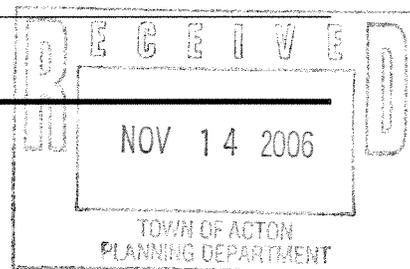


Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)

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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- Open Space
- Community Housing
- Historic Preservation
- Recreation

Town Committee (if applicable): _____

Project Name: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) – Design Funding(2nd installment)

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

Amount Requested: \$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 include 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 to date: \$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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It does not including designs for auxiliaries such as parking lots or trail spurs and it does not include work in support of additional funding applications for the 100% design cost. All these items will need additional funding.

Work on the 25% design is expected to begin in late fall 2006 or winter 2007. This will commit all CPA appropriations to date except for \$5,000.

4. Funding Request \$202,000

The 25% engineering design work as scoped out with GPI includes two of the possible work items listed in the 2005 CPA appropriation: survey, including Rex Lumber survey; road crossings feasibility study.

The requested funding amount represents the total additional pre-construction costs currently anticipated. All are highly volatile estimates.

	<u>Addl. Anticipated Pre- Construction Cost</u>
a) Items from the 2005 appropriation not in the GPI scope of work:	
· EOT right-of-way acquisition (legal expenses)	\$ 25,000
· Rex Lumber negotiations (legal and appraisal)	\$ 20,000
b) Environmental liability (BRAC) insurance (local match; not needed until construction)	\$ 24,000
c) Trail spurs design (Morrison, NARA/Town Forest/Nagog, other)	\$ 27,000
d) Parking lots design, including connectors where needed	\$ 23,000
e) Application for Federal funding for 100% design (Enhancement Grant application or similar)	\$ 22,000
f) Enhancement Funding for 100% design - 10% local match	\$ 25,000
g) Contingency (10% of total anticipated pre-construction cost to date, including 25% design work; minus \$5,000 available contingency)	\$ 36,000
Total	\$ 202,000

5. Consistency with the Acton Community Preservation Plan Goals

The BFRT project meets several of Acton's Community Preservation Goals:

a. Open Space

The BFRT will preserve and make accessible for use a 4.6 mile open space corridor that ranges in width between 33 feet and 99 feet. The corridor starts at the Concord town line in East Acton near Route 2 and follows an abandoned railroad right-of-way in a northerly direction to the Carlisle town line near the Route 27/Route 225 intersection. The corridor runs more or less parallel to Great Road in East Acton and Main Street in North Acton and follows Nashoba Brook from most of its length. It was formerly a part of the Framingham and Lowell railroad but eventually became the Lowell Secondary Track of the Penn Central Transportation Company and is now owned by EOT. Between West Concord and Route 27, the right-of-way was also shared by the Nashua, Acton & Boston railroad for a time. Without the BFRT, the EOT could sell the right-of-way to abutting landowners. In

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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 Greenway¹ 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 19th 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
- create green belts

¹ 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.

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- provide recreational opportunities for families with young children
- provide facilities that will encourage walking and bicycling
- regional (...) cooperation in transportation planning
- reduce dependency on the automobile
- improve connectivity and circulation

For the most part, the above are carried over from the 1990 Master Plan and thus are long-standing Acton planning goals. The Master Plan Update specifically discusses the status of the BFRT in 1998 and includes in its action recommendations to "lobby for an extension of the Lowell-Sudbury Rail Trail through Acton" (p. 173).

b. 2002-2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Open Space and Recreation Plan dedicates an entire section of its Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest to two planned rail trails in Acton, one of them being the BFRT (referred to as the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Bicycle Path, BFBP, p. 100).

The authors of the Open Space and Recreation plan conducted a survey of Acton residents. The plan reports that the answers to the question: "What are the top-five recreational facilities most needed in Acton", returned bike trails as the overwhelming top preference (p. 111). Accordingly, the development of the rail trails is a principal goal of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. "Promote the development of the two regional bike trails planned to run through Acton" is one of its five recreation goals (p. 122). The rail trails also were mentioned in the 1996-2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

c. 2004 East Acton Village Plan

Among the East Acton Village Plan goals are to preserve historic, cultural and recreational resources; improve bicycle access and safety; enhance outdoor recreation opportunities; protect, enhance, and manage open spaces that have value as aesthetic, agricultural, recreational, wetland, flood control and/or wildlife resources; and protect and promote air quality. A high priority strategy, which is reiterated numerous times throughout the document under each of these goals, is to "construct the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)." Pages 169-171 are devoted solely to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

7. Feasibility

The Fay, Spofford & Thorndike study found the BFRT project physically feasible. Various approvals for constructing the trail near wetlands and waterways, at and over State-owned roads, and across the Isaac Davis Trail will be required. Fay, Spofford & Thorndike state in the study that based on their "site walk and experience on previous projects, it is unlikely that the existing conditions in the study area would prevent construction of the bicycle path" (Executive Summary, page i., attached) funding for the project to date and demonstrated progress on acquisition, design, and construction in other towns has proven its feasibility, including financial feasibility. The entire BFRT has been listed as one of eight regional proposed trails in the Boston MPO Regional Transportation Plan 2000-2025, the guidance document for future transportation program and project investments in the Boston region. The MPO has re-programmed the federal construction for in 2010.

8. Population Served

At present, there are no off-road or on-road bicycle ways in Acton. Narrow streets and high traffic volumes make bicycling for commuting and recreation a dangerous proposition. A survey in the 2002-2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan reports that respondents considered bicycle ways by far the most needed recreational facilities in Acton. A survey conducted as part of the East Acton Village planning process in 2001 found that most respondents would use the BFRT occasionally to very frequently (East Acton Village Plan, Appendix H). The great success of the BFTR clean-up day in the fall of 2005 demonstrated the widespread support for this project in the community.

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)

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 route 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.

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Attachments *(same as in prior years' applications – available upon request; Figure 1 map provided)*

Supporting Documents:

- 1. Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Feasibility Study**
Summary and physical description
- 2. Deed to the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) for the Right-of-Way**

Letters of Support:

- 1. Executive Office of Transportation (EOT)**
- 2. Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**
- 3. Acton Stream Teams**

Maps and Plans:

- 1. Bruce Freeman Bicycle Trail Study Area Map (Figure 1)**
- 2. USGS Map**
- 3. Assessors Maps**
Attached are copies of the assessors maps. The right-of-way is shown as Penn Central Co.
- 4. Wetlands and Flood Plain Maps**
Attached are copies of the wetlands and floodplain maps for assessors map sheets. The right-of-way is shown as Penn Central Co. Wetlands are shown in horizontal crosshatch; flood plains are depicted in gray tone or between arrowed lines.
- 5. Zoning Map**
Attached is a map showing the zoning in the area surrounding the BFRT route. The zoning map legend is on a separate sheet.
- 6. Record Plans**
Attached is a copy of the EST's right-of-way plan.

Photographs

- 1. Fall 2005 Clean-up Day**
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Figure 1: Map - Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton

