



MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL —BOSTON TO NORTHAMPTON—104 MILES

2024 Year in Review

As we reflect on a year of progress, collaboration, and momentum, we're thrilled to share highlights of what the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) community accomplished in 2024.

From significant construction milestones to exciting new initiatives, every achievement brings us closer to completing the trail from Boston to Northampton.

January

> We kicked off the year with the First Annual MCRT Workshop in Sturbridge, bringing together 50 dedicated advocates, planners, and supporters. Mark your calendars—the 2025 Workshop will be held on February 28, 2025!

February

> The MCRT garnered well-deserved attention with a feature in Worcester Magazine, highlighting its transformative potential across the state.

March

> MassDOT hosted a 25% Design Public Hearing for Phase 1 of the Belmont Community Path—a critical section connecting the Fitchburg Cutoff Path at the Cambridge city line to the Clark St Bridge.
> Thanks to support from the Solomon Foundation, work began to map the entire MCRT on Google Street View—making the trail more accessible and visible to all.

April

> Mass DCR awarded a \$2.3 million contract to construct a new segment of the trail, connecting the eastern edge of Weston to Jones Road in Waltham—another link in the MCRT's expanding chain.

Spring Highlights

> Cross-State Bike Tour Vision: Planning began for a first-of-its-kind bike tour across the MCRT, igniting excitement and hard work from a core group of organizers.
> Sudbury Progress: Key advancements were made on six bridges along the MCRT and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, while Eversource continued transmission line work along the former MBTA railroad corridor.

Summer Momentum

> Building Support: We launched an initiative calling on all 26 MCRT corridor communities to submit letters of support to state leaders. Northampton and Hardwick led the way with enthusiastic responses.
> RideN2B Announced: The inaugural RideN2B (Northampton to Boston) was unveiled alongside an updated [FinishTheRailTrail](#) website.
> MassTrails Grants: The Healey-Driscoll administration awarded \$12 million through the MassTrails Program, with \$1.74 million dedicated to the MCRT.

Notable projects included:

> East Quabbin Land Trust: Overhauling four key bridges in Hardwick and New Braintree.
> Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust: Building two new access points with accessible parking and signage.

September: RideN2B Takes Off

> The first-ever RideN2B saw 12 Ambassador Riders traverse the MCRT from Northampton to Boston over 3 inspiring days. Participants included leaders from MassDOT, DCR, MAPC, the Conine Family Foundation, the Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation, and the Helen & William Mazer Foundation. Along the route, six public events celebrated the trail, drawing passionate engagement from local communities.

Additional September highlights:

> Ware Corridor Expansion: East Quabbin Land Trust announced plans to purchase 39 acres of land, enabling a critical corridor from Greenville Park to the MCRT section off Upper Church Street.

October

The Norwottuck Network Board President and rail trail advocate Craig Della Penna took center stage:

> He was featured on [WCVB's Chronicle](#).

> Honored with the MassTrails Award for outstanding contributions at this year's conference which began with a virtual kickoff and video overview dedicated to the MCRT.

November

> A 3-mile segment of the MCRT opened in Waltham, celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by DCR Commissioner Brian Arrigo and Waltham Mayor Jeannette McCarthy.

> The Northampton Bikeway segment of the MCRT is closed temporarily for repaving—its first reconstruction in over 40 years.

> DCR committed to plowing the Norwottuck section of the MCRT, ensuring year-round accessibility.

> Final recordings of trail were completed for Google Street View, a vital way for visitors to experience the MCRT virtually.

December

> The year concluded with an ambitious step forward as Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll signed a new climate bill. The legislation includes a Clean Energy Siting Law, enlisting utilities as partners to advance the construction of shared-use paths like the MCRT. The Mass Central Rail Trail played a central role in the court case that went all the way to the SJC. The Commonwealth will now be able to develop a new 21st century, robust and resilient grid taking advantage of the hundreds of miles of unused former railroad corridor throughout the state.

< ALL of the open sections of the MCRT and the major connecting trails have been uploaded and are now visible on Google Street View.

Looking Ahead

2024 demonstrated what we can achieve when communities, leaders, and advocates come together with a shared vision. The Mass Central Rail Trail is now a vision coming to life. As we close out 2024, there are many reasons to be cheerful for the year ahead.

> We now have 6 of the 26 towns who have submitted resolutions to finish the rail trail.

> The Sudbury Diamond – connecting the MCRT and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail – is poised to open with an official ribbon cutting in the spring.

> We have entered into a fiscal agreement with the New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway Alliance, enabling them to fundraise for trail enhancements and other initiatives while allowing donors to benefit from tax-deductible contributions. This arrangement could also benefit other emerging trail groups along the corridor, providing them with similar opportunities.

Thank you for being part of this movement. Let's keep the momentum rolling into 2025 to [FinishtheRailTrail](#)

The Norwottuck Network Board of Directors and supporters.

