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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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LINDSAY N. SABADOSA
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
1st Hampshire District

Vice Chair
Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Joint Committee on Transportation
House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling

State House, Room 160
Northampton Office, 76 Gothic Street
(617) 722-2304 | 413-270-1166
Lindsay.Sabadosa@mahouse.gov

August 30, 2024

Norwottuck Network
Craig Della Penna
62 Chestnut St.
Florence, MA 01062

Dear Craig Della Penna,

I am writing to join the Northampton City Council in expressing full support for all efforts to complete the Mass Central Rail Trail. Since 1938, Massachusetts has had 100 miles of disused rail tracks connecting Boston and Northampton. They offer a right-of-way that presents an incredible opportunity that would have positive economic, social, and environmental benefits. Extensive work has already been performed by dedicated volunteers, municipalities, state agencies and local land trusts to complete 70 of the envisioned 100 miles. The completed rail trail would connect 26 municipalities with a shared-use path accessible to pedestrians, runners, cyclists, and individuals using assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, and strollers.

The economic impact of the completed trail would be substantial. The Mass Central Rail Trail Benefits Study, prepared by Mass Central Rail Trail Network, Norwottuck Network, and Cambridge Econometrics, estimates that annual visits on a completed trail would increase from around 1.3 million visits to between 4.1 and 5.5 million visits per year, including 105,000 to 375,000 overnight visits. These estimates were prepared using data from the comparable Erie Canalway Trail in New York and the Great Allegheny Passage in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Visitors to the existing MCRT spend about $19 million annually. When the trail is completed, the study estimates that spending will increase to $74 to $133 million annually. With increased spending will come as businesses use revenue to expand or hire more employees, who in turn spend the additional income in their

community. These benefits are also estimated to be evenly spread out between Western, Central, and Eastern Massachusetts, ensuring that people from all over the state stand to benefit from the trail.

Beyond the economic advantages, this trail will tangibly improve the lives of the residents of our Commonwealth. Increased physical activity leads to better physical and mental health outcomes, including reduced risk for premature death, various diseases and cancers, and depression. 56% of users of the existing trail said that they would not participate in their primary trail activity, including walking, jogging/running, biking, as frequently if the trail did not exist. Additionally, the trail will allow people to travel without the use of a car, both helping the Commonwealth advance towards its goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and providing opportunities for those who are not able to drive.

For all of the above stated reasons, I strongly encourage other communities and legislators to join this effort to finish the trial.

Sincerely,



Lindsay N. Sabadosa
State Representative, 1st Hampshire