trail Environmental Liability Insurance legislation. These efforts were made to advance both the Assabet River and Bruce Freeman Rail Trails. In addition the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail have organized several trail clean-up and trail clearing events.

**3. The 25% MassHighway Design**

In October 2006, the Town has selected the firm Greenman-Pederson, Inc. (GPI) for a price of \$245,000, subject to signing of a contract, to prepare the MassHighway 25% design work of the basic trail between Acton Indoor Sports in East Acton to the Carlisle town line in North Acton. In brief, this work will start the rail trail design and advance it to the 25% design stage, which is a defined MassHighway term, and include:

- Full survey.
- Definition of environmental issues and concerns.
- Preliminary plans and profiles.
- Cross sections.
- Early alternatives analyses at 2A and 27 road crossings and at Rex Lumber.
- Select preferred alternative in each location for advancing design.
- Complete and obtain approval for MassHighway 25% design stage of entire trail segment.

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railroad for a time. Without the BFRT, the EOT could sell the right-of-way to abutting landowners. In some cases this would simply increase their yards; in other cases the additional land could create new building lots.

In East Acton where the railroad right-of-way intersects Concord Road is the Village Green with the former site of the East Acton depot. The plan is to recreate the green on this site to provide rail trail users and others a place to rest with views of Ice House Pond. Educational materials on East Acton's history and local natural resources will also be displayed in a kiosk at the green. The green will complement the rail trail and provide an additional 1.3 acres of open space.

Open Space and other environmental resources within and alongside the BFRT corridor are discussed in greater detail on pages 12 and 13 of the feasibility study (attached).

**b. Recreation**

The BFRT is a regional bike trail project as called for under Recreation Goals of Acton's FY 05 Community Preservation Plan. The BFRT will offer opportunities for recreational biking, walking, rollerblading, possibly horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing in winter, and bird watching and nature study on Nashoba Brook, Ice House Pond, Butter Brook, and along the swamps that the trail transects. Along its 22 miles through seven communities, the BFRT links many neighborhoods, recreation facilities, parks, conservation lands, historic villages and downtowns, schools, employment locations, commuter rail service to Boston (in Lowell and Concord), and the Central Mass Rail Trail. In Acton alone, the BFRT connects multiple recreation areas and corridors. The BFRT runs through the proposed site of the EAV Green, just a short distance from the Morrison Property on Concord Road. It passes by the Veterans Memorial Field at Main Street and Great Road, then along the Nashoba Brook Conservation area in North Acton (which also abuts the Spring Hill Conservation area). Finally, it crosses Main Street at Ledge Rock Way, which is the access to the North Acton Recreation Area (NARA). In addition, it forms an element of the Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway<sup>1</sup> near Main Street and Carlisle Road. Since major funding will be coming from federal grant programs, the BFRT must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Therefore, the BFRT will be handicapped accessible.

**c. Historic Preservation**

The BFRT will preserve the old railroad corridor, which is part of North and East Acton's agricultural, commercial, and industrial heritage. The right-of-way includes historic remnants such as old railroad devices, sections of the East Acton depot foundation, telegraph poles, and mill stones that could be restored as historic and educational landmarks along the trail. Additionally, the historic Isaac Davis Trail crosses the right-of-way near Brook Street and the BFRT is just a short walk from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Pencil Factory site in the Nashoba Brook Conservation area. Rail trails in general help stimulate and revitalize local economies through the recreation and commuter traffic that they bring to an area. Business and property owners in North and East Acton Villages will benefit from the existence of the BFRT, and with that they will be better able to maintain and restore their historic properties near the trail.

**6. Consistency with Town Planning Documents**

The BFRT is consistent with all relevant Town of Acton planning documents:

**a. 1998 Master Plan Update**

The BFRT implements the following broad Master Plan goals and objectives:

- strengthen Acton's traditional pattern of village centers
- preserve natural and human-made features that contribute to Acton's character
- promote pedestrian circulation

<sup>1</sup> The Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway is one of the State's recreation priorities. It provides an "outer emerald necklace" around Boston by connecting publicly accessible open spaces from Duxbury to Ipswich. The Acton segment is completed from the Stoneymeade Conservation land to the Robbins Mill Estates land. The Robbins Mill Estates segment is planned for construction within the next few years. The BFRT will complete the Bay Circuit Trail in Acton.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)**

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**9. Serving Multiple Needs and Populations / CPA Focus Areas**

The BFRT will be used by recreation seekers and commuters between Framingham and Lowell and eventually commuters using rail service to Boston. In addition to bicycling, the BFRT is available for walking, rollerblading, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter, observing wildlife, and enjoying nature. Motorized vehicles will not be allowed except for emergencies and maintenance. The BFRT will be accessible to persons with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The BFRT addresses three CPA focus areas:

- Open Space
- Recreation
- Historic Preservation

(see section 2 of this Narrative)

**10. Other Funds**

To date, the Acton portion of the BFRT has received roughly \$275,000 in total town appropriations (see section 9 below). In the future, it is hoped that the Town will be able to contribute its 15% share (up to +/- \$660,000) for design to leverage the Federal and State construction funds for a total estimated project cost of \$4.4 million in Acton. Any funding Acton contributes to the project puts Acton in an advantaged position to apply for federal grants in a highly competitive funding program.

**11. Relationship to Other Town-Owned Assets**

Ownership and development of the BFRT along Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond enhances the Nashoba Brook Greenbelt. The Town of Acton already owns the East Acton Village Green site, the land along Ice House Pond, and several large tracts of conservation land along the right-of-way.

**12. Consistency with Recent Town Meeting Action**

In 2000, Town Meeting authorized the Town to raise and appropriate \$25,000 to be expended by the Town Manager for the purpose of a feasibility study for the creation of a rail trail in North and East Acton. In 2003, Town Meeting voted that the Town accept a parking easement gift from Acton Garage Storage, Inc. for parking purposes at 1009-1015 Main Street to serve the BFRT. The 2005 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$75,000 in start-up funding. The 2006 Annual Town Meeting appropriated \$175,000 as a first installment towards engineering services.

**13. Competency**

The Town of Acton has a proven ability to implement the proposed project.

**14. Site Control**

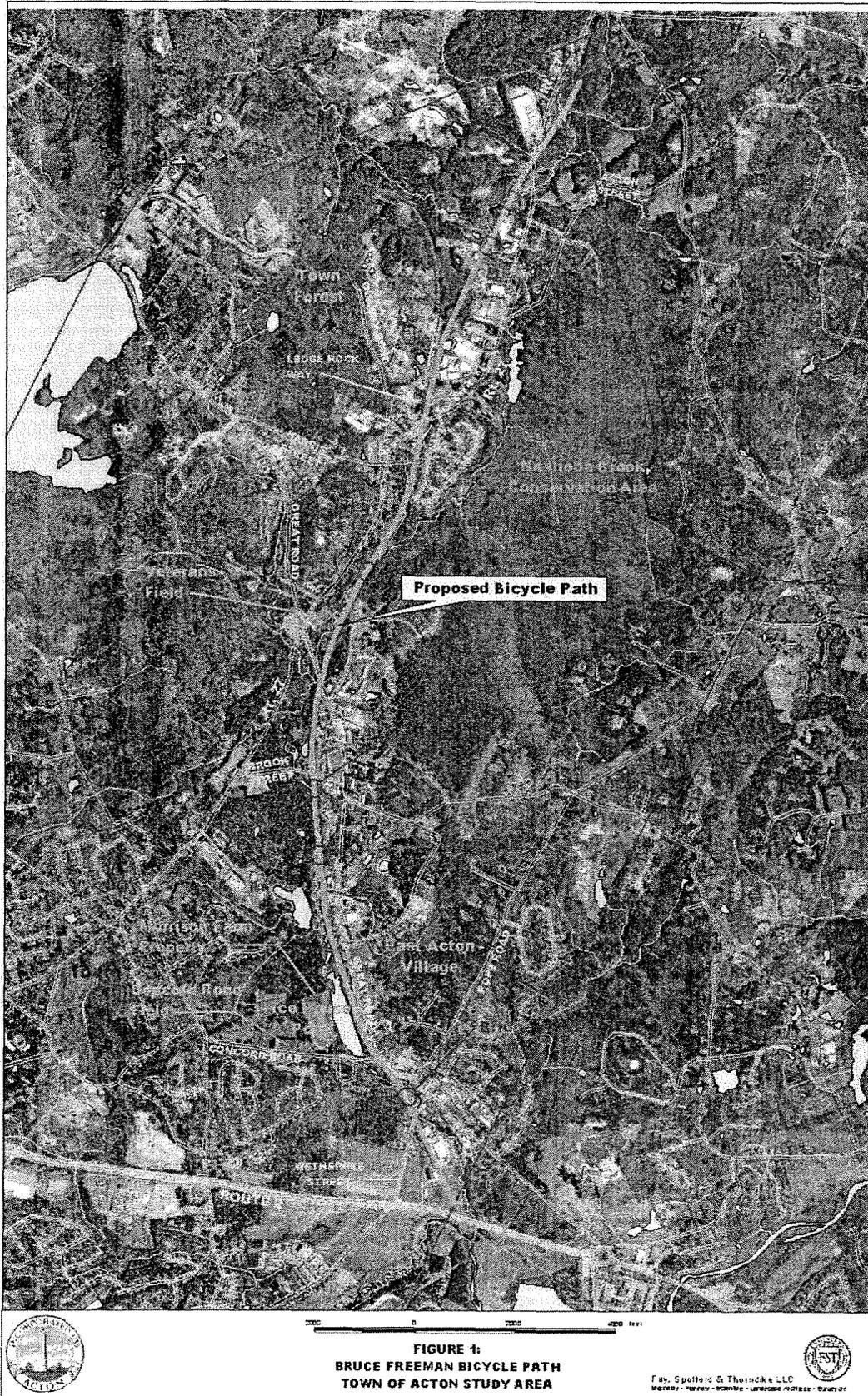
EOT owns the right of way. EOT has expressed support for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail project. The Town and Rex Lumber have some understanding on the process by which trail rout options in the Rex Lumber site vicinity will be pursued. The requested funds will continue to provide funding for efforts to establish firm site control of the right of way.

**15. Cost Estimates**

This request is for an installment payment or set-aside to build a fund that will eventually cover the Town's cost for engineering design services. Originally the estimated was for +/- \$660,000. Now it appears that perhaps a bit less will get the job done. Detailed cost estimates presented herein are highly volatile.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)**

Figure 1: Map - Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton



**FIGURE 1:  
BRUCE FREEMAN BICYCLE PATH  
TOWN OF ACTON STUDY AREA**

Fox, Spotted & Thornick & LLC  
Surveyors - Planners - Scientists - Landscape Architects - Engineers