



Departments of Zoning, Planning,
Permitting, Conservation and Building
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TO: Steve Ledoux, Town Manager
FROM: Angus Jennings AICP, Director of Land Use Management
DATE: September 8, 2011
RE: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Parking

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with the Acton Board of Selectmen on Monday, September 12 to discuss the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and our continuing efforts to ensure safe and accessible parking to serve the trail terminus. This letter is intended for distribution to the Board.

A concept has arisen which we feel is very exciting – to be detailed herein – and we are in the process of preparing a grant proposal for submittal next Friday, September 16, pursuant to the MassWorks program. When we meet, we hope to receive a vote of Board support for this proposal.

As you may know, the Town of Westford has been considering this issue for some time, and in the past year or so has undertaken significant research and evaluation of potential parking options near the existing terminus. Building on initial public meetings held by the Planning Board last fall, this past week the Town held an all-Boards meeting to consider this issue.¹ Members of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Recreation Commission (which provides care of the portion of the trail in Westford), the Tax Possession Sale Committee, the Conservation Commission and others were in attendance, with staff representation including the Public Safety Officer, Engineering, Recreation, Conservation, Planning and others. The Highway Department was also instrumental in preparations.

Materials presented at the meeting included review of nearly twenty parcels for preliminary feasibility, as well as more detailed conceptual analysis of five options – four in Westford and one in Acton, in a location shown as future parking on the BFRT 25% design plans (except enclosed).² Each of the Westford parcels presented significant concerns regarding feasibility and/or safety, and provisions in Westford zoning present hurdles for any parking in this area.

On the basis of this discussion and the significant if not insurmountable challenges, broad support arose for the fifth concept, sited in Acton, which is shown on the attached conceptual drawing.

¹ Video of the August 31 meeting is online at: <http://westfordcat.pegcentral.com/index.php>

² The Westford town website includes a page dedicated to this issue which includes all materials presented at the meeting, including conceptual plans for several sites. The site will be updated periodically, and is online at: http://www.westfordma.gov/Pages/Government/TownDepartments/WestfordMA_EngDept/S031E7C2D?Close=-1

The concept is summarized as follows:

- Work with Iron Horse Preservation Society, Inc. to improve the MassDOT layout, extending from Route 225 southerly ~1,700 linear feet to the site shown as parking on the BFRT 25% design plans. The trail surface would be fully ADA and AAB compliant. A letter of commitment from Iron Horse COO Joe Hattrup is enclosed, and information on their prior work in Massachusetts is online at www.ironhorsepreservation.org.
- Working closely with the Town of Acton, Westford Engineering and Highway Departments to complete engineering design and secure permitting as necessary for parking area in Acton, including provision for ADA and AAB compliant access from the parking to the trail.
- Secure all necessary landowner and MassDOT authorizations for same, and ensure appropriate permitting for trail work and parking including Conservation Commission Orders of Conditions as necessary. Pending direction from the Acton Board of Selectmen, we have yet to contact the landowner of the subject parcel. We are prepared to do so in the near term if so advised.
- Working with the Friends of the BFRT, coordinate volunteer support as appropriate.
- Submit a MassWorks grant to be focused primarily on:
 - Design and construction costs to ensure safe pedestrian crossing of Route 225 at its intersection with the BFRT layout. This is envisioned to represent an incremental improvement focused on pedestrian safety – not the complete intersection redesign that is part of the Phase 2A design contract. GPI is preparing a cost estimate for this work which, subject to receipt of funding, could be pursued as a change order.
 - Receipt of an amount of recycled asphalt product (RAP) adequate to provide 3” cover for a 1,700’ stretch of trail at a 10-12’ width. The Westford Highway Department has estimated this amount at 350 cubic yards.
 - Construction costs associated with Acton parking area and trail access.

While the details of the grant proposal are still in process, the general approach will be consistent with the outline above.

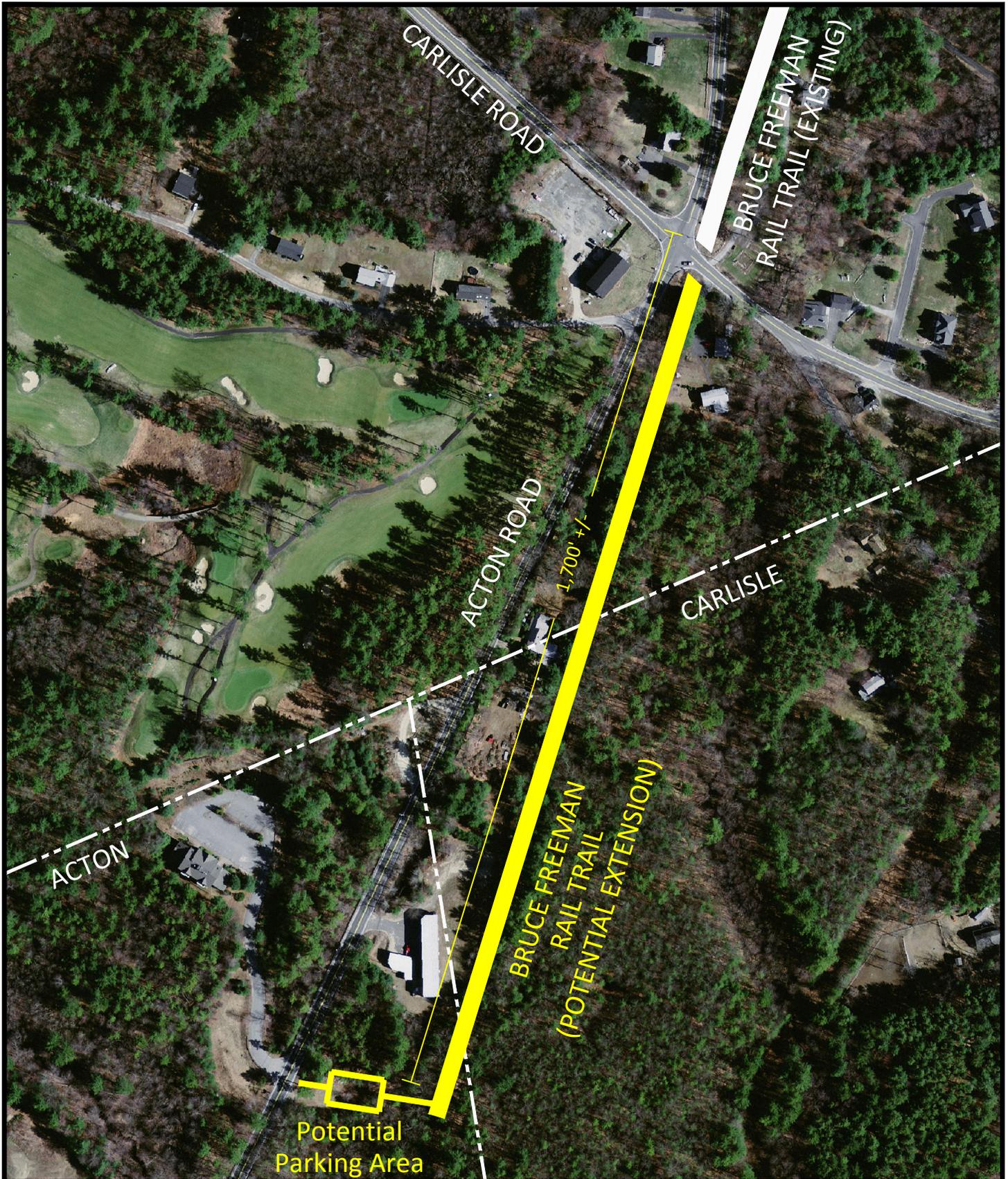
Efforts to date have included coordination with Becky Williamson at GPI, who attended both the August 31 meeting and the September 2 site visit with Iron Horse. It is of critical importance to all parties that any work undertaken on the trail represent a step forward toward the next phase of trail design and construction, and that this take place in full coordination with GPI, the host communities, and MassDOT. The idea is that GPI’s design work would take into account any trail work completed by Iron Horse such that the longer-term design and construction would build on the RAP foundation as sub-grade without compromising the eventual trail surfacing nor quality. Advancing initial discussions to date, this item has been included for discussion at the MassDOT design kick-off meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 14.

We very much appreciate the Board's willingness to consider this issue at the upcoming meeting. While the timeline for our grant proposal is short, we are confident that this proposal will secure broad support. We view it as a step forward in the overall BFRT initiative, securing an interim extension to a site that – owing to its location, accessibility, and present condition – represents a safer and more logical terminus and parking opportunity than the present Westford terminus.

It is our goal to receive a vote of Board support for the MassWorks grant application this coming week, and will be glad to provide additional information or assistance upon request.

Thanks.

cc: Jodi Ross, Westford Town Manager
Westford Town Boards and Departments
Roland Bartl, Acton Town Planner
George Mansfield, Carlisle Town Planner
Tom Michelman, Alan Cameron, Emily Teller, Chris Barrett (Friends of BFRT)



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
 Potential Medium Term Extension &
 Parking Concept





IRON HORSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY, INC.

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Town of Westford
Board of Selectmen
55 Main Street
Westford, MA 01886

Subject: Approx. 1700' of railroad track development for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

Iron Horse Preservation Society, Inc. has had the opportunity to visit the next proposed track development in Westford, MA adjoining the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT). After the inspection meeting with Westford and Carlisle representatives and staff, Friends of the BFRT, and Becky Williamson from GPI, I have determined that IHPS is willing to do the following work-

- Remove all of the railroad material (rails, angle bars, tie plates, spikes, railroad ties, etc.) including the developing debris. The corridor will be left free of all material.
- The trees that have fallen across the right-of-way will be cut up and removed from the corridor.
- The corridor will be graded level (allowing for proper drainage) and compacted.
- If recycled asphalt is made available to us or another can be supplied in a timely fashion, IHPS will spread and compact that material for a more finished surface. This can be accomplished upon a donation of scrap metal to cover our costs.
- Once work begins, this work can be performed within 10 days.
- All of these functions will be provided at no cost to Westford with the donation of the track materials.
- All permitting and erosion control to be completed by other parties.

IHPS is available to handle this project and more next year 2012 but, having an agreement in place sooner rather than later will make it more predictable when the work can be performed.

Thanks for your consideration for this project.

Iron Horse Preservation Society, Inc.

J.K. Hattrup

Joe Hattrup
COO

Please feel to contact me with any questions or in depth details concerning this matter or like matters on my cell (775) 742-2149, thanks again.

cc: Angus Jennings



Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

<http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/>

September 7, 2011

Board of Selectmen of Westford, Acton and Carlisle

Dear Members of the Boards of Selectmen,

We are writing to you to ask for your support of the Mass Works Infrastructure Program application that the Town of Westford is submitting. A discussion of this grant proposal is on your upcoming meeting's agenda, and Emily will be present to represent the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Inc. along with a several others who are our board members from Carlisle and Acton.

Westford is submitting this grant proposal to fund an extension of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from its current *temporary* terminus at the junction of Routes 27 and 225 in Westford. This proposal would create a longer trail, as well as a place for users to access the southernmost 2.5 miles. This would make the BFRT more easily available to the residents of Westford, Carlisle, and Acton.

I wanted to bring to your attention an aspect of the BFRT with which you may not be familiar: Since the August 29, 2009 ribbon cutting, thousands of people have enjoyed the trail, and several significant events have been hosted on it, as well as its being used by individuals for their betterment:

* **2010 and 2011 Annual Kids' Pan Mass Challenge Rides**

Two Westford young women, Jessica Ryan and Claire Enos, ages 14 and 12 in 2010, organized this hopefully annual fundraising event to honor one of their mothers, who died of breast cancer.

The 2010 ride was the first event EVER on the BFRT. It included 50 riders and 25 adult volunteers, and raised \$3,500 for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute through the Jimmy Fund.

This year's ride on June 26 was even more successful – and fun – and raised \$6,000. Of the 35 volunteers, 4 were teens doing community service hours.



- * **Live for Liv Ride** After the tragic murder in Westford of Olivia Marchand, her mother's sister Jill wanted to help Liv's mother, Jody, recover from her own injuries and loss of her daughter, and Jill thought of a ride for adults and families on the BFRT in Westford to honor

Olivia near her birthday. As the proceeds recipient, The Domestic Violence Services Network became a partner, and out of their teamwork, and helped by many friends, family members and other volunteers from Westford and the region, a joyous event occurred on July 24. Using Westford's 4-H grounds as their parking lot and headquarters (at no charge by 4-H), 261 adults and children rode either a 6-mile family ride, or a 23-mile longer loop – both using the BFRT. The “day-of” registrations surpassed their highest expectations (and supply of t-shirts and water bottles). 61 volunteers helped with a BBQ, face painting, massages, and other family-friendly activities. The event raised \$11,000 and truly did honor Liv's memory and brought joy to her mother and everyone who participated that day.



[all photos taken by Emily Teller]

- * **Spontaneous event:** Puma, a Westford business on Lyberty Way, used the BFRT early one Friday morning in early spring (6:30 am-7:30 am) for its employees to have a “team building” event. They parked at Agway in Chelmsford (as there is no parking near their building) and ran for an hour on the BFRT. They also just hosted a 5K road race earlier this month on roads around Westford.
- * **The Westford Eagle photographer “caught” some women walking on the BFRT:** the August 25, 2011 [front page](#) had a photo and lengthy story of 4 women using the BFRT this summer to train for the Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk in September, again to honor family members and friends and to support cancer research.
- * **“Trail to Personal Growth”** was the title for an article in the Friends BFRT's spring newsletter which focused on Hilary Taylor of Westford. She registered for a sprint triathlon, and, since the BFRT is a safe, outdoor path that is only a quarter-mile from her home, training there was a logical plan. She had been riding an exercise bicycle indoors! Hilary's first goal was to ride to Chelmsford Center and back, and she built up her mileage gradually. She said, “I will never forget the day that I got there!” She was “totally blown away” by the triathlon experience and was planning on doing another this summer. One person; one

story. There are hundreds more whose physical and psychological (and perhaps family) health have been improved by their frequent use of the rail trail.

Documented BFRT trail usage: All of us are familiar with the Minuteman Bikeway that goes from Bedford's former train depot through Lexington and Arlington to Alewife in Cambridge. In the United States, it is the #2 most busy rail trail, mostly due to commuters using it to go to and from work and/or public transportation. An average of 1,200 people use it on a daily basis.

- * The BFRT is "running" close behind the Minuteman – and this is only in 2 years of existence! Westford's 2010 Annual Town Report had the following statistics, part of statewide counts of trail usage organized by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. The usage numbers are collected for comparing other trails, prioritizing maintenance activities, and applying for grants.
- * Volunteer counters from Acton, Chelmsford, Littleton, Lowell, Sudbury, and Westford recorded BFRT usage on 2 Tuesdays and 2 Saturdays in June, July and September of 2010. This local work was coordinated by the Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).
- * Over the 4 days, 42 volunteers covered 96 one-hour time periods. All of these numbers are for a 12-hour period from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Trail users who pass a count location twice are counted twice, so the counts do not represent the number of users on a given day but rather the number of trips as noted above.
- * The counts documented that the trail is most heavily used between Chelmsford Center and Westford.
- * There were more trips on the trail on a lovely autumn Saturday (around 1,500) than there were on a hot summer Saturday (around 1,100).
- * In September 2009, around 1,200 trips in the same location were recorded.
- * Most trips on Saturdays were by bicycle at 70%, walkers at 20%, runners/joggers at 6% with in-line skates, child carriers, or other forms of locomotion at 4%.
- * By comparison, the numbers for the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway in Lexington were 3,000 in September 2009 and 4,000 in September 2010. The numbers for the BFRT are more similar to historic numbers for the Nashua River Rail Trail.

Your support for the creation of a parking area in North Acton is action you can take on behalf of extending the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and for hundreds of trail users who will continue to benefit in many ways, especially with improved physical health.

We hope you will vote to support this Mass Works Infrastructure Program grant, and thank you for your serious consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Westford Directors, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Inc.

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978 692 6968 h

and

Chris Barrett
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Westford
chrisjbarrett@gmail.com
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HIGHWAY GUARD DETAILS
NONE

DRAINAGE DETAILS
NONE

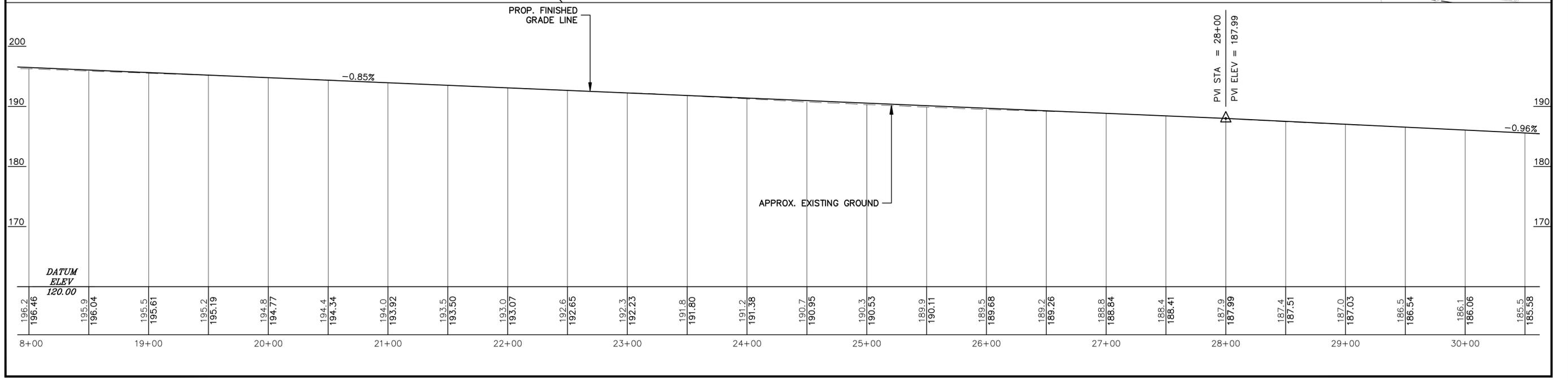
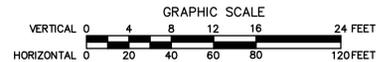
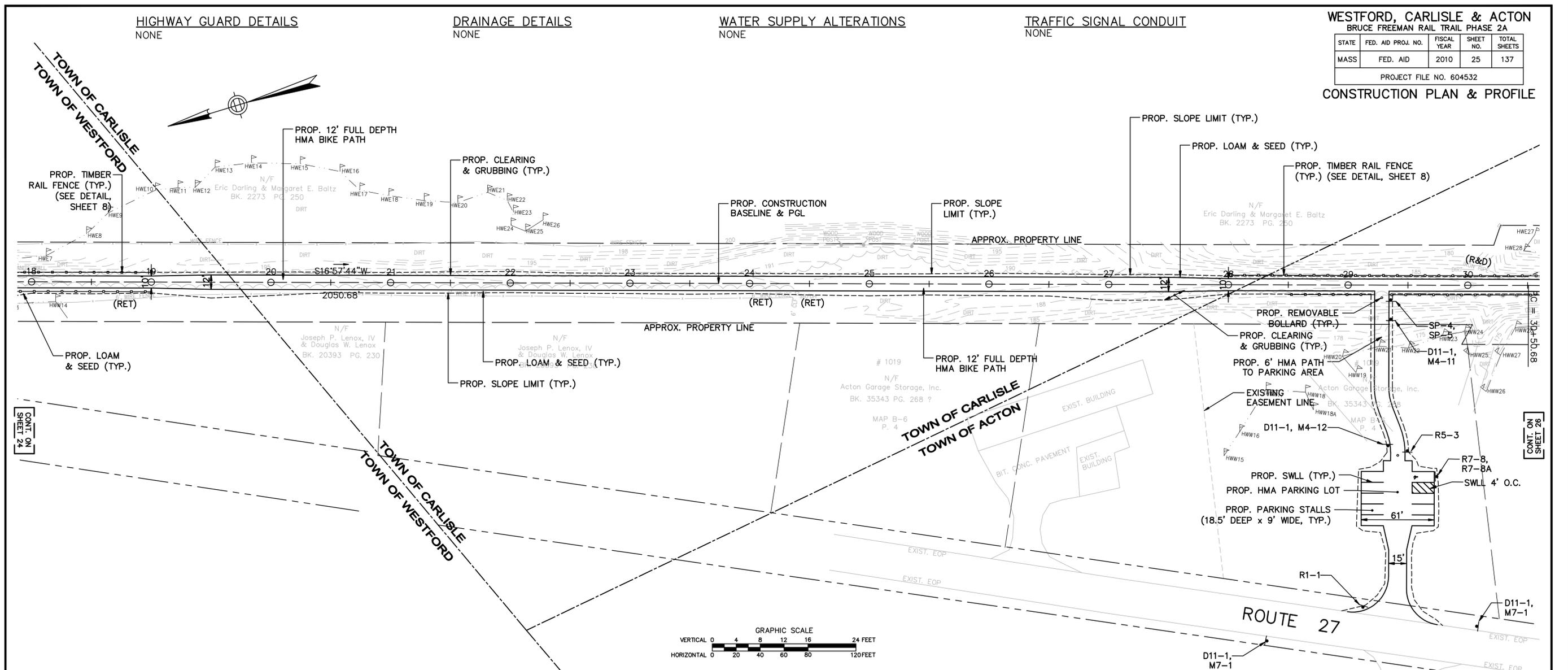
WATER SUPPLY ALTERATIONS
NONE

TRAFFIC SIGNAL CONDUIT
NONE

WESTFORD, CARLISLE & ACTON
BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL PHASE 2A

STATE	FED. AID PROJ. NO.	FISCAL YEAR	SHEET NO.	TOTAL SHEETS
MASS	FED. AID	2010	25	137

PROJECT FILE NO. 604532
CONSTRUCTION PLAN & PROFILE



IN CHARGE OF _____
 DESIGNED BY _____
 CHECKED BY _____
 DRAWN BY _____
 CHECKED BY _____