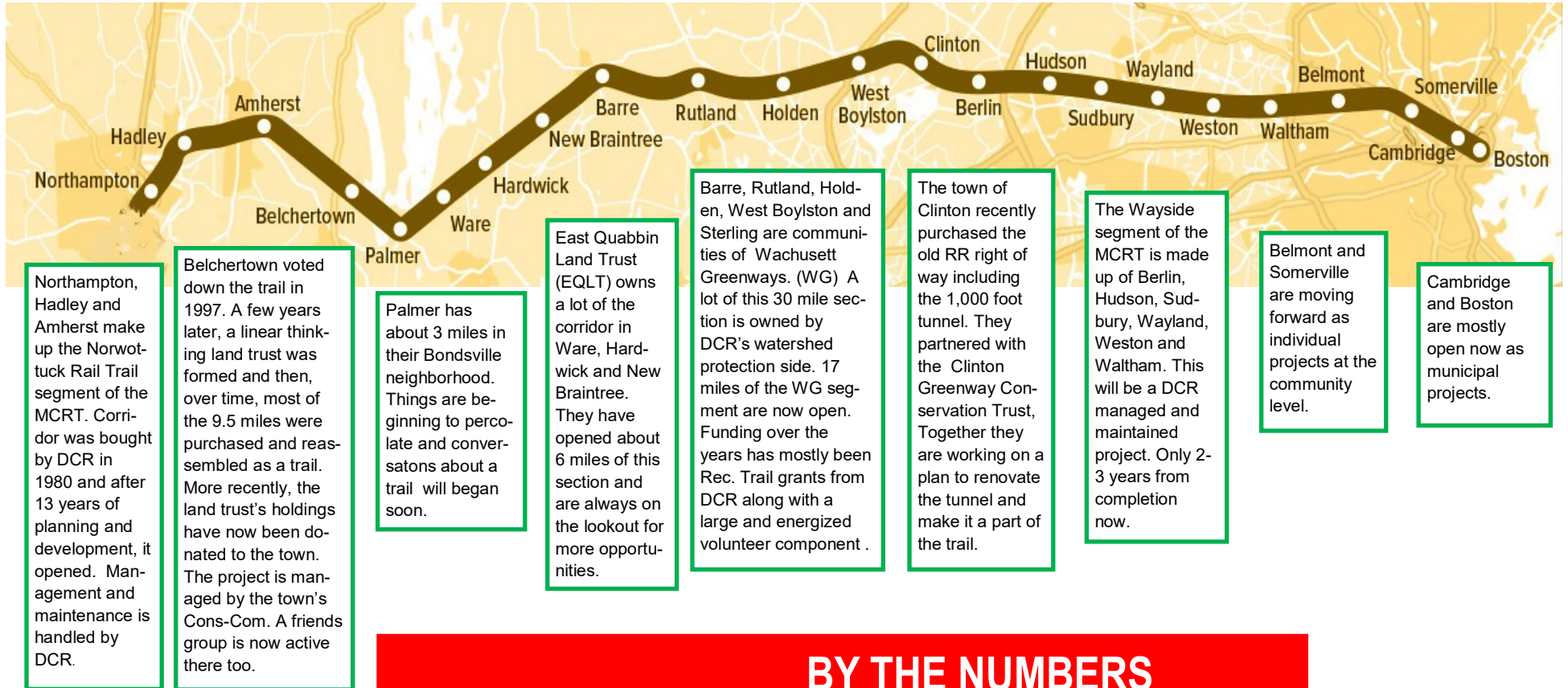




How the idea of the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL has progressed over the past 40+ years.



BY THE NUMBERS

MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL DATA

104

Number of miles
from Boston to
Northampton

51±

Number of
miles open
today

88±

Number of miles
owned by a pro-
tecting agency

16±

Number of miles
owned by a non-
protecting entity

TIMELINE TO PIECE TOGETHER THE CORRIDOR

1980: State Park agency-DEM-purchases the western 10 miles of the corridor and begins a 13 years process to plan and develop the corridor.

1988: The Fisk family completes a walk from Northampton Union Station to North Station Boston and writes a never published manuscript. A copy of this was given to a top DEM official who kept a copy in his office and referred to it often.

1993: The Norwottuck Rail Trail opened. It was one of the last formal, paved, bikeways in the US to be built at the old design width of 8 feet. In 2105, a widening project to 10+ feet was done.

1995: Wachusett Greenways was formed and they purposefully made a decision to build out their sections as soft surface—stone-dust trail. And getting small grants through the parks agency that included a volunteer component. This was a momentous decision. Their service area included a 30 mile stretch of the corridor and the transportation funded process looked much more complicated and they wanted to buildout their section as fast as possible. They have done 17+ miles so far.

1995: The six-community Wayside Rail Trail project and the Belchertown Rail Trail began to be talked about.

1997: Both Weston and Belchertown voted down their rail trail projects. Both with a wide range of reasons, but the important reason in Belchertown was the state's requirement to pave. At that time, Mass was the only state in the US that required asphalt pavement if you were using federal dollars. Local equestrians thus were opposed to paving and they led the effort to fight against the trail.

1997: Wachusett Greenways opens their 1st mile of the MCRT in West Boylston.

1998: The Commonwealth Magazine. does a story about the fight in both Belchertown and Weston. <https://tinyurl.com/CommonwealthMagStory>

1999: DEM released a report that called for more greenways and trails including the encouragement of piecing together the *Mass Central Rail Trail* corridor. <https://tinyurl.com/GreenwayVision>

1999: Federal Highway Administration encourages all states to hold a Millennium Trail Contest and Norwottuck Network (NN) was named the winning entry for Massachusetts. <https://www.nnnetwork.net/about-us>

2002: A 2nd Golden Spike event was held in Waltham at Bentley University and over 400 advocates, gubernatorial candidates and policy makers turned out.

2004: An anti-trail group in Sudbury (called Protect Sudbury today) was founded to fight against both the N-S and the E-W trails. (N-S trail is the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. E-W trail is the MCRT.)

2005: Central Highlands Conservancy, LLC (CHCLLC) was created to buy 3.2 miles of the corridor to block sales to adjoining landowners. CHC held it for two years, giving the East Quabbin Land Trust two years to buy them out for costs. No mark up. That was the water-shed moment. It became apparent that the corridor could be reassembled by non-traditional means.

2006: Shortly after the discovery of a theft of a short section of the former railroad corridor in Berlin, the MBTA offered up a lease to DCR. This too was another momentous event.

2007: The 3.2 miles of the corridor in Hardwick was purchased by the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) and they then began to develop that section of the trail. This includes 3 rare bridges that would have been scrapped out.

2011: After several years of negotiations, the MBTA and DCR entered into a lease agreement for the entire 24 mile Wayside section, including Berlin.

2014: A report was released about the Erie Canal Trail showed that it was producing \$253+ million a year for the state of NY and communities along the way. <https://tinyurl.com/ErieCanalReport>

2017: NN launched a free, monthly E-newsletter about news along the MCRT, that quickly ramps up to over 10,000 subscribers in 8 states. And a little more than a year in, we are notified by Constant Contact that it is in the top 10% of all their E-newsletters world wide.

2017: Wachusett Greenways opens the 17th mile of the MCRT. <https://tinyurl.com/WGMission>

2017: The Belchertown Land Trust gifts to the town, 5 miles of the MCRT making the holdings of the town-owned MCRT to be nearly 7 of the 9.5 total miles. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org/by-the-numbers>

2017: Friends of the Belchertown Greenway was formed. <https://www.belchertowngreenway.org>

2017: Because of the huge economic development numbers shown in the Erie Canal report, the NY Governor instructed NYDOT to build another 400 miles in 4 years.

2017: Wayland and Weston sections of Wayside Trail began

construction because Eversource's utility upgrade made the trail construction easier/faster.

2018: EQLT purchases another mile of the MCRT corridor in Ware and begins to develop it.

2018: The 7th Golden Spike event was held in Northampton. <https://www.gs2018.org/>

2019: NN was re-launched with a broader mission and a more geographically encompassing board.

2019: Weston and Wayland segments of the Wayside section open. Eversource's grid enhancement project makes it easier and less expensive for DCR to build the trail.

2020: Protect Sudbury fights the Eversource plan in Sudbury to build a more resilient and robust grid by putting it underground, under the future trail.

2020: NY completes the Empire State Trail. 750 miles total. <https://empiretrail.ny.gov/>

2020: The Town of Clinton along with the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust purchased the 1,000 foot tunnel and a remaining mile or so of dead corridor still owned by the B&M RR. <https://tinyurl.com/TunnelClinton>

2020: MassDOT commissions a feasibility study of the MCRT and hires VHB to identify the missing pieces and come up with a plan to develop work-arounds until the expensive missing pieces can be filled-in.

2021: VHB study is finalized and released. <https://tinyurl.com/MCRT-Study>

2021: Protect Sudbury loses at the SJC. <https://tinyurl.com/SJC-ruling>

2022: Protect Sudbury loses at the Surface Transportation. Board in Washington DC. <https://tinyurl.com/STB-ruling>

2022: EQLT enters into a lease agreement with National Grid for another 2.3 miles of the corridor in Gilbertville.

2022: Golden Spike 2022—the 8th GS event—is to be held in Hardwick's Gilbertville village. July 30, 2022. Nationally known speakers. Walking and biking tours. <https://www.gs2022.org/>

2022: MCRT=104 miles. 51 miles now open. 88 miles are now in a public protected status.