

# \$100 oil and \$4 gasoline - A continual trend

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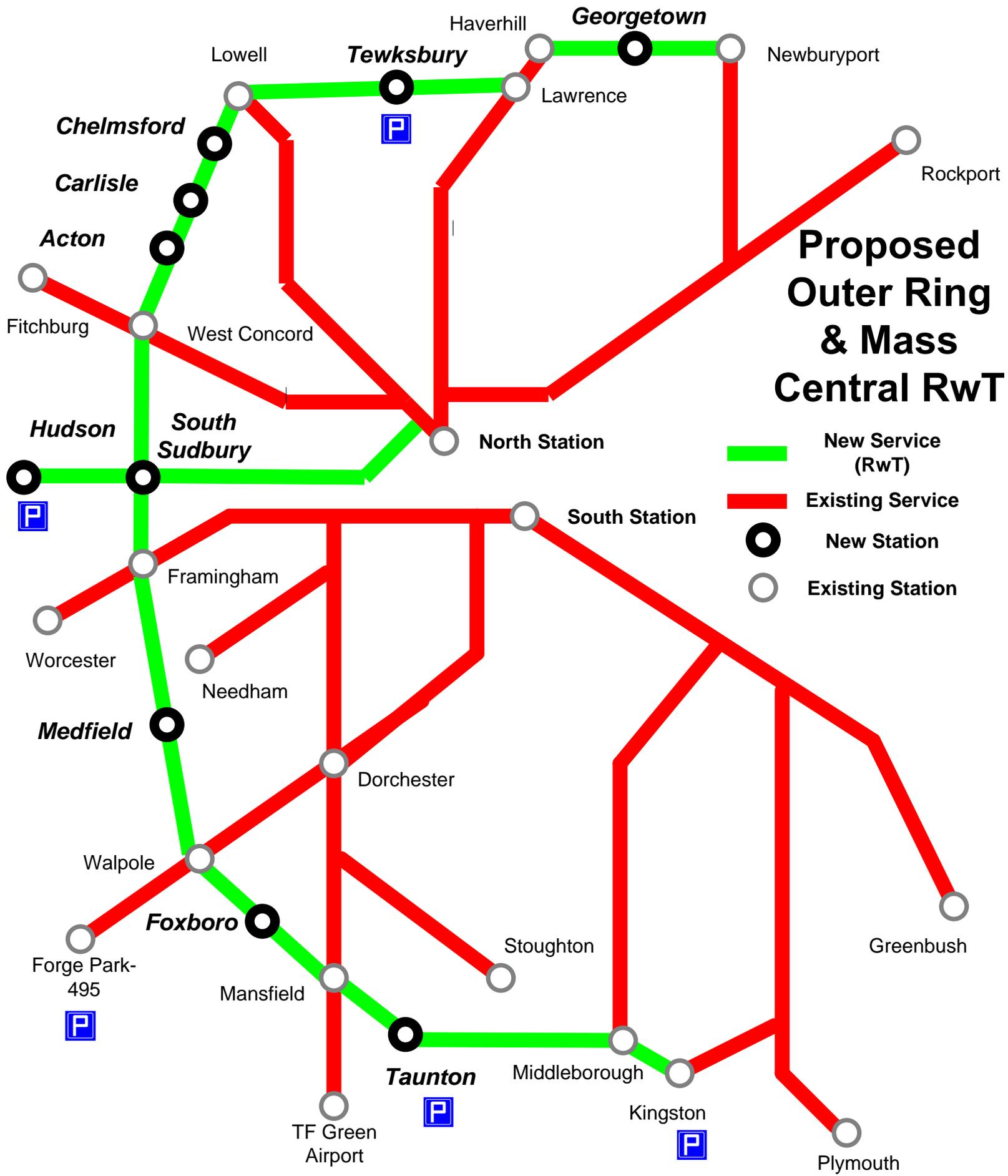
As [crude oil prices hover around \\$90 a barrel](#) and gasoline at an average of \$3.00 per gallon according to AAA, it appears that many analysts are [predicting even higher prices for 2011](#).

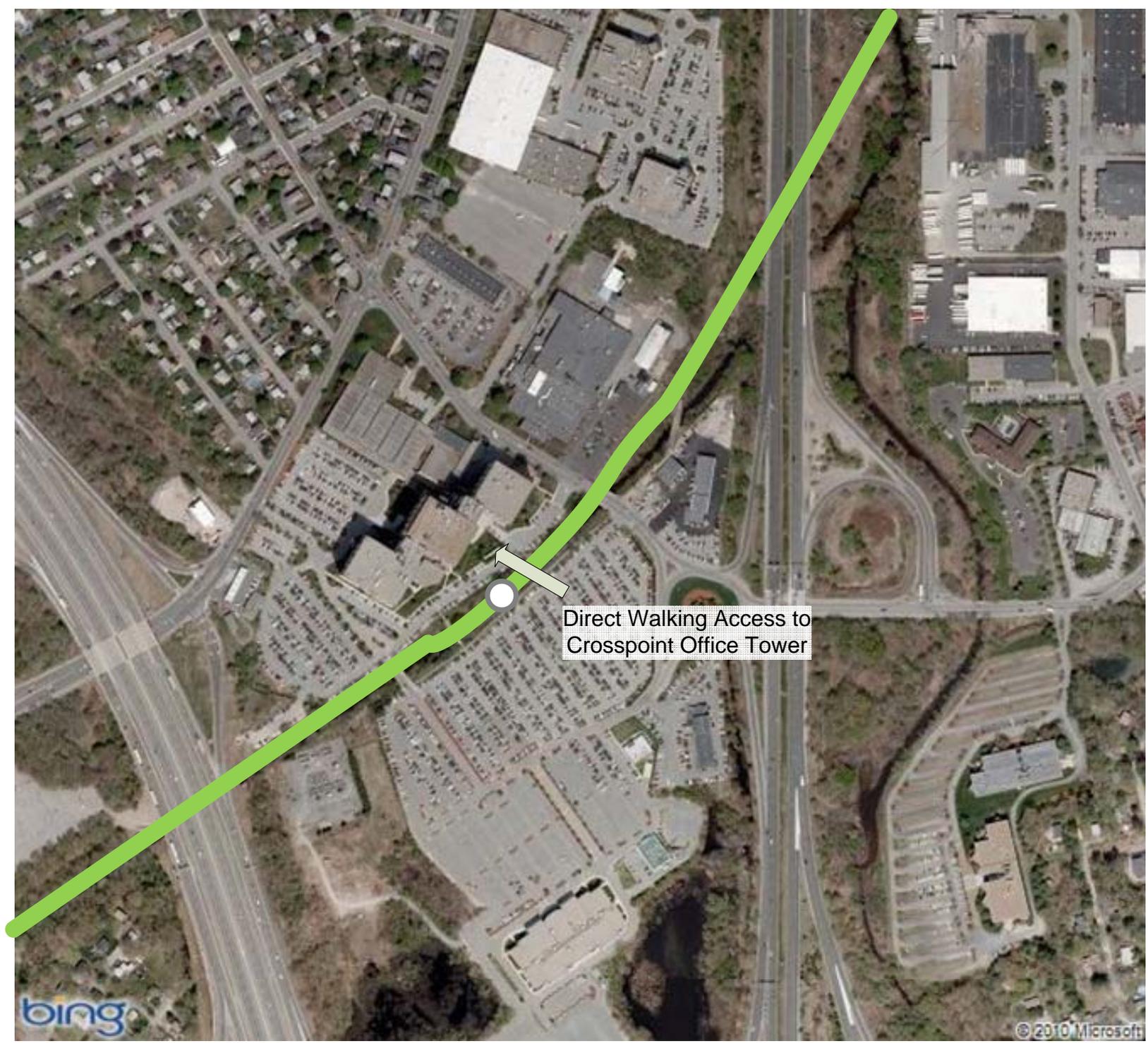
Due to growing global demand, analysts from companies such as Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs Group Inc., JPMorgan, and Merrill Lynch all see oil prices climbing to \$100 in 2011. As well, other analysts are predicting even higher prices. Economist Dian L. Chu is predicting crude could hit \$110 to \$115 a barrel in March of 2011.

In a recent blog post Chu wrote, “At that level, gasoline at the pump could hit \$3.70-\$3.80 a gallon range.”

On a recent CBS talk show, Former Shell Oil president John Hofmesiter predicts that world oil supplies will tighten and gasoline prices will hit \$5.00 in 2012. In his opinion, these price increases are caused by competition and growth of the emerging economies of China and India. “We’re right back to where we were in 2007 and 2008, in terms of U.S. demand. What’s different this time, however, is that Asia’s demand is much, much higher than two years ago,” said Hofmesiter.

# Proposed Outer Ring & Mass Central RWT

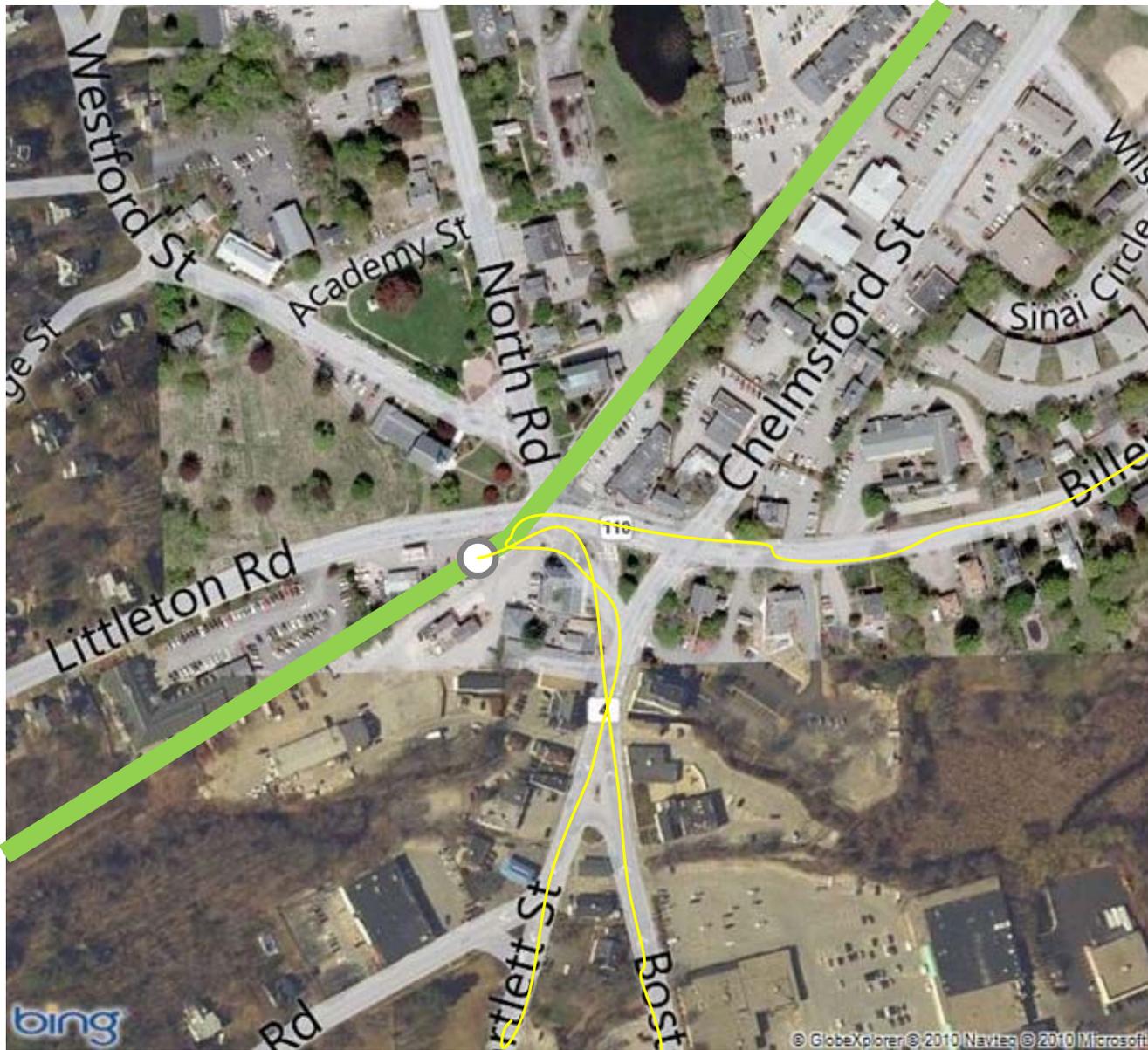




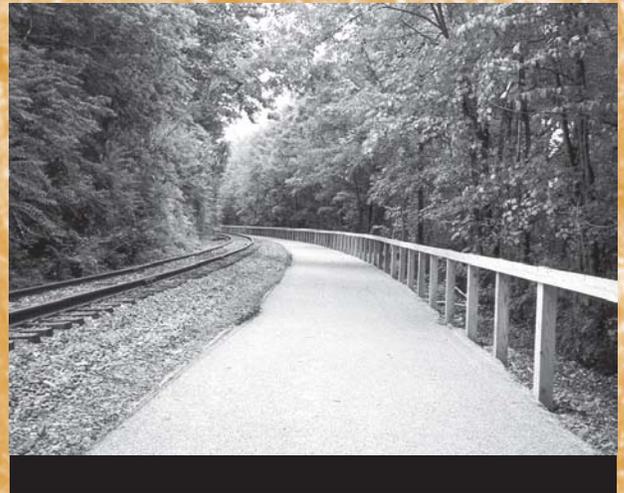
Direct Walking Access to  
Crosspoint Office Tower



Rail with Trail  
Local Business Van / Bus



# **RAILS -WITH- TRAILS**



**Design, Management, and  
Operating Characteristics  
of 61 Trails Along Active  
Rail Lines**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Every day thousands of Americans safely use and enjoy trails located along active rail lines. The number of “rails-with-trails” is steadily increasing as communities throughout the United States work with local railroads to take advantage of the opportunities that rail corridors provide for creating valuable trails.

**GROWTH:** The growth and popularity of rails-with-trails appears to parallel the growth of traditional rail-trails. This report analyzes 61 existing rails-with-trails. This is up from the 37 rails-with-trails that were identified in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s first rails-with-trails report in March 1996. At least another 20 rails-with-trails are being planned.

**DUAL BENEFIT:** Constructing a trail along an active railroad doubles the value a community derives from the rail corridor and provides citizens with an extra transportation choice. In many places it is difficult to find land on which trails can be built so using an existing rail corridor can be a good option. In some cases, trails support railways by providing enhanced access for transit riders to stations.

**SAFETY:** Despite fears that rails-with-trails expose users to greater danger by their proximity to active rail lines, rails-with-trails appear to be just as safe as other trails. Our survey of trails found only one incident between a trail user and a train. This is the same single incident identified in the March 1996 report that occurred on a trail otherwise operating safely for 34 years. In fact, using a rail-with-trail may well be significantly safer than walking or cycling next to a busy main road and it may serve to keep people from walking on active rail tracks.

When developing a rail-with-trail (RWT), including both parallel rail lines and rail crossings, trail developers must consider the safety of trail users with respect to active rail lines. Trail managers should bring key stakeholders, e.g., the railroad operator, railroad customers, government leaders, and trail users together early in the trail development process. Coordinating efforts guided by best practices as outlined by the Federal Highway Administration’s RWT study will ensure that safety elements are an integral part of the trails’ master plan.

**RANGE OF DESIGNS:** Rails-with-trails are operating successfully under a wide variety of conditions. Some are very close to rail tracks and others further away. Some use extensive separating fences or barriers. Some are next to high-speed, high-frequency train services. Others are on industrial branch lines or tourist railroads with slower trains operating only a few times per week. Some have at-grade crossings while others use underpasses or overpasses.

**RAILROADS:** While railroad companies are understandably cautious of such projects, this report found that 20 out of 61 trail managers described the attitude of the railroad involved with their trail as supportive, positive or good (and in one case, “great!”). Only five trail managers reported the railroad company initially opposed their trail. Rail-with-trail benefits for the railroads can include corridor beautification, potential reduction of trespassing on train tracks, reduced vandalism and increased transit ridership.

**LIABILITY:** The survey revealed the vast majority of rails-with-trails are insured by existing state, county or city insurance coverage in a similar manner to other trails. An increasing number of railroad companies are requiring trail managers to indemnify them against liability. The report found only three claims made against trail managing agencies. Two of these cases were settled (one for a human injury and one for a farm animal). According to the survey results, no claims were made against railroad companies.

# I. INTRODUCTION

Rail corridors can be attractive sites for trails because they often provide a direct connection between popular community locations, such as downtown districts and residential areas. At a time when demand for trails is increasing, finding land for them can be difficult. Placing trails alongside active rail corridors can be an excellent method of securing land for safe, popular and effective trail development.

## WHAT ARE RAILS-WITH-TRAILS?

There are more than 1,000 multi-use trails in the United States operating on rail corridors no longer used by trains. This concept is well-understood and has strong community support.

The idea of rails-with-trails is less well-known. It is the name given to multi-use trails along rail lines that are still active.

This report provides a wide variety of information about the growing phenomenon of rails-with-trails. It is hoped that the report can help to ensure that decisions about future and proposed rails-with-trails are based as much as possible on objective facts.

This report follows two previous reports on rails-with-trails by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The first was published in March, 1996 and the second in September, 1997.

The information in this report covers many aspects of rails-with-trails, including the extent and growth of rails-with-trails nationwide, safety performance, liability, trail design and location issues, attitudes of railway companies, obtaining easements for trails and funding.

The report is based on an extensive survey of managers of 61 rails-with-trails along with interviews and literature research. The authors had little direct contact with members of the railroad industry.

## WHO CAN USE THIS REPORT?

This report is designed to be of assistance primarily to trail planners, advocates and managers. By clearly laying out the national rails-with-trails experience, the report is designed to help answer questions such as:

- ▼ Are rails-with-trails safe?
- ▼ Will a rail-with-trail work in our community?
- ▼ How do we design our rail-with-trail to make it safe and effective?
- ▼ How can we work cooperatively with a railroad company?
- ▼ How do we handle liability issues?
- ▼ Who has experience with different aspects of rails-with-trails?

It is hoped that the report will also be useful to the railway industry, elected officials, federal, state and local transport officials, consultants, planning departments and anyone interested in the rails-with-trails concept.



*A daycare group uses the York County Heritage Trail to get some exercise and explore their community. Photo: Gwen Loose*

## II. REPORT FINDINGS

### GROWTH OF RAILS-WITH-TRAILS

The growth and popularity of rails-with-trails appears to parallel the growth of traditional rail-trails. This report analyses 61 existing rails-with-trails. This is up from the 37 rails-with-trails that were identified in the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's first rails-with-trails report in March 1996.

Today rails-with-trails represent about 6% of the total number of rail-trails in the United States. This number is likely to increase as more people learn about the potential of rails-with-trails.

Rails-with-trails exist in 20 states with Pennsylvania having nine, the most of any state.

Rails-with-trails appear to be as popular as any other type of multi-use trail. The 35 rails-with-trails that supplied usage figures recorded a total annual patronage of 8.2 million visits.

At least 20 more rails-with-trails are known to be in various stages of development, with many more likely to be at the pre-development stages.

### LENGTH OF RAIL-WITH-TRAILS

As the number of rails-with-trails has grown, so has the overall length of these trails. Today, rails-with-trails cover 523 miles, up from 299 miles in March, 1996, an increase of 75%.

Of course not all rails-with-trails run along active rail lines for their total length. Of the total inventory of 523 miles of rails-with-trails, 239 miles (46%) are adjacent to an active rail line.

### DUAL BENEFIT

Once constructed, rails-with-trails offer similar benefits to trail users and the general community as other types of trails. They are safe places for walking, jogging, cycling and other forms of recreation or human-powered travel and they provide recreation, commuter and utility links between and within communities.

Rails-with-trails also make efficient use of rail corridors by providing more transportation choices and recreation opportunities for the community. In many places it is difficult to find land on which trails can be built so utilizing an existing rail corridor can be the best option. Also, the continued

expansion of urban sprawl rarely leaves space for multi-use trails. Provided trails next to rails are developed in a safe and well-planned manner, they can be a highly efficient way to make the most of scarce space in a community.

For example, the five-mile Folsom Park Trail in Folsom, California is being developed with the specific goal of making the best use of the existing transport corridor. It will include not only the trail and the future commuter light rail, but a road as well. The trail is expected to boost rail ridership as train commuters use the trail to cycle or walk to the stations for their commute to Sacramento.

### LOGICAL LINKS

Rail corridors were developed to serve as or form links between many of the places that cyclists, walkers and other trail users want to go. These include links between downtowns and residential areas, often running along attractive waterfronts or serving historic tourist destinations.

Just like abandoned train lines, active lines have bridges and culverts designed to help trains avoid at-grade road crossings. Trails can sometimes take advantage of these, improving the safety of trail users by keeping them away from road crossings and making the trail route smoother and more direct and attractive to users. An example of this is a cantilevered bicycle and pedestrian bridge hung on the side of a railroad bridge in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

### LAND OWNERSHIP

The report shows that for 29 of the 61 trails (48%), the trail land is owned by the agency that manages the trail. Of the trail managing agencies, 20 obtained an easement from a railroad company.

#### RAILS-WITH-TRAILS IN THE UNITED STATES

Date	Total trail length (miles)	Percent parallel to rail line (miles)
March 1996	299	51%
September 1997	390	45%
June 2000	523	46%

## DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

The following indicators demonstrate the range of conditions under which rails-with-trails have been successful.

- ▼ **Longest trail:** 57 miles (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- ▼ **Shortest trail:** 0.4 miles (Libba Cotton Bikepath, North Carolina);
- ▼ **Longest length of rail next to trail:** 22 miles (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- ▼ **Shortest length of rail next to trail:** 0.2mi (Watts Towers Crescent Greenway, California);
- ▼ **Fastest trains:** 150 mph (Southwest Corridor Park Trail, Massachusetts);
- ▼ **Slowest trains:** 5 mph (West Orange Trail, Florida);
- ▼ **Oldest trail:** 1966 (Illinois Prairie Path, Illinois);
- ▼ **Most recent trail:** 2000 (several trails);
- ▼ **Widest corridor:** 1,500 feet average width (Rose Canyon Bike Path, California);
- ▼ **Most narrow corridor:** 18 feet (Seattle Waterfront Trail and Duwamish Trail, both in Washington);
- ▼ **Closest to tracks:** 2 feet (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- ▼ **Furthest from tracks:** 100 feet (several trails);
- ▼ **Most trains:** 9 per hour (Illinois Prairie Path, Illinois);
- ▼ **Fewest trains:** 1 per week (several trails);
- ▼ **Most trail/rail crossings:** 17 (Southwest Corridor Park, Massachusetts);
- ▼ **Least trail/rail crossings:** 0 (several trails);
- ▼ **Most at-grade crossings:** 13 (Heritage Rail Trail County Park, Pennsylvania);
- ▼ **Least at-grade crossings:** 0 (several trails);
- ▼ **Most expensive corridor acquisition:** \$7 million (Fillmore Trail, California);
- ▼ **Least expensive corridor acquisition:** \$0 (several trails).

## VARIETY OF RAILS-WITH-TRAILS

Successful rails-with-trails operate under a variety of conditions. Some are very close to rail tracks and others further away. Some use extensive separating fences or barriers. Some are next to high-speed, high-frequency train services while others are on industrial branch lines or tourist railroads with slower trains operating only a few times per week. Some have at-grade crossings while others use underpasses.

The trails can be successful under a variety of conditions as long as the trail is designed to the satisfaction of the railroad, the trail manager and existing design standards. See the Case studies for specific examples.

## SAFETY AND DESIGN

Safety is perhaps the most important aspect of developing any rail-trail, whether along an operating railroad or not. The good news is that rails-with-trails appear to be just as safe as other trails. Every day thousands of people across the United States safely use existing rails-with-trails.

Fears that more trail users would be severely injured due to the proximity of moving trains have not been realized. A 1999 draft report by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) technical committee on rails-with-trails noted that existing rails-with-trails appeared to be operating without major problems. This finding corroborates that of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's first rails-with-trails report in March, 1996.

## TRAIN-TRAIL USER CONFLICTS

A bicyclist on the Illinois Prairie Path ignored an at-grade road crossing warning bells and flashing lights and rode around a lowered crossing gate. The bicyclist was struck by an on-coming train and sustained injuries. (Technically, this incident did not occur on the trail corridor but at an adjacent, pre-existing road/rail crossing.) This is the only incident in this trail's 34-year history and is the same single incident recorded in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's 1996 report.

One other incident that occurred adjacent to a trail, but not involving a trail user, occurred adjacent to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Anchorage, Alaska when a young person was injured after crossing the trail from a residential area to "hop" a slow-moving Alaska Railroad train. See Case Studies for more details.

## RELATIVE SAFETY OF ROAD AND RAIL

Opponents of rails-with-trails have said that introducing people to active railroad corridors will reduce the safety of the corridor. However, questions on the safety of active railroad corridors are only relevant in comparison with existing bicycle and pedestrian safety on roadways and with current incident levels on rail lines without adjacent trails.

According to Michael G. Jones, chairman of the ITE technical committee, “more than 10,000 bicyclists are injured on California’s roads each year compared with 115 reported trespasser incidents on railroads in the same year.”

In the right circumstances, rails-with-trails can be safer than trails next to roads. The ITE draft report notes that a trail set 25 feet from a track carrying 10 to 20 trains per day provides “substantially less exposure to potential incidents for people than riding or walking within a few feet of a road carrying between 10,000 and 40,000 vehicles per day.”

There is no background data available on the total number of people legally and illegally crossing or walking on railroad tracks throughout the United States. This makes it impossible to accurately compare the relative safety for people on different types of active railroad rights-of-way versus heavily traveled roadways.

## SAFE DESIGNS

Trail managers can do a great deal to ensure that their trail is designed, operated and maintained to be as safe as possible. Each of the 61 trail managers surveyed for this study faced a variety of safety challenges that they have solved.

Key safety design factors include:

- ▼ Providing adequate distance between track and trail;
- ▼ Providing safe fencing, barriers or grade separation between track and trail where necessary;
- ▼ Designing safe rail crossings;
- ▼ Installing adequate trail-user warning signs.

This report found 43 of the 61 rails-with-trails surveyed had installed some kind of barrier between the rails and the trail. Barriers used include vegetation, grade separation, fences, ditches and cement walls. Crossings are at-grade, tunnels or overpasses.

Other trail safety findings include:

- ▼ The average separation between track and trail is 33 feet;
- ▼ There are at least 69 at-grade railway crossings operating on rails-with-trails throughout the United States with only one recorded incident. (See above.)

## INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

Trail insurance and liability are key issues to be resolved when developing a trail. Liability issues have become increasingly important to local agencies that develop and maintain rail trails. Of particular concern are the large dollar amounts sought from public agencies for medical costs and punitive damages should an incident occur.

Railroads, many of which are private companies, can be very concerned about any increased liability they may face due to the construction of a rail-with-trail.



*The Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has 250,000 visits per year. Photo: Richard Smithers.*