



NORWOTTUCK NETWORK

FINISH THE RAIL TRAIL?

Here's some bulleted updates about the Mass Central Rail Trail—104+ miles long. Running from Northampton to Boston and why we think a tipping point is near.

- ⇒ We are about 60 miles open right now and we'll likely be about 75 miles open by the end of 2025.
- ⇒ Of the 104 miles, we currently have 94+/- miles under some kind of public protected status.
- ⇒ During the pandemic, MassDOT commissioned a feasibility study to see if it is even possible to re-assemble the corridor.
- ⇒ Here's a link to the Three Volume MassDOT feasibility study. <https://www.mass.gov/.../mass-central-rail-trail-feasibility>. It says that it is possible to reassemble, but it will be complex.
- ⇒ Projects that will include:
 - ⇒ 3 long RR bridges that were removed and will need to be replaced with bike-ped bridges. Several smaller bridges will need to be replaced as well.
 - ⇒ A 1,000-foot tunnel needs to be renovated.
 - ⇒ A few miles of corridor needing to be acquired along with other complications.
- ⇒ All this begs the question, what would a completed 100+ mile long trail mean to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A trail that intersects with 17 other trails. This is a question never before asked in New England.
- ⇒ In the spring of 2022, Norwottuck Network put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) searching for a consultant to produce the report that answered that basic question. <https://www.nnnetwork.net/rfp> The RFP went out and a nationally known consultant, [Kittelson & Associates](#) was chosen in the fall of 22.
- ⇒ In the summer of 2023, their report came out and it produced some compelling numbers. [Here's the REPORT](#)

HERE'S THE MAIN METRICS.

- ◆ **4-5 million users a year**
- ◆ **960,000 users a year, just in Worcester County.**
- ◆ **400,000-500,000 overnight visitors a year.**
- ◆ **Up to \$200 million a year in economic impacts.**

Within 150 miles of Northampton lies the densest network of dead steam railroad corridor in North America. The network here led to huge antediluvian mill complexes that are no longer producing heavy things. They are now converted to apartments, condos or startup businesses.

Over the past few decades, the conversion of former RRs into local trails has led to a re-discovery of a way to get around town without a car.

But when gaps in trails get filled, longer distance trips are now possible as ways to explore a neighboring community or even the possibility of longer, multi-day journeys are on the horizon. That last facet—multi-day, long-distance journeys, off-road, is largely unknown here in southern New England. Thousands of people each year leave the region for multi-day, bike touring vacations in NY, Canada, or other places in the U.S. where long trails have been operational for a while now.

We know that the usual way a long trail gets finished is by an entity commissioning an extensive report that predicts what the benefits of a fully completed trail would be in terms of economic impact, health impacts, transportation, community development, climate impacts, etc.

For a live, scalable map of all the open, closed, and under-construction sections of the MCRT, go [to this link: https://masstrailtracker.com/](https://masstrailtracker.com/)

- We know that we are at the tipping point here.
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