

# Junction Park Conceptual Redesign

## Recommendation by the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

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June 30, 2022\*

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\* The date above is the due date of this report to the Concord Select Board. The report was approved June 14, 2022 by roll call vote of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

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## Executive Summary

In October 2021, The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee (BFRTAC) was tasked by the Concord Select Board to make recommendations for a “conceptual redesign” of Junction Park that would ensure the safety of both rail trail and park users. The recommendations were to include both a “short-term” proposal that could be implemented with limited funds, time, and resources and a “long-term” proposal that would be permanent and therefore require more funding, time, resources, and community involvement to complete.

### Key Recommendations

The BFRTAC has completed its work and makes the following three recommendations to the Select Board:

1. **Short-term conceptual design**

The Committee recommends an approach that alerts trail users that they are entering a shared space and that they are accountable for safe and respectful behaviors. We also recommend adding two or three aesthetically pleasing, physical barriers (i.e., planters) in two locations in the park to help direct trail users to the correct routes through the park. The short-term solution should include “gateway arches” at entrances to the park both to welcome trail users and to signify that they need to adapt new behaviors in the space. Existing signage is excessive and ineffective. Current signage should be replaced with limited signage that conveys a positive message to be aware and respectful of park users.

2. **Long-term conceptual redesign**

The Committee recommends that an 8-foot-wide path be constructed on the west edge of the park (the west edge of the railroad right-of-way) to physically separate trail users from park users. A defined rail trail path will create a safer space for everyone.

3. **Commuter rail crossing safety**

The Committee finds that the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail crossing at the North end of Junction Park is a significant safety hazard having already been the site of one fatal accident. While not explicitly part of the task set forth by the Select Board, the Committee strongly recommends that the Town immediately engage with the MBTA to make that crossing safer by adding, at a minimum, pedestrian warning lights electronically tied to the automated crossing gates on Commonwealth Avenue.

The Committee believes that Recommendation #1 is critical to address the immediate concerns of residents and is an adequate solution for the short term. Recommendation #2 completes the design of the park which started 20 years ago. It addresses the needs of park users and the trail users in this limited shared space and fulfills the charge given to the Committee by the

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Select Board. Recommendation #3 addresses a glaring safety issue. The recommended approach is technically simple but requires strong political will to get a state agency to act.

The Committee is committed to ensuring that the Town carry out all three recommendations. At public meetings, some residents were concerned that the Town will opt to not follow through with a long-term solution after implementing short-term measures. Other residents expressed the opposite – that the Town may be too quick to pursue the long-term plan without determining if the short-term plan addresses safety.

## Summary of the Committee’s Process

The Committee recommendations are the result of a comprehensive public process that included:

- Seven posted meetings of the full committee where the topic was discussed
- A site walk and a dedicated public forum soliciting input and ideas from the public
- Appointment of a Junction Park subcommittee which met eight times to gather information and make recommendations to the full committee
- Distribution of a 10-question survey which received 569 responses and captured over 800 comments
- A review of how the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and Junction Park came to share the same space. (Summarized in Appendix 1.)
- Committee co-chair meetings with MassDOT staff and MBTA executives to gather data, assess assumptions, and solicit input and support
- Collaboration with the Town’s Director of Planning and Land Management and input from the Concord DPW Director, town engineer, and town safety officer.

## Contextual Background on the Junction Park Safety Issue

The task assigned to the BFRTAC by the Concord Select Board was to recommend a “conceptual redesign” for Junction Park to “increase safety and separation” between trail users and park users.

Why did this issue arise? Over the past few years, a group of residents, some affiliated with the West Concord Green Thumbs, have raised the issue of safety in Junction Park – specifically that bicyclists were riding through the park and that cyclists could injure pedestrians. Those concerned about this issue pointed to the diverse users of the park that include young children and residents of Concord Park, an assisted living center.

One of the tasks of the BFRTAC was to understand the safety issue, its scope, how it was perceived.

In researching the issue of safety, the BTRTAC findings include:

- According to the Town Safety Officer, there has not been a pedestrian/cyclist collision in the park since its opening.
- In the public survey just 15.6% of respondents said that they saw cyclists riding through the park more than 75% of the time, while 66.8% said they saw cyclists ride through less than half the time.
- The survey asked for observations regarding safety in the park. In analyzing the free form comments, 35% of those comments indicated that the park was safe or that safety was not an issue while 17% of comments indicated that safety was an issue.

These results could be construed to mean that there is no substantiated safety issue in the park. However, for some park users, the presence of bicyclists creates a feeling of insecurity and disrupts the park’s ambiance. The Committee has carefully considered this issue of different perceptions in its deliberations.

The Committee believes that the separation of trail and park users is a worthwhile long-term goal with the understanding that it will take time to find the substantial resources required to implement the recommended long-term redesign.

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign Recommendations

This section provides details on the short term and long-term conceptual design recommendations.

Over the course of its work on the Junction Park question, 26 conceptual design ideas were submitted to the BFRTAC email box and made available on the Committee website. The Junction Park subcommittee evaluated these short and long-term design options, and they were presented at public meetings and to relevant Town and State officials. The subcommittee members considered the benefits and tradeoffs of each option regarding safety, feasibility, and user experience. From these the subcommittee developed a total of 10 conceptual designs (see Appendix 3) and deliberated publicly on them. The Subcommittee recommended two designs to the full Committee and after deliberation, these were approved by roll call vote.

### Recommendation 1: Short Term Conceptual design

The committee's short-term recommendation involves the addition of large planters as signifiers and the suggested addition of a "gateway" arch at the entrances. Philosophically, this approach alters the messaging for all park and trail users, from telling people what they cannot do to one that encourages sharing the space, respect for others, and personal accountability for safety.

See the next page for the conceptual design.



Key features of Plan JP 10:

- Uses objects (planters) as signifiers to direct trail traffic to the correct path and to make it clear that crossing the tracks is not the correct path.
- The concept includes adding up to two “gateways” (which could be an arch that people could walk under) at the south and north entrances, to signify that they have entered a Park and noting that the Park is shared space and that users should proceed with appropriate caution.
- It would include removing many of the (too small) signs that have proliferated around the park and replace them with carefully placed positive messages of respect for others. One expert who was interviewed, the MassDoT staff member responsible bicycle infrastructure, noted that he had never seen such a small space with so many signs that were badly located or too small.

The JP 10 concept was selected for the following reasons:

- No major changes are required to the physical layout of the park
- Clarifies the BFRT route with “signifiers” and is designed to deter trail users from crossing the train tracks at an unsafe place.
- Aligned with many of the design principles set forth for the conceptual redesign (see Appendix 2)
- Changes the approach to signage from one of negative reinforcement to making trail users accountable for their actions and safety

## Recommendation 2: Long Term Conceptual redesign

After careful consideration, the full committee recommends the following long-term conceptual redesign referred to as “JP #4”:

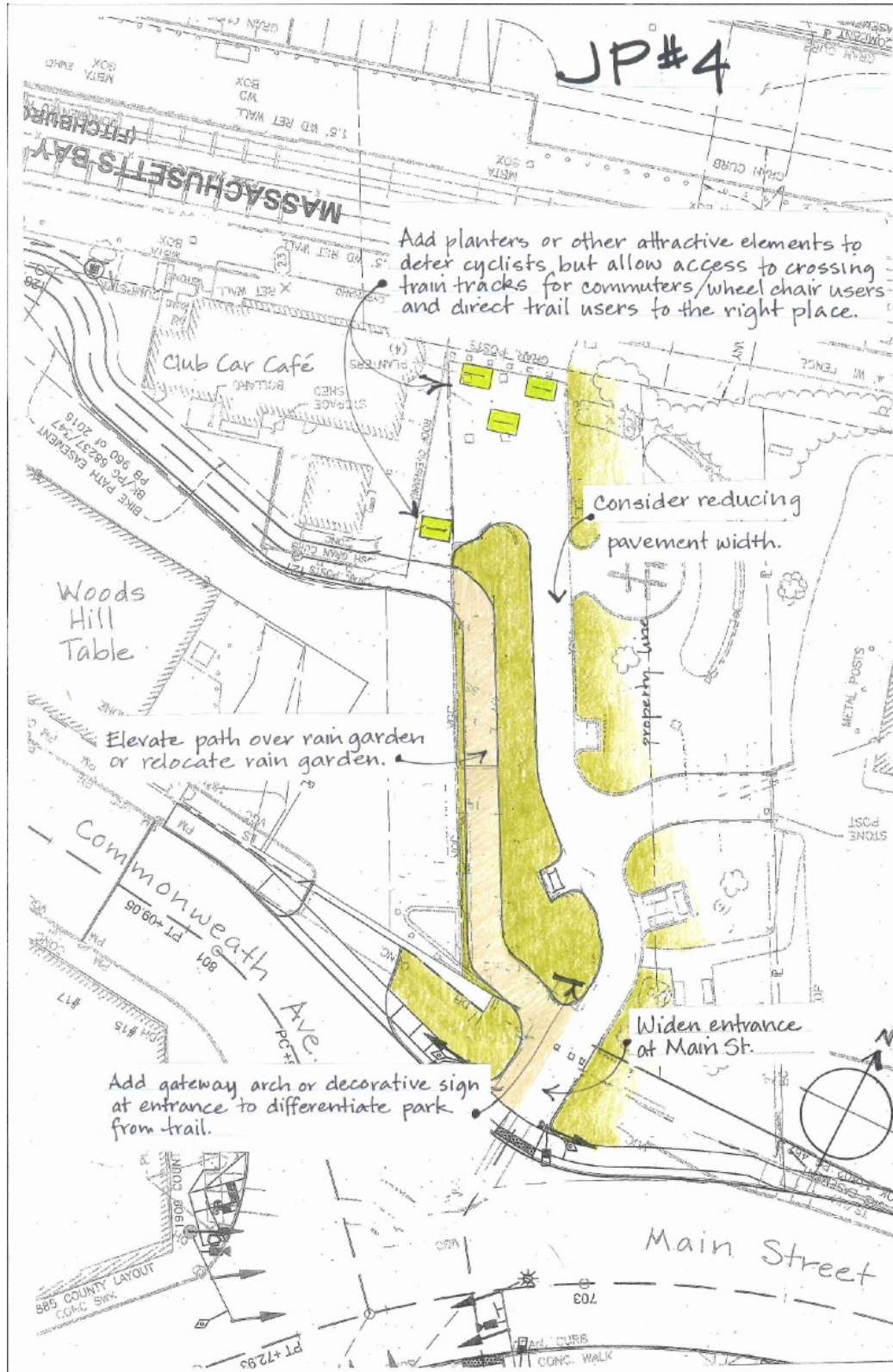


Figure 2: Conceptual Redesign Plan JP 4

Key features of conceptual design JP 4:

- A separate path is created along the west side of the park, within the BFRT right of way that connects directly to the existing route of the BFRT which continues behind Wood Hill Table restaurant and across the tracks at the gated pedestrian crossing at the west end of the platform
- To maintain as much of the current park infrastructure, included in this plan would be bridge/ boardwalk designed to go over the current retention basin and maintain its functionality.

Concept JP 4 was selected for the following reasons:

- It maximizes separation of trail users and park users and therefore maximizes safety.
- The concept minimizes changes to the park layout versus other concepts.
- It keeps trail users away from the commuter rail crossing to improve safety.
- JP 4 continues to use objects (planters) as signifiers to make it clear that crossing the tracks is not the correct path and instead directs trail traffic to the correct path.
- This idea (and some variations) was first brought to the Committee by members of the West Concord Green Thumbs, an important stakeholder group in this process.
- Aligned with many of the design principles we set forth for the conceptual redesign (see Appendix 2)

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – Process and Timeline

The Committee was tasked by the Select Board with developing short- and long-term conceptual redesigns and to do so, a plan was developed. This section outlines the timeline of the process that the committee followed and provides an overview of the flow of the discussions across meetings. Official minutes from all meetings are available at the BFRTAC website (<https://concordma.gov/980/Bruce-Freeman-Rail-Trail-Committee> )

### October 2021

The Concord Select Board tasked the BFRTAC with developing recommendations for conceptual redesigns to improve safety and separation of users in Junction Park.

### November 2021

- November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The BFRTAC met and agreed to hold a site walk on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The purpose of this posted site walk was to provide Committee members and the public with an opportunity to get a better understanding of the “as-built” environment of the park, suggest ideas, and ask questions.
- November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021: A site walk was held in the afternoon to solicit input from the public. See *Appendix 4* for a list of participants who signed in during the site walk and the questions generated by attendees.

### December 2021

- December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021: The BFRTAC agenda included the topic “Junction Park Conceptual Redesign discussion”. During this portion of the meeting:
  - The results of the site walk were discussed.
  - Using a discussion document (Appendix 5) the committee deliberated on an approach to tackling this task in terms of how many meetings, doing a survey, and publicizing the fact that the Committee would be working on conceptual redesigns.
  - The Committee discussed “core principles” for how to evaluate any feasible options. Separately and independently, six members responded after the meeting to a request to “weight” the principles by indicating relative priority. The result of that weighting is included in Appendix 2.
  - The Committee discussed how outreach to all interested stakeholders and developed a list of those as detailed in the minutes.

### January 2022

- January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The BFRTAC met, and the deliberations included a review of the “core principles”, setting up a public Junction Park Forum in February to solicit ideas and input from the public, discussion of a public survey, and the appointment of a Junction Park Subcommittee to work on all aspects of the conceptual redesign and report back

findings to the full Committee. Tracy Hansen, Adrienne Boardman, and Nathaniel Welch were appointed to the Subcommittee.

- January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Junction Park Subcommittee held its first posted meeting and Tracy Hansen was appointed chair. The meeting was focused mostly on creating a survey and promoting it online through social channels (Nextdoor, Facebook, Instagram) and through posting the survey in Town Hall, at the polling places, at the libraries, COA, and delivering surveys to Concord Park.
- January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Junction Park Subcommittee met again. Subcommittee members reported on the distribution of the survey through online forums and social media. A copy of the first page of the printed survey is included in Appendix 6 (the 2<sup>nd</sup> page had instructions and a map of the park). Discussions were held regarding the design and agenda for the February Junction Park Forum.

### February 2022

- February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met and discussed the status of the survey (there were 244 online responses received as of February 1<sup>st</sup>). The Junction Park Forum agenda was discussed as were clarifications of the Open Meeting Law (requested by the BFRTAC co-chair from the MA Attorney General's office) as they related to the Forum because it was not a posted meeting of the BFRTAC, but a way to get input like the site walk.
- February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met and it was reported that there were 514 Survey responses to date and a preliminary analysis of the data was shared. The Subcommittee also worked on the agenda for the Junction Park Forum
- February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022: A quorum of the BFRTAC met and the Subcommittee members updated the Committee on progress to date and plans. After the review, committee members were invited to share their ideas for short- and long-term conceptual redesigns. Members of the public participated during the meeting.
- February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The subcommittee met to finalize the agenda and materials for the Junction Park Forum.
- February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Junction Park Forum was held as a zoom meeting and had 53 attendees. Nathaniel Welch presented a set of slides (Copy available on the Committee website) that:
  - Framed the objective for the Forum and provided context through maps and photos of the park
  - Shared the results to date of the public survey
  - Set the stage to discuss ideas for conceptual redesign and invited the public to participate.
  - During the session, 23 comments from the public were captured in the notes (See Appendix 7 for a copy of those comments)

### March 2022

- March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met to review the results of the Junction Park Forum and discuss how to move forward. It was noted that the full survey dataset had been posted on the Town website.

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

- March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met to prepare for the full meeting of the BFRTAC. At this meeting the results of phone calls with the MassDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator were discussed including his input that he had never seen so many bike-related signs in such a small area as Junction Park. Also reported was an initial call with the MBTA’s chief engineer regarding use of the MBTA parcel of land to the west of the park. This concept of using the parcel to create a path for trail users and not impact the park had been submitted by the public early on. A second call would be set up with the relevant MBTA executive. The meeting was also the first chance for the subcommittee to review renderings created by Town of Concord staff of ideas submitted by the public and Committee members
- March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The full BFRTAC met, and the Subcommittee chair shared the ideas and renderings that had been created based upon public input.

### April 2022

- April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met with members of the Town of Concord staff including the Director of the DPW, the Director of Planning and Land Management, the town engineer, and the town safety officer. Short- and long-term plan renderings and ideas were discussed, and input was provided by both Town staff and members of the public.
- April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022: This was a meeting of the BFRTAC, and significant deliberations were held regarding the short-term conceptual redesign. A motion was made to recommend “Concept 10” as the short-term recommendation and that it be forwarded to the Town staff for their further review in preparation to present it to the Select Board. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously by roll call vote.
- April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Subcommittee met and reviewed the long-term concepts for the redesign. Results of the second meeting with the MBTA had clarified that they were not willing to allow use of the MBTA parcel for any Junction Park redesign. With that point clarified, the Subcommittee reviewed the rest of the long-term concepts. After deliberation, a motion was made to approve Concept #4 as the one to recommend to the Select Board. This was seconded and the motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

### May 2022

- May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The Full BFRTAC met and heard from the Subcommittee that Concept #4 was their recommendation. After deliberation by the Committee and public comments, a motion was made to move forward with Concept #4. It was seconded and approved unanimously by roll call vote. The co-chairs agreed to work on the draft recommendations to be presented to the committee at its June Meeting

### June 2022

- June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022: The BFRTAC met (with a quorum) and deliberated on the draft of the report as written by the co-chairs. Public comment was invited and then the Committee approved, by roll call vote, the final copy of this report.

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign Survey – Summary and Analysis of Results

The BFRTAC undertook to survey the public to get their input on the scope of the safety issue in Junction Park, understand how the Park was used, and to solicit ideas and input to increase safety. Appendix 6 is a copy of the printed version of the survey.

### The Questions

There were 12 questions on the survey, and each was intended to provide data to help the Committee understand the issues and opportunities:

- *Question 1: How often are you in Junction Park?* We wanted to understand how frequent a use of the park the respondent was and to understand if frequency of use was correlated with other answers.
- *Question 2: When in Junction Park, where are you usually headed?* Here we wanted to understand if the respondent was just passing through (on the trail, going to the train, going to a nearby business) or if the Park was their destination.
- *Question 3: When in Junction Park, what is your primary mode of transportation?* Understanding if they were walking, biking, using an assistive device, etc. provided us clarity on the type of park user.
- *Question 4: What do you believe the route that the BFRT takes from Junction Park going north?* Early on we learned that many trail users were not following the designated path of the BFRT and were instead just cutting across the commuter rail tracks. We wanted to understand the scope of the issue.
- *Question 5: When in Junction Park, how often do you see bicyclists, skateboarders, or rollerbladers riding through the park (vs. dismounting and walking)?* The dismounting question was a key part of the issues raised by some of the public who were vocal about safety – those cyclists were riding through the park and putting walkers at risk. This question was to help us understand the scope of the issue from the respondent's viewpoint.
- *Question 6: Are you aware that signage instructs all to walk across the railroad tracks?* A yes/no answer to help us gauge the scope of the potential safety issue
- *Question 7: What observations do you have regarding BFRT safety in Junction Park?* Open ended question to gather more information about the nature and scope of the perception of safety in the park.
- *Question 8: Do you have any ideas on improving safety in the park or on the BFRT, or suggestions for what to keep in mind when doing so?* Another open-ended question designed to solicit ideas from the public.
- *Question 9: Would you support Major structural changes to the layout of Junction Park to improve safety?* A second yes/no question trying to gauge the appetite of the public for a long-term redesign concept that might involve a lot of change.

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

- *Question 10: Why or why not?* Building on question 9 and soliciting more input about a long-term redesign concept.
- *Question 11: Do you live in Concord?* Understanding if the respondent were a Concord resident would help us to prioritize the answers. It turned out that over 89% of the respondents reported as Concord residents
- *Question 12: Your age?* We wanted to get a sense of the surveyed population was a fair representation of the town.

### Summary of Survey Results.

The raw survey data is available on the BFRTAC website. BFRTAC members reviewed the data and Nathaniel Welch, co-chair took on the task of analyzing and summarizing the survey results for the Committee. It should be noted that while Mr. Welch has extensive business experience and has often collected and analyzed data for marketing, strategy, and R&D purposes, he is not a statistician.

The basic survey data:

- Data was collected between January 21st, 2022, and February 19th, 2022.
- 569 respondents (559 Online, 10 Paper Surveys)
- For the “open-ended” questions the results were
  - Question 7 – 341 comments
  - Question 8 – 303 comments
  - Question 10 – 169 comments

The preliminary results were shared with the public on February 16<sup>th</sup> at the Junction Park Forum (and that presentation is posted on the BFRTAC website). Some of the slides of data and observations presented at the forum are included in Appendix 8:

## Conclusion

With this report, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee has completed the task assigned it by the Concord Select Board. The Committee's work engaged a large number of residents and other stakeholders in developing the three recommendations to improve the safety in Junction Park: a short-term conceptual redesign, a long-term conceptual redesign, and an additional safety recommendation related to the commuter crossing of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail line.

The Committee thanks the Select Board for this opportunity to serve the needs of the town.

This report was approved by the BFRTAC roll call vote on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

# Appendices

Appendix 1: History and Development of Junction Park

Appendix 2: Conceptual Redesign “Principles”

Appendix 3: Junction Park Conceptual Design Ideas

Appendix 4: Junction Park Site Walk, November 16, 2021

Appendix 5: Overview of the Conceptual Redesign Task

Appendix 6: Junction Park Survey Questionnaire

Appendix 7: Public Comments from the Junction Park Forum

Appendix 8: Selected slides from Junction Park Forum

## Appendix 1: A Brief History of Shared Space: Junction Park and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail



### TOWN OF CONCORD

Department of Planning & Land Management  
141 Keyes Road ~ Concord MA ~ 01742

June 6, 2022

To: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee  
From: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management  
Re: **Junction Park and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) – additional information**

I continue to attend meetings where some Concord residents call into question the design intentions for the BFRT and Junction Park. There are some residents who have expressed the opinion that the Junction Park design was not intended to accommodate or include the BFRT; that the former railroad right-of-way cannot (or should not) be shared. I provided a memo in October 2021 along with the various documents referenced that provided a timeline of events (available on the BFRTAC web page, under the “Junction Park Information” tab), yet some residents continue to raise these questions rather than focus on now addressing perceived safety issues that were not addressed in the initial redesign of Junction Park in 2011.

- In 1982, the Commonwealth recorded a deed taking all or any portion of the land, premises, easements rights-of-way and other rights in Concord comprising the former Lowell Secondary Track. In 1987, a feasibility study of the Sudbury to Lowell portion of the Lowell Secondary Track is prepared by the MPO’s Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) to consider converting the former railroad right-of-way to a multi-use rail trail and in 1991, the Town enters into a License Agreement with the State’s Executive Office of Transportation for use of a portion of the right-of-way for a park and walkway.
- In August 2004, Consultant Fay, Spofford & Thorndike completed the BFRT Environmental and Engineering Assessment with recommendations that the trail continue over the existing at-grade pedestrian crossing and through the existing park.
- Between 2009 and 2011, while Concord Public Works worked with a landscape architect/designer and the West Concord Green Thumbs to redesign Junction Park, the BFRT Advisory Committee hired consultant Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. to consider design alternatives for crossing the commuter railroad, which was completed in February 2010. Various alternatives were discussed with stakeholders (West Concord Task Force and business and property owners

June 14, 2022

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

along Commonwealth Ave.) that led to continued discussions with the MBTA regarding alternative crossing locations of the commuter railroad. During this time, the DPLM Director sought input from the CPW Director and Town Engineer on the BFRT route over the commuter railroad and through Junction Park.

- The design developed and implemented by Concord Public Works (with input from a landscape architect/designer and the WC Green Thumbs) for Junction Park was done so with the express intent to provide a multi-purpose, multi-use path through the park that accommodated the rail trail and could be used by all. This is documented in presentations by CPW Engineering (given September 14, 2011, and November 10, 2011, at Public Works Commission meetings), memoranda prepared by CPW Engineering (November 1, 2011), and as accepted by the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee on November 3, 2011.
- Additionally, the design for connecting the rail trail to the park over the Woods Hill Table property and adjacent to the Club Car Café/West Concord Depot was prepared by CPW Engineering staff in 2014 and approved by the MBTA. The BFRT design/engineering consultant was given the approved design plan in 2015.
- The BFRT design/engineering consultant and town’s project manager were directed by then-Public Works Director Rich Reine to work with CPW Engineering staff in 2015 to integrate the construction of the rail trail with the park without changing the stormwater drainage/retention basin at the edge of the park or the pervious paver placement as Junction Park was constructed.
- During meetings of the BFRT Advisory Committee since late 2020, and more recently the subcommittee, the statement “if we had only known that the rail trail was going to go through the park” things may have been designed differently has been repeated. As documented above, the Town knew in 2005 that the rail trail would be located over the former railroad right-of-way. Two documents (letter from Town Manager Christopher Whelan to the MBTA and the study by Faye, Spofford & Thorndike) noted the recommended location for siting the BFRT was over the former Lowell Secondary Track right-of-way. While crossing the active rail line was in question by the MBTA, there was no question about the recommended use of the Lowell Secondary Track right-of-way as the location for the rail trail. The meeting minutes from two Public Works Commission meetings in 2011 (noted above) clearly discuss the provision of the rail trail in the re-design of Junction Park.
- Recently it was suggested that the August 2012 agreement between the MBTA and the Town allows for exclusive use of the former Lowell Secondary Track as a park, (or for the Town to have the ability to direct such exclusive use); however, that document states:

“Licensee’s [the Town’s] use of the Premises is non-exclusive and is subject to all encumbrances, restrictions, reservations and other matters of record title and rights of possession in others, including without limitation, future grants of use to others.”
- Also, at recent meetings of the BFRTAC and/or subcommittee, some residents have suggested that the MBTA may be willing to allow the Town to use a portion of their land associated with the West Concord Depot building (a.k.a. Club Car Café) to construct a bicycle lane alongside Junction Park, thereby impacting the 9-10 parking spaces associated with the West Concord Depot. Recent discussions with senior officials of the MBTA resulted in reaffirmation that these parking spaces were necessary to continue to offer a viable lease of the property by the MBTA; that they would not be willing to allow such use for a bicycle lane. While the lease with the Club

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Car Café may have expired, there is a provision in the lease that allows the restaurant to continue its operations in the building, and it is unknown how the MBTA may choose to use the building in the future.

In conclusion, the documents and actions cited above make it clear that since at least 1987, when the feasibility study was prepared by CTPS and the 1991 lease agreement was signed between the Town and the Commonwealth, that the Rail Trail and the Park would occupy and share the same space. The current work of the BFRTAC to develop conceptual redesigns for the short and long term will help to make that shared space serve its multiple purposes in a safe and equitable way.

## Appendix 2: Conceptual Redesign “Principles”

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee  
Junction Park Conceptual Redesign  
Design Principles – Weighted  
From 12/2/21 BFRTAC Meeting Discussion**

These principles are input to the public conversations and the BFRTAC’s deliberations on the Junction Park conceptual redesign. Each principle is weighted in terms of its importance versus other principles by dividing a total of 100 points across all the principles so that the total of the scores = 100. 6 members responded to the request and the average of their weights for each principle is shown below ordered from highest to lowest

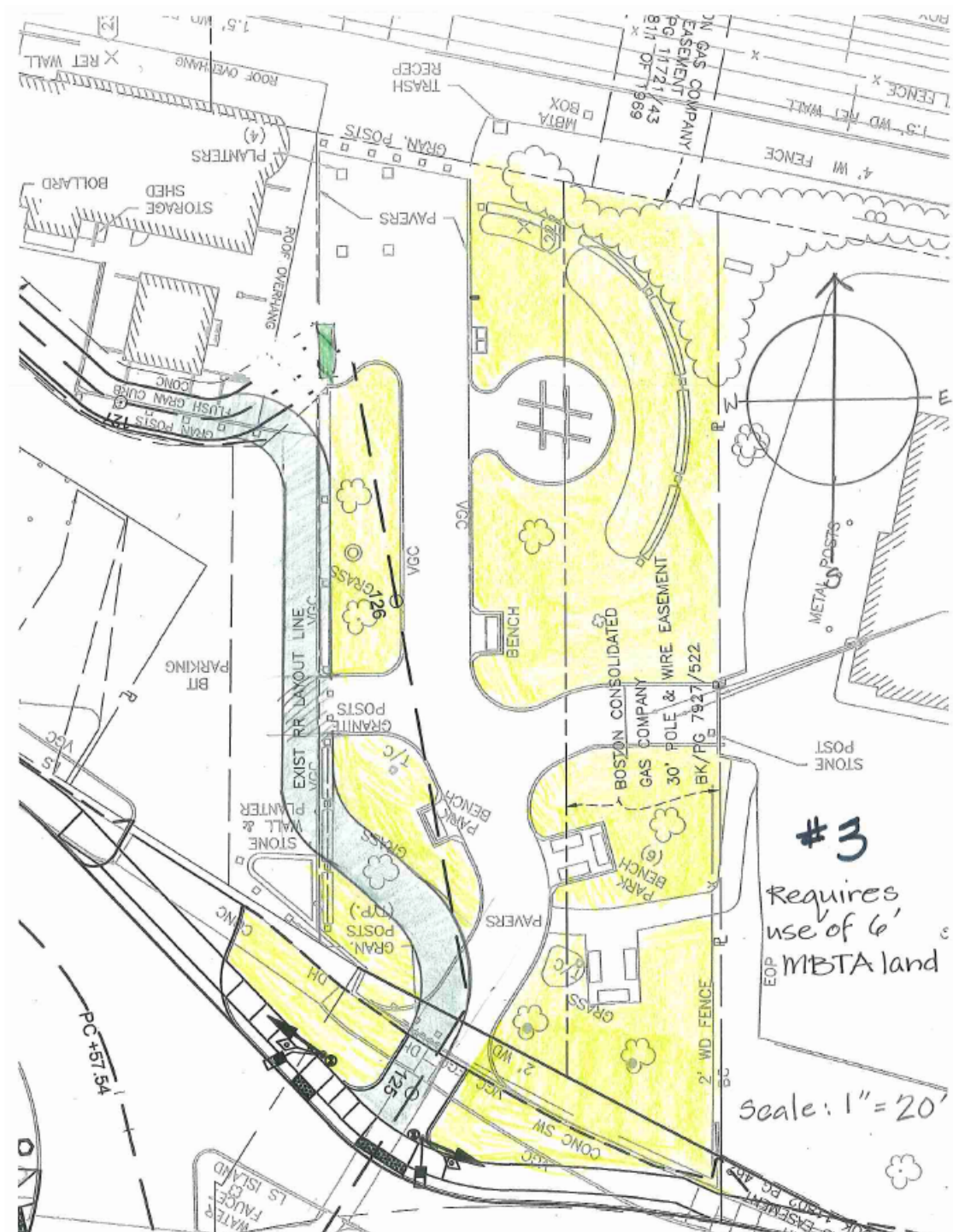
Principles (DRAFT)	Weighted Average (n=6)
Balance the need for safety with the need to keep the park aesthetically pleasing, inclusive and welcoming.	16.6
In concert with all stakeholders, consider changes to the current park layout including landscaping, location of paths, benches, fencing, signage, drainage, etc. that will meet the goal of safety and separation of users	16.3
Meet the needs of the 3 types of users (trail, park, and commuter).	15
Include recommendations for the areas surrounding Junction Park that would enhance and improve safety of users.	14.2
Be a collaborative process which includes participation of all stakeholders and is explicitly in service to the three types of users.	11.2
Make specific recommendations and be explicit about tradeoffs considered	9.2
Suggest “signifiers”, that help all users to be clear where they should be or go when they approach, leave, or are in the park.	8.3
Encourage continued use of the park and trail by all three user types.	5.0
Consider whether or not to recommend using adjacent parcels.	4.2
Total of	100.0

Each principle should be ranked or weighted in terms of its importance versus other principles by distributing a total of 100 points across each of the principles.

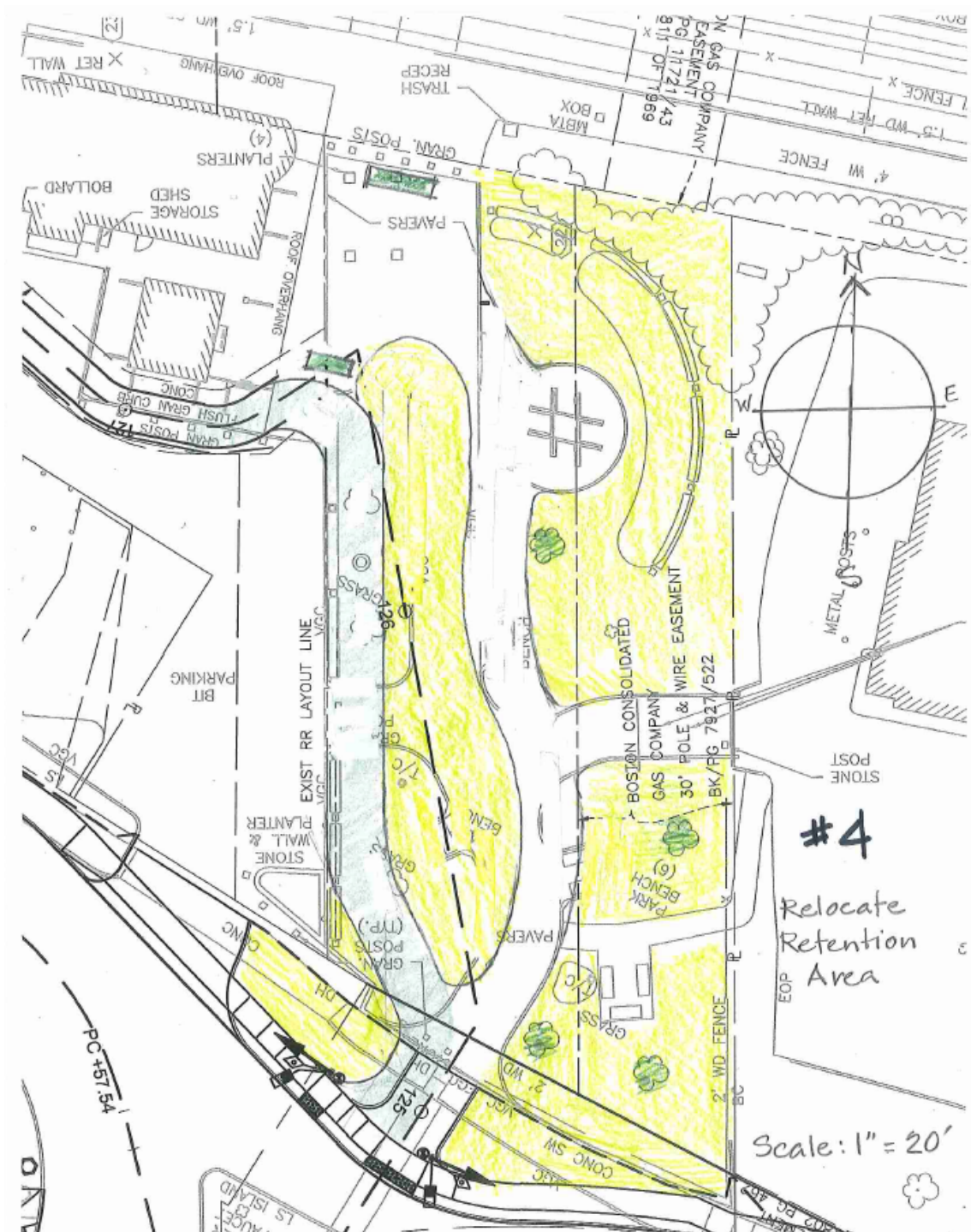




Conceptual Design JP 3

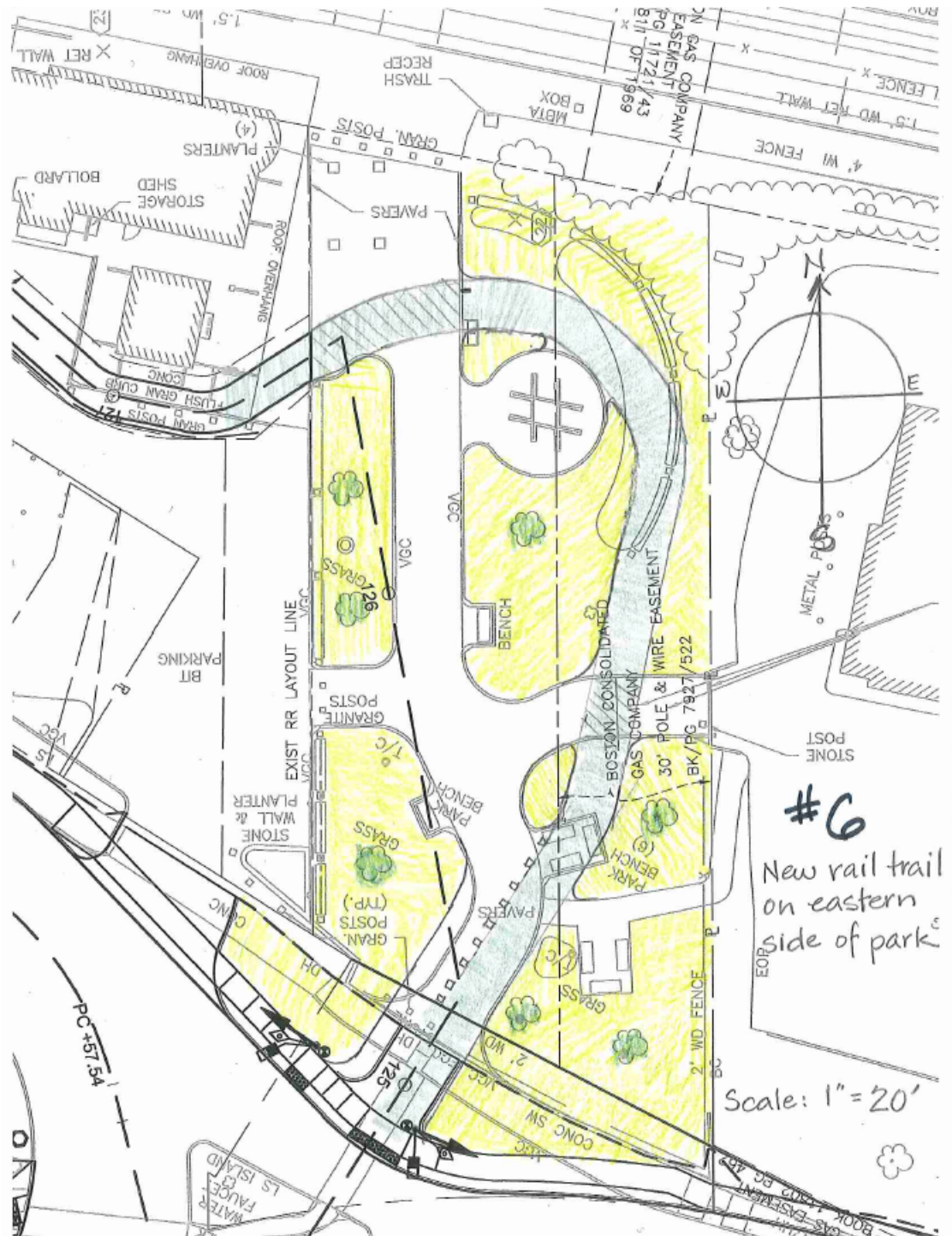


Conceptual Design JP 4





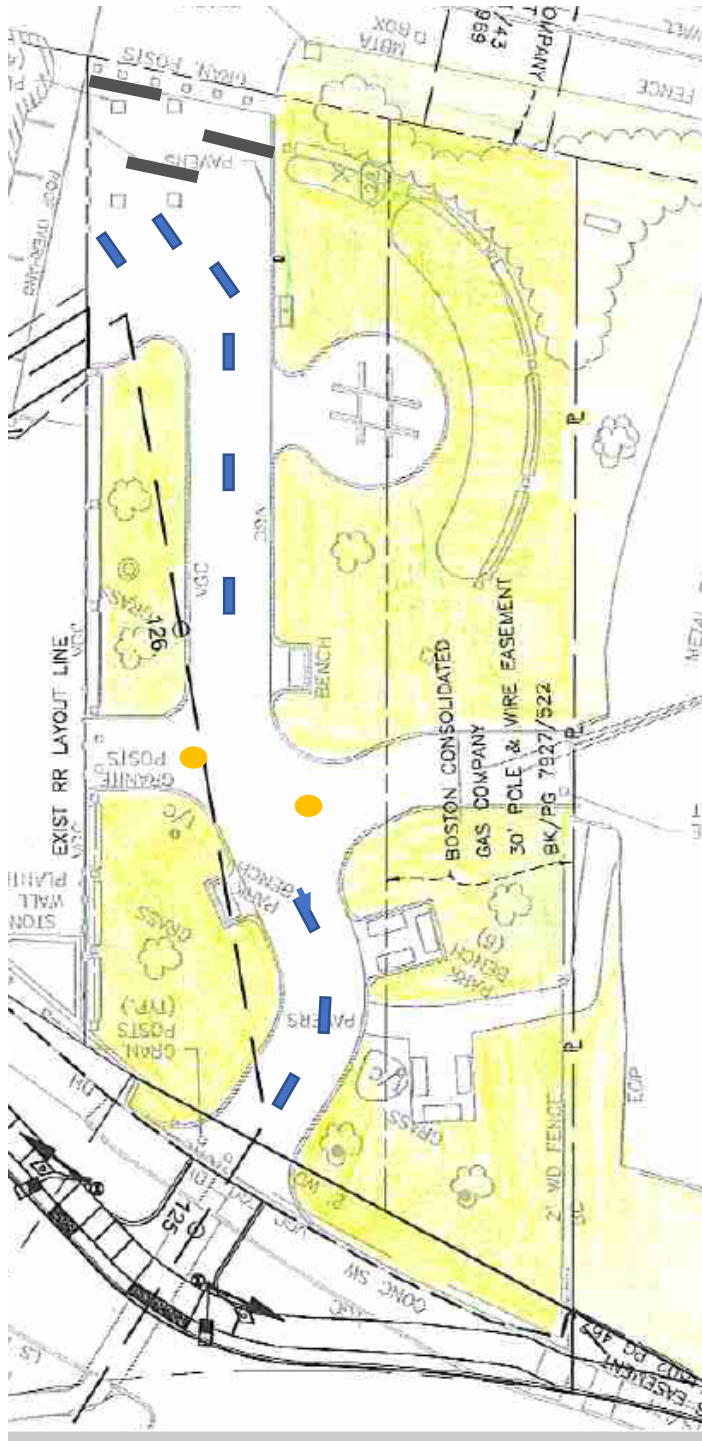
Conceptual Design JP 6







Conceptual Design JP 9





## Appendix 4: Junction Park Site Walk, November 16, 2021

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee  
Junction Park Site Visit Attendees<sup>2</sup>  
November 16, 2021**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Affiliation/Interest</u></b>
Dorcas Miller	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Adrienne Boardman	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Nat Welch	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Richard Fahlander	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Deborah Adelman	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Sam Stearns	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Tracy Hansen	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Emily Teller	Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Barbara Pike	Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Susan Bates	Select Board
Marcia Rasmussen	Concord Planning and Land Management
Steve Dookran	Concord Public Works
Alan Cathcart	Concord Public Works
Erin Stevens	Concord Information Officer
Meryl Schwartz	Commission on Disabilities
Susan Mlodozieniec	West Concord Advisory Committee
Ann Sussman	West Concord Advisory Committee
Dorrie Kehoe	West Concord Green Thumbs
Ed Feather	West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee
Phil Posner	Cyclist
Toby Kopman	Citizen
Bill Robichaud	Citizen

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<sup>2</sup> Attendees who signed in. there may have been other attendees who did not sign in.

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee**  
**Junction Park Site Walk**  
**Questions Submitted During the Site Walk**  
**November 16, 2021**

- Can barriers be installed to prevent cyclists from riding through the park while meeting the needs of people using strollers and mobility-assisting devices (wheelchairs, scooters, trikes)?
- Can trail users and park users be separated? A continuation of railings beyond the Club Car Café?
- Can the 90-degree intersection of the trail at the park (near Club Car Café) be redesigned to make the trail more apparent to users coming from the south.
- Can signage be re-designed and re-configured to be more visible and consistent?
- Is there any mechanism/authority to enforce “walk your wheels.”
- How do we discourage people coming from the north from entering the parking lot and heading straight through across the tracks?
- Is there technology available that prevents people from crossing tracks when a train is approaching?
- Are there are other examples of a rail trail intersecting an active rail line?
- Are there other instances of a rail trail and park sharing the same space?
- Can we consider utilizing land beyond the town and state property lines (i.e., MBTA parking for Club Car Café)?
- Should the various property owners be brought together to discuss solutions?
- How do underground utilities (gas/electric/drainage) affect any proposed changes?
- Can we find a volunteer landscape architect to help evaluate solutions?

Submitted by Richard Fahlander, co-chair

## Appendix 5: Overview of the Conceptual Redesign Task

### **Junction Park Conceptual Redesign Task – Discussion Document Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee December 2, 2021**

#### **Context for the task:**

- Deliverables
  - A written recommendation to the Select Board on the “conceptual redesign” of Junction Park To ensure the safety and separation of two types of users:
    - Wheeled recreational users (e.g., cyclists, skateboards, scooters, roller-bladers, etc.)
    - Pedestrians (e.g., people on foot, dog-walkers, wheelchair users, strollers, people on crutches, etc.)
  - Include a recommendation for a “short term” proposal that augments signage and helps address increased ridership due to the completion of the Rt 2 Bridge in July 2022
- Timing: The BFRTAC must deliver a recommendation to the Select Board no later than June 30, 2022.
- Constraints:
  - There are no funds to hire experts or pay for studies (these can be part of the recommendations)
  - The area that the Select Board has authorized the BFRTAC to use in the redesign is the right-of-way and the adjacent town-owned parcel to the east (under which runs a gas transmission line.
  - The impact of Open Meeting Laws on the drafting and discussion process are not fully understood and the BFRTAC will need some guidance from the Town Clerk to ensure we are following the right process.

#### **Suggested Methodology for discussion:**

- A series of public meetings (separate and distinct from the monthly BFRTAC monthly meetings) held by the BFRTAC between December 2, 2021, through April 2022 to get community input and shape the conceptual redesign.
- The committee uses its regular meetings to take up the results of the public meetings and moves the process forward (with discussion and roll call votes as needed)
- The committee drafts its recommendations (process TBD), shares draft and then votes on recommendations as needed/required.

#### **Potential topics for discussion at 12/2 meeting**

- Discuss core principles for a conceptual redesign. Principles can guide the Committee’s work and any solutions can be evaluated against the principles that are developed. Some examples of core principles (THESE ARE ILLUSTRATIVE):

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

- “The conceptual redesign maximizes the safety of all park users by physically separating rail trail users (i.e., bikers, skaters, runners, etc.) from other Junction Park users (i.e., walkers, wheelchair users, people sitting on benches).”

## Appendix 6: Junction Park Survey Questionnaire

### Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee Junction Park Survey Questions Available from January 19, 2022, through February 18, 2022

#### West Concord Survey: Junction Park Safety

The **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)** Advisory Committee needs your feedback! We've been tasked with creating a short and long term plan for improving safety at Junction Park by June 2022. See the map on the next page. Scan the QR code to the right to take the survey digitally.



1. How often are you in Junction Park?  
a. Daily                      b. Weekly                      c. Monthly                      d. Less Than Once A Month
  
2. When in Junction Park, where are you usually headed?  
a. To the parking lot or the train  
b. To the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)  
c. To nearby businesses  
d. To enjoy Junction Park  
e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. When in Junction Park, what is your primary mode of transportation? (Select up to two).  
a. Walking  
b. Biking  
c. Rollerblading/skateboarding  
d. In wheelchair / using a walker  
e. Pushing stroller
  
4. What do you believe is the route that the BFRT takes from Junction Park going north?  
a. Across the railroad tracks and through the commuter parking lot  
b. Left right before the Club Car Café and behind Woods Hill Table, then across the tracks  
c. Nowhere - that's where the BFRT ends  
d. I don't know
  
5. When in Junction Park, how often do you see bicyclists, skateboarders, or rollerbladers riding through the park (vs. dismounting and walking).  
0% to 25%                      25% to 50%                      50% to 75%                      75% to 100%
  
6. Are you aware that signage instructs all to walk across the railroad tracks?    Yes    No
  
7. What observations do you have regarding BFRT safety in Junction Park?
  
  
8. Do you have any ideas on improving safety in the park or on the BFRT, or suggestions for what to keep in mind when doing so?
  
  
9. Would you support major structural changes to the layout of Junction Park to improve safety?    Yes    No
10. Why or why not? (Add any additional comments here)

[Map and Demographic Questions on Next Page]

## Appendix 7: Public Comments from the Junction Park Forum

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee**  
**Junction Park Conceptual Redesign**  
**February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Forum**  
**Public Comments – 53 Attendees**

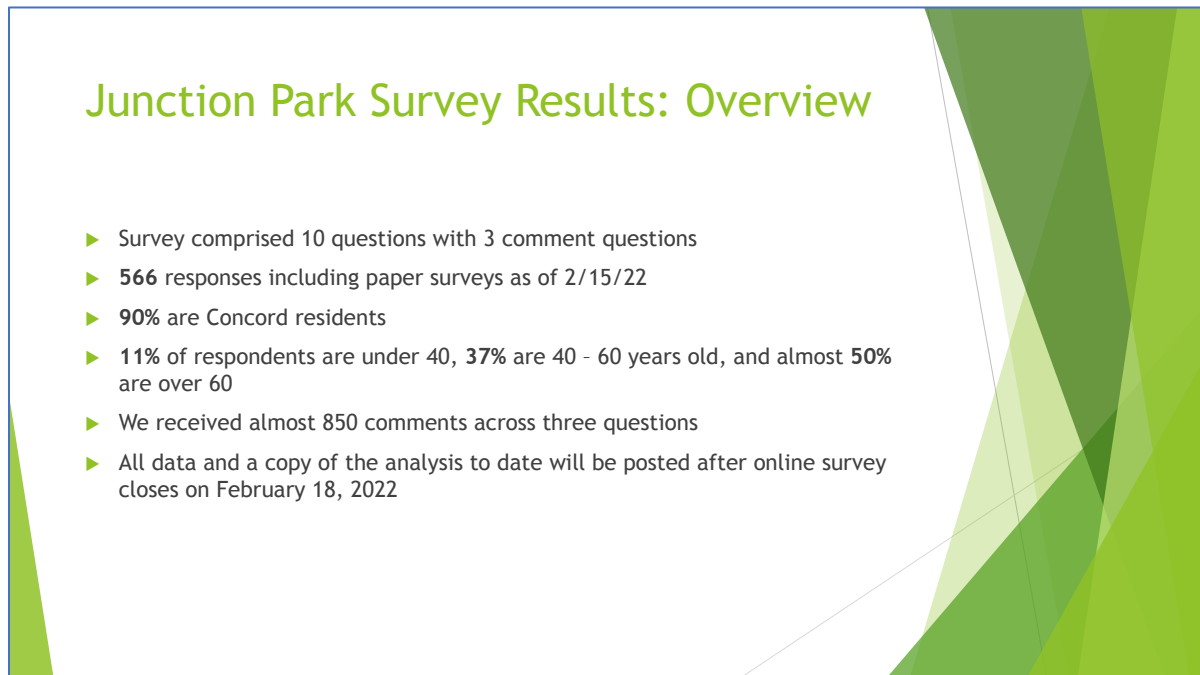
- Peter Lowitt (5 Westvale Drive): Agrees with short term; is against taking landscape areas due to disruption to storm water management and sustainable concepts being jeopardized
- Ellen Quackenbush (206 Prairie Street): Engage with community members who are no longer using park due to safety concerns (ex: Concord Park); consider those who are not able-bodied and on bikes
- Cosette Dunn (131 Ministerial Drive): Only way to be safe is to have clearly marked separation physically (railings or planters) for wheels vs people who are walking and using the park; signs are not working - need alternative path for bikers
- Cynthia Katz (20 Conant Street): Concord should take lead from Arlington; BFRT should not go through Junction Park (no win for bikers and pedestrians); BFRT should go down Commonwealth Ave and reconnect beyond parking lot for MBTA; multi-modal trail, but hard to be a pedestrian on the trail; Dan Stapleton (20 Conant Street) echoed comments
- Bill Herring (214 Peter Springs Road): Markings on the pavement are an economical way to test to see if the concept works, and then can upgrade to more permanent solutions (bricks); adding any obstruction should be done carefully to avoid any accidents; thinks it's almost impossible to separate wheeled users completely
- Bill Satterthwaite (297 Laws Brook Road): Survey results may not truly convey real usage - the Park is indeed used quite often; ideal place to put BFRT would be on the east side, down by 7-Eleven; the approach to have the BFRT go down Commonwealth Ave had been considered in the past and was problematic; Sallie Satterthwaite: cultural problem with cyclists not registering what signs and bollards are instructing them to do
- Isabel Bailey (121 Everett Street): Agrees with the comments to add painted markings
- Nika Engberg (62 Church Street): A solution should not make the park inconvenient for cyclists
- Julie Hirshler (1381 Main Street): Bicycles can be dangerous and were not the intended purpose/users of the park; need to revisit how the Park can be restored to the intended use and find a different path for the BFRT
- Jeanne Griffith (396 Thoreau Street): Supports the idea of painted markers and would recommend making the signs larger; not safe to route cyclists down Commonwealth Ave
- Jean Goldsberry (1832 Main Street): Chair of the Concord Commission on Disability; feels that safety is a big concern and that the current signs are ignored and are not effective; physical barriers may help as the head of Minuteman Arc, we need to be mindful of neighbors that have mobility limitations and need to ensure safety when on the trail

## Junction Park Conceptual Redesign – The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

- Nancy Crowley (5 Concord Greene): member of Green Thumbs and opened Concord Park in 2001 - Park is focal point of West Concord; would hate for paving to be broken up or marked up; suggests making the area on the west (by Club Car Cafe) and make it the BFRT path without disrupting the rest of the park
- Tanya Hellman (240 Border Road): Speaking as President of Green Thumbs; proud to keep the park looking beautiful; support BFRTAC efforts
- Tracy Hansen (77 Hill Street): Ideal solution would be to have BFRT not go through Junction Park; however after reading the history has accepted that BFRT needs to remain close to where it is; key is to separate BFRT users from park users and pedestrians; need to think about subconscious signifiers to assist with making sure people know where pedestrian areas are (tables, planters, etc.) to make sure that it's visually clear where cyclists should/shouldn't go; also need to think about the BFRT path from the other side of the tracks (across from the park by the Nashoba Bakery direction) as navigation is unclear and confusing
- Julie Rohwein (1404 Main Street): need to be mindful about how we are talking about separating pedestrians as they are also on the trail (not just cyclists use the trail); trail cannot be too hard to use
- Cosette Dunn (131 Ministerial Drive): We do not want to discourage people from riding bikes in the area
- Dorrie Kehoe (51 McArthur Road): If pavers are painted, they become pervious; discussions about using part of MBTA land and would recommend that this further be investigated (or into parking area)
- Jeff Collins (address not stated): Need to ensure the BFRT is kept as a smooth connection; rather than thinking about getting the BFRT out of the park, should we remove the Park from the BFRT. and investigate other areas in town where the purposes of Junction Park are met (between Twin Seafood and Teacakes, etc.); acknowledges tradeoffs with all approaches and decisions, but urges examining the problem from all perspectives
- Sallie Satterthwaite (297 Laws Brook): A cyclists who is waiting for the traffic light is not going to lose much more time or momentum by walking through the park either
- Ellen Quackenbush (206 Prairie Street): Clarifying the earlier recommendation about using the Club Car Cafe parking; making it simple and intuitive
- Marilyn Lowitt (5 Westvale Drive): Echoed the possibility to investigate use of parking spaces to the west of the garden; they present their own safety concerns
- Jeanne Griffith (396 Thoreau Street): Agrees that signage is difficult and that markings on the ground are often easier for cyclists to follow; human nature might lead people to continue using Junction Park even if BFRT is rerouted
- Pamela Dritt (13 Concord Greene): Using the park quite a bit and has never seen an accident or near accident in the park; fears are ahead of the reality; would be against the possibility to removing the ability for cyclists or skateboarders to go through the park; should only restrict when there's good reason to restrict

## Appendix 8: Selected slides from Junction Park Forum\*

### Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee Junction Park Forum Slides 2/16/22



**Junction Park Survey Results: Overview**

- ▶ Survey comprised 10 questions with 3 comment questions
- ▶ **566** responses including paper surveys as of 2/15/22
- ▶ **90%** are Concord residents
- ▶ **11%** of respondents are under 40, **37%** are 40 - 60 years old, and almost **50%** are over 60
- ▶ We received almost 850 comments across three questions
- ▶ All data and a copy of the analysis to date will be posted after online survey closes on February 18, 2022

\*Complete slide presentation available on the BFRTAC website

## Junction Park Survey Results: Usage

- ▶ 13% visit daily, 42% weekly, and 21% monthly
- ▶ **84% of respondents are passing through** to get to businesses or the rail trail. Just 5% are heading to the park and 3% are commuters
- ▶ Transportation "Mode" (multiple answers allowed) Top 5 are
  - ▶ Walking (58%)
  - ▶ Walking & Biking (19%)
  - ▶ Biking (13%)
  - ▶ Walking & Pushing Stroller (2%)
  - ▶ Pushing stroller (under 1%)
  - ▶ All others (8%)
- ▶ Frequency of observed riding:
  - ▶ 63% report seeing people riding 50% or less of the time
  - ▶ 32% report seeing people riding between 50% and all the time
  - ▶ 5% left blank

## Junction Park Survey Results: Other

- ▶ 47% support major structural changes while 36% do not support and 17% left the question blank. Comments indicate they want more info on what comprises a "major structural change."
- ▶ A quick and unscientific survey of comments surfaced the following themes:
  - ▶ While 20% of respondents to question 10 said there was a safety issue, another than 30% of respondents said the park was safe or there is no issue.
  - ▶ Across all 3 questions there is a lot of support and ideas for improved signage, trail markings (e.g. like the Freedom Trail), and barriers
  - ▶ The MBTA crossing is a significant issue for including safety and security of users as well as confusion about where the BFRT path actually goes (15% don't know).

## Illustrative (and incomplete) Survey Themes

- ▶ Small, congested space with people moving at different speeds and in different directions
- ▶ No barriers around train tracks
- ▶ No notification that a train is coming
- ▶ TWCGT have done an amazing job of landscaping and maintaining a special space in west concord
- ▶ Lack of clarity on where rail trail goes
- ▶ No clear path for the rail trail; Some not even aware the rail trail passes through the park
- ▶ Bicyclists and walkers do not always agree on how safe it is
- ▶ Concern about cars entering commuter parking lot where rail trail crosses
- ▶ Concern about cars turning right at Commonwealth Ave rail trail intersection
- ▶ Tables/planters in the way & there needs to be more tables and planters to slow people down
- ▶ Dogs not on leashes
- ▶ Kids running around, people hanging around
- ▶ People not walking straight / walking side by side
- ▶ Poor lighting
- ▶ Congestive not conducive to calm park experience
- ▶ People funneled to Junction Park only because there is no crossing on Main Street
- ▶ Some pedestrians fear cyclists who don't dismount and skateboarders and rollerbladers
- ▶ Cyclists slow down to safely avoid pedestrians
- ▶ It is inconvenient and sometimes difficult for cyclists to dismount
- ▶ Some cyclists use street to avoid dismounting; some will not use trail if dismounting enforced?
- ▶ Questions around need for and cost of major structural changes to the park
- ▶ Not a problem - it's perfectly safe

The full survey and analysis are available on the BFRTAC website.