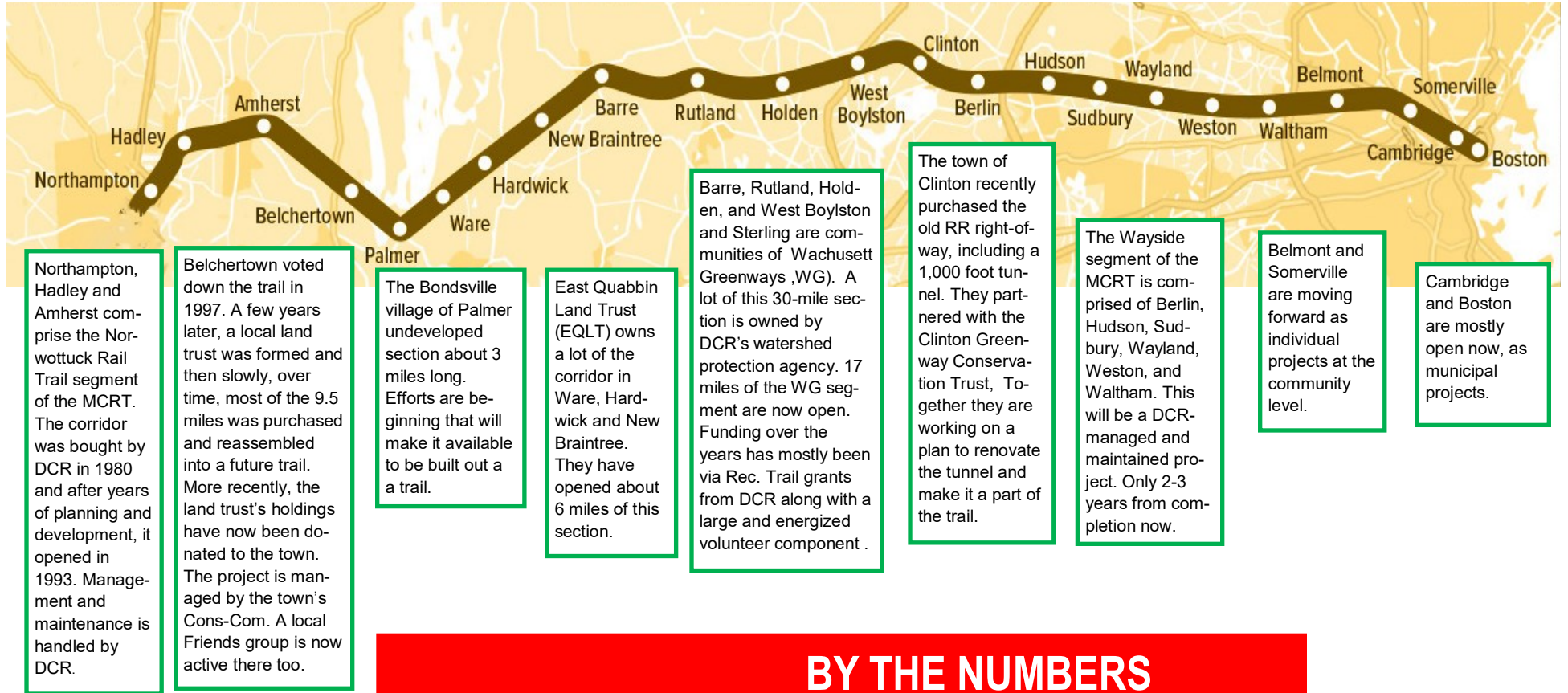




# How the idea of the MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL — as a 100 mile trail has progressed over the years.



BY THE NUMBERS				
<b>MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL DATA</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>53±</b>	<b>90.5±</b>	<b>13.5±</b>
	Number of miles from Boston to Northampton	Number of miles open today	Number of miles owned by a protecting agency	Number of miles owned by a non-protecting entity

## A TIMELINE OF THE JOURNEY THUS FAR TO PIECE TOGETHER THE CORRIDOR

**1980:** The Mass. State Parks agency-DEM-purchases the western most 8.5 miles of the corridor and begins a 13 year process to plan and develop the corridor.

**1988:** The Fisk family completes a walk from Northampton Union Station to North Station Boston and they write 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 2015, the trail was widened to 10± feet.

**1995:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) was formed and they purposely decided to build out their sections as a soft surface—stone-dust trail, and not a paved trail. This was a momentous decision. Receiving small grants through the DCR grants process—that also encouraged a volunteer component—meant this would be built much faster. The other alternative, going through the transportation funding process looked much more complicated. They have completed 17 miles so far and have built or redone 10 bridges. Their service area includes 30 miles of the corridor that is largely owned by DCR's watershed protection agency.

**1995:** Both 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, with a smorgasbord of reasons, but one main reason in Belchertown was state's requirement to pave. At that time, Mass was the only state in the US to require pavement. If you were using federal dollars you had to pave. Local equestrians almost everywhere opposed paving and led the effort to fight against the trail.

**1997:** Wachusett Greenways (WG) opened their first mile of the MCRT in West Boylston.

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

**1999:** DCR released a report that called for more trail projects and encouraged of piecing together the \*[Mass Central Rail Trail](https://tinyurl.com/GreenwayVision)\* corridor. <https://tinyurl.com/GreenwayVision>

**1999:** In 1999, WG hosted the first "Golden Spike I"

event, in West Boylston, where Congressman Jim McGovern spoke enthusiastically to the vision for a statewide, E-W trail. <https://tinyurl.com/GoldenSpike1>

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

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

**2004:** An anti-trail group (Protect Sudbury) 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. Both trails intersect in Sudbury.)

**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—to lease the Wayside section.

**2007:** 3.2 miles of the corridor in Hardwick was purchased by the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) to develop that section of the trail. This includes 3 rare bridges.

**2011:** After several years of negotiations, the MBTA and DCR entered into a lease agreement for the entire 24 mile Wayside section, including the eastern half of the corridor in Berlin. The west side is still owned by the B&M RR.

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

**2017:** Norwottuck Network (NN) launched a free, monthly E-newsletter about news along the MCRT, that quickly ramped up to over 10,000 subscribers in 8 states. And a little more than a year in Constant Contact names it in the top 10% of all their E-newsletters world-wide.

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

**2017:** The Belchertown Land Trust donates to the town, 5 miles of the MCRT, increasing town owned sections 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.

**2018:** EQLT purchases a farm in Ware that includes 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:** The State of 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 purchase 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, a consulting firm, 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:** The 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 conference held in Gilbertville on July, 30. <https://www.gs2022.org/>

**2022:** NN hires Kittelson & Associates to produce a report that will tell what would a completed trail be worth to the Commonwealth and the communities along the way. The effort got underway in September, 2022. 1st phase of the report involves a survey. Please take time to participate in that. It is only a few minutes. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MCRTSurvey>