

# Towpaths to Trails

## *OPENING AUTO SLIDESHOW*

How the Old Canal Towpath and Other Rights of Way  
Can Bridge Some Gaps in Regional Multi-Use Trails



Presentation to the Quarterly Meeting

Middlesex Canal Association

18 Feb 2024

Doug Chandler  
A Chelmsford Rep to  
Middlesex Canal Commission



# Original Use of Towpath



Woburn, just north of 128, recently



# Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)



Fall trail in Acton



Westford DPW workers Jacob Rowe and Rick Savory removed a downed tree that was blocking the trail after a late summer storm.

Pix from <https://brucefreemanrailtrail.org/>



- Built on abandoned RR grade
- Paved
- Maintained

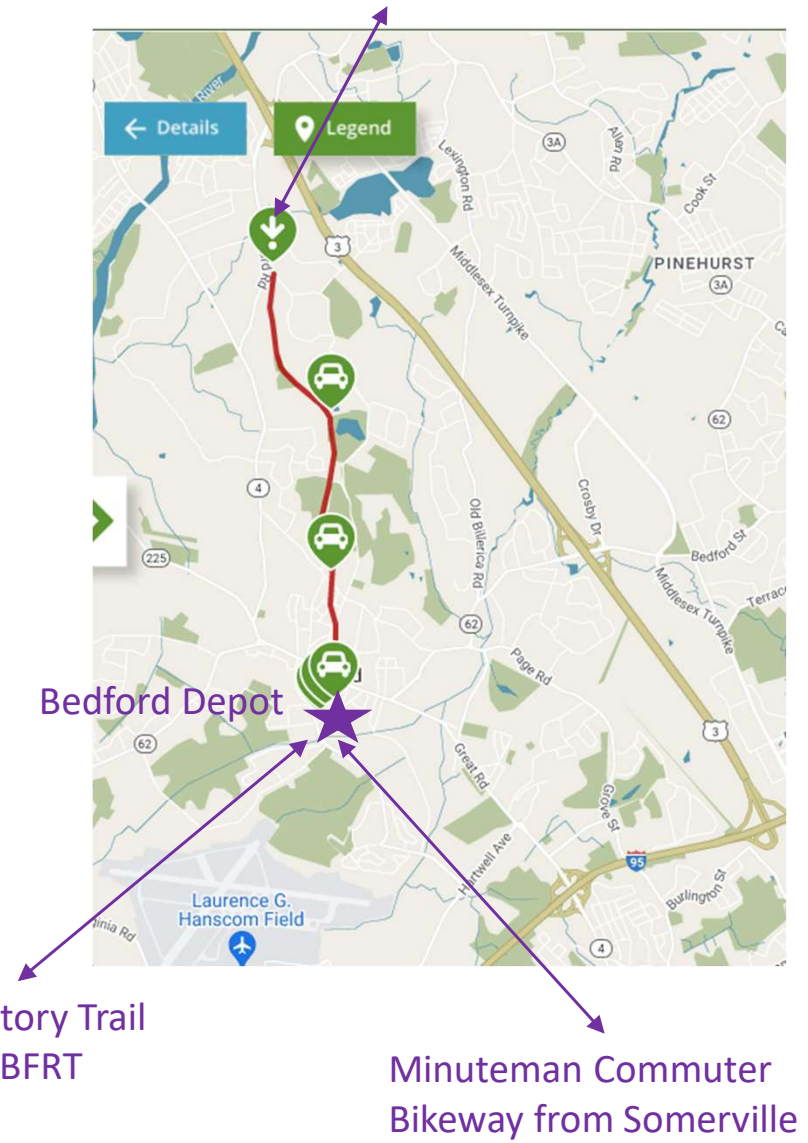


# Bedford Narrow Gauge Rail Trail

Yankee Doodle to Billerica will connect here



6 miles of good unpaved trail





# Minuteman Commuter Bikeway

On the old "Lexington Branch" RR between Bedford, Lexington, Arlington, Alewife & Cambridge Connecting to Somerville, Boston, etc



Minuteman Commuter Bikeway



46 Reviews

Length: 10.1 mi





**The Minuteman Commuter Bikeway**  
Points of Interest Along the Bikeway

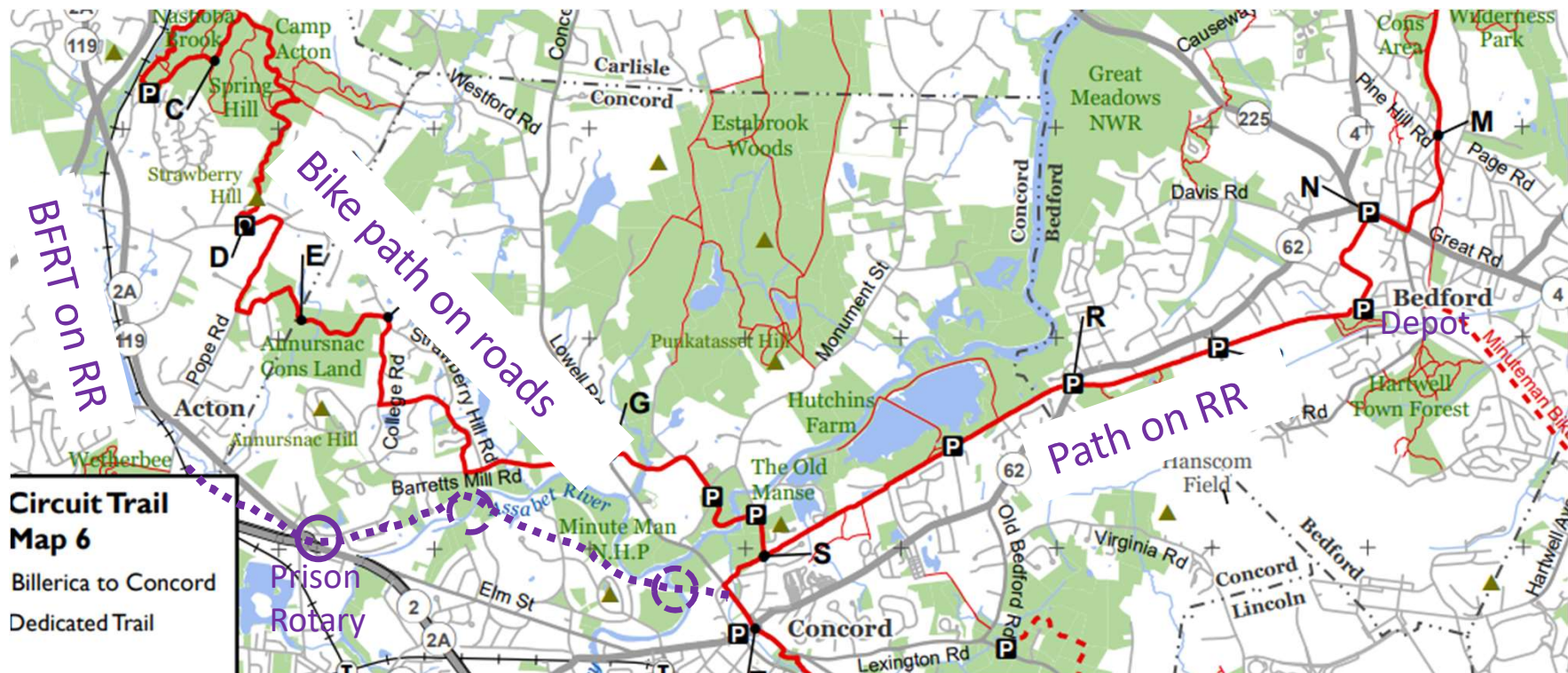
- ◆ Alewife Station Public transit station on the Arlington/Cambridge line offers bus and subway access and free bike parking.
- ◆ Spy Pond Park and Field Children's play space, boat ramp, picnic tables and ice skating when the pond freezes.
- ◆ Arlington Center The Town of Arlington is only 5.5 square miles, so nothing is far from the Bikeway. Bikeway users are encouraged to visit eateries/businesses along the Mass Ave corridor and enjoy respite in parks scattered throughout the community. Details on reverse.
- ◆ Cooke's Hollow Early mill site, now a green space along Mill Brook.
- ◆ Old Schwamb Mill Oldest still functioning (since 1864) mill in the US. Renowned for oval high-quality wooden frames.
- ◆ Arlington Reservoir Nature path around the reservoir; sandy beach, Habitat Garden, swans.
- ◆ Arlington's Great Meadows Hiking trails through natural habitat.
- ◆ Tower Park A shady picnic area alongside the Bikeway; site of a battle between British forces and the Colonial militia.
- ◆ Lexington Community Center Available for civic, cultural, charitable and educational groups and organizations that serve the Lexington community.
- ◆ Munroe Tavern and British History Museum Revolutionary War site that played a prominent role in the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Now preserved and operated as a museum with exhibits highlighting the role and perspective of the British soldiers during the outbreak of the war.
- ◆ Lexington Center Settled in 1642 and incorporated in 1713, Lexington is best known as the "birthplace of American Liberty" for its role in the American Revolution. A variety of shops and restaurants as well as historic sites are just steps from the Bikeway. Details on reverse.
- ◆ Hancock Clarke House The destination of Paul Revere and William Dawes on the eve of the American Revolution to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock of the coming British troops. Built in about 1698, the house contains period furnishings and portraits.
- ◆ Parker Meadow 17.5 acres of woods and meadows with paths and boardwalks.
- ◆ Depot Park Bedford terminus of the Bikeway where three rail trails converge. The historic freight house is now an information center with railroad memorabilia.
- ◆ Rail Diesel Car 6211 The vintage passenger car, which formerly ran on the Boston-Bedford rail line, has been restored and is open to the public.
- ◆ Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge 250-acre wetlands on the Concord River, a popular destination for bird watchers, walkers and families.

**Legend**

▲ Entry Point	▲ Parking	P
○ Mile Marker	🚲 Bike Shop	🚲
◆ Points of Interest	📍 Visitors Center	i
🔥 Fire Station	💧 Water	💧
👮 Police Station	🍦 Ice Cream/Yogurt	🍦
🚻 Restrooms	🍽️ Amenities	🍽️
🛒 Grocery Store	🏪 Grocery Store	🏪

# “Reformatory Branch” Rail Trail

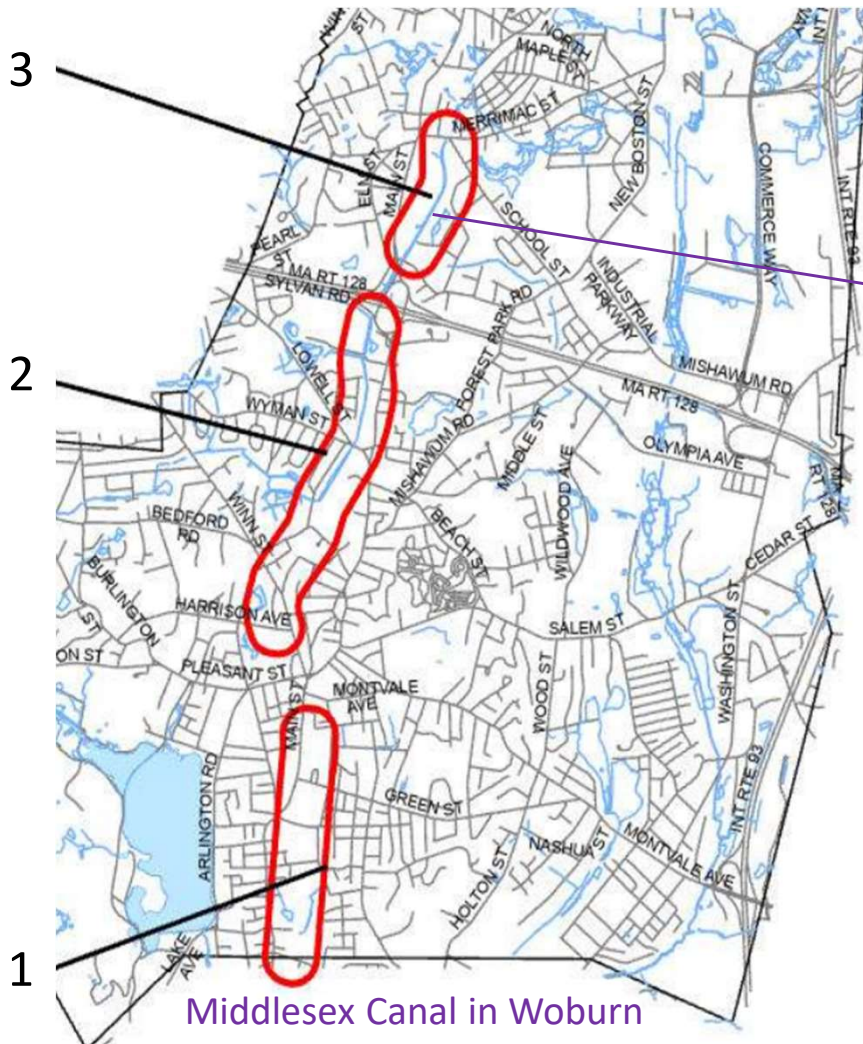
- RR used to connect Bedford Depot to Framingham & Lowell RR (now BCT/BFRT) near Concord Prison Rotary
- Good unpaved rail trail (like Narrow Gauge, not Minuteman)
  - East 4 mi  OK between Bedford Depot and Concord Lumber
  - West 4 mi  missing bridges over Sudbury and Assabet Rivers   
and paved over by prison rotary , so substituted by roads





# Woburn Towpath to Bike Trail

About 3 miles of Middlesex Canal towpath and subsequent railroad now being converted to trail



# NY State Towpaths to Bike Trails

New York state is a leader in towpath trails.

They have finished most of the Erie Canal and much of the Champlain Canal, plus more in the works



Champlain Canal, NY



# NY State Towpaths to Bike Trails



Erie Canal Trail, NY

# WDC & VA Towpath to Bike Trail



Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Multi-Use Trail: Bikers, strollers, joggers, runners, ducks



# New Jersey Towpath to Bike Trail



D&R Bike-Hike-Horse trail, NJ



# Ohio and Indiana Towpaths to Trails



Miami&Ohio lock sign and replica canal boat, OH



Monon Central Canal trail, IN



# Riverneck Project

5.6837 miles [switch to km]  
Distance traveled: 0 [enter weight]

CREATING ROUTE...

UNDO LAST POINT

Route type: manually (straight lines) ▾

Label your route

Map style: None

Map features: Mile markers

Map actions: Print map, Download

Map labels: WESTLANDS AREA, SACRED HEART, RIVERNECK AREA, GOLDEN TRIANGLE, FARMSTON, North-Billerica, Billerica

Route markers: Start, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, End



# Lowell Heritage Park Project

2.6947 miles [switch to km]  
Weight: 0 [enter weight]

Calculating route...

Use last point

Route type: manually (straight lines) ▼

Route name: [text input]

Style: None

Start: [location pin icon] Mile markers

Print map [print icon] Download [download icon]

Save route [save icon]

GPX [GPX icon] GET LINK [link icon]



# Greenway Connection Project



2.7405 miles *[switch to km]*

burned: 0 *[enter weight]*

CREATING ROUTE...

UNDO LAST POINT

manually (straight lines) ▾

our route

ion



