

A community newsletter from the Natick Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee about the proposed Cochituate Rail Trail. Visit our website at natickma.gov/crt

The Cochituate Rail Trail at a glance

The CRT is a proposed 4-mile path and linear park connecting Natick Center with Saxonville in Framingham, with a spur to the Natick Mall, along the abandoned, 170 year old Saxonville Branch line.

The Framingham section is open, and the Natick section is getting close to reality. The Town still must buy the land from CSX, but design and construction are largely funded.

The CRT will connect Natick, Framingham and beyond with a 4-mile trail for runners, walkers, bikers, commuters and strollers. The CRT will serve thousands of residents and hundreds of businesses, and will serve for commuting, shopping, recreation and healthy enjoyment of the outdoors.

The CRT will make many connections. These include Natick Center and our Cultural District; small and large businesses (such as TJX and The MathWorks), recreation sites (Lake Cochituate State Park, Navy Yard Field, Camp Arrowhead), MBTA and RTA transit service, retailers including Wegmans and the Natick Mall, established neighborhoods and new housing (Avalon, Nouvelle, Cloverleaf, Modera), the Hampton Inn, the Natick Soldier Systems Center, and the recently permitted recreation and housing developments on Flutie Pass at the Framingham/Natick line. ■■■

The CRT in Design

The Natick CRT design is moving forward. A “25% design” has been revised and resubmitted to MassDOT by the Town’s engineering firm, BETA. Most recently, the trail design is being reviewed where a new bridge for the CRT will cross over route 30, in order to accommodate improvements to that road in connection with expansions to the TJX campus in Framingham. MassDOT is likely to hold a public hearing on the design in late 2016/early 2017, which will be widely promoted.

The final design will be complete in late 2017/early 2018, and includes new bridges, scenic lookouts, safe grade crossings, and a 12-foot wide paved path. The 25% design is online at natickma.gov/crt. ■■■

Meet the Friends of Natick Trails

A new, non-profit Friends group supports the CRT and other trails. You may learn more and sign up at FriendsofNatickTrails.org and help make the CRT a reality!

The CRT design includes new bridges to safely cross two of the busiest roads in the region:



New Route 9 bridge with higher clearance



Route 30 bridge joining Framingham and Natick

In the years to come, the Town will redesign Navy Yard Field between Washington Avenue and the CRT. The Town acquired a nearby parking lot on Mechanic Street from CSX in 2007, and it’s likely that visitors to both the playing fields and CRT will use this parking.

In Natick Center, the CRT will temporarily end at Willow Street, off North Main. Once the MBTA station is redesigned (a project that gets underway soon), the Town may extend the CRT to the station. In the meantime, the CRT will connect to Natick Center via Willow and North Main Streets. ■■■

The biggest hurdle: buying the land

Land acquisition is the largest challenge with the CRT. CSX Transportation, Inc. owns the land we need; so far, the Town does not yet have outside funding for acquisition, although that may change. Subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting, Natick may purchase the CSX Saxonville Branch, now under agreement for \$6.3 million. In April 2016, Town Meeting approved \$2.5 million in mitigation (non-taxpayer) funding towards the purchase. Another vote is tentatively scheduled for November 1. Stay tuned! ■■■

To Framingham... and beyond

The 1.4-mile Framingham section of the CRT is open from Route 30 at the town line to School Street in Saxonville. Test out the CRT today! And in years to come, bike lanes will connect the CRT to the growing Framingham-to-Lowell Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, with many more connections. ■■■

Construction green light in 2018

In July 2015, and reconfirmed in 2016, the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization approved Natick CRT construction to start in Federal FY 2018, with 80% federal/20% state funds, at a budget of about \$9 million, including two new bridges. The job should take 2 construction seasons. ■■■

Natick Town Meeting support

Town Meeting and other committees, including the Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, Open Space Committee and Planning Board have consistently supported the CRT project.

Since 2006, Town Meeting has approved \$600,000 in mitigation (non-taxpayer) funds, along with \$200,000 in state funds from the Natick Modera housing development, which funding has been, or will be used for design and similar work, including:

- Environmental testing
- Several community meetings
- An abutter survey
- A conceptual design study
- An alternative transit/recreational use study
- Wetlands research
- Topographic survey
- Multiple appraisals and title research
- Gates and barriers
- 25% design
- Final design

See natickma.gov/crt for more info. ■■■

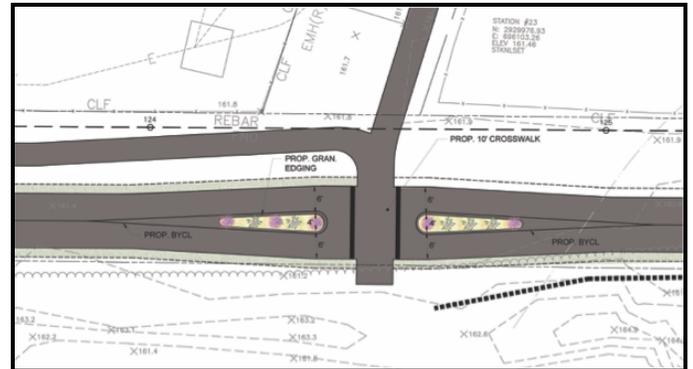
Environmental testing

Testing has identified an expected level of contamination associated with railroad use. The CRT will be built on “capped” land using an approved soil management plan to limit exposure. Test results are at natickma.gov/crt. ■■■

Like the CRT on Facebook

Visit [Facebook.com/crtrail](https://www.facebook.com/crtrail) to stay up to date. ■■■

Design snapshot: the CRT abuts a refurbished Navy Yard Field and Mechanic Street parking. ■■■



Trail crossing at Navy Yard Field

No trespassing, please

While the CSX right-of-way is under agreement with the town, we have limited access; no private use is currently allowed. The Town has installed barriers to prevent motorized vehicles and trash disposal. If you observe dumping or other illegal activity on the trail area, please report it to the Natick Police. ■■■

Non-motorized use

The Town has explored, but not approved, using the CRT for combined public transit and a rail trail. The CRT will be non-motorized only based on votes of the Selectmen and Town Meeting. ■■■

Contact the CRT Advisory Committee

The CRT Advisory Committee, appointed by the Natick Board of Selectmen, holds public meetings monthly or as work requires. Visit natickma.gov/crt for more information, email crt@natickma.org, or call the Selectmen’s office at (508) 647-6410.

Please contact the CRT committee or attend a meeting with any questions. Public participation is welcome! ■■■
