

## **Minuteman Bikeway Annual Town Meeting FAQ**

Town Meeting is being asked to approve and pay for private land takings on 45 parcels along the Reformatory Branch Trail to extend the Minuteman Bikeway from Depot Park to just west of the Concord town line. This action is required in order for the Town to utilize over \$11m provided in state and federal funding for the transportation improvement project of paving the trail, making it accessible for all residents to use. Additionally, this approval will secure access rights for existing and future utility infrastructure such as water, sewer, and fiber optic.

For more information on the project and the related warrant articles please go to:

<https://www.bedfordma.gov/departments-of-public-works/webforms/minuteman-bikeway-extension-project>

<https://www.bedfordma.gov/town-manager/town-meeting/pages/2022-annual-town-meeting-materials>

### **1. What is the history of this project?**

- 2004: Town Meeting approved funding for a feasibility study on this section of the trail.
- 2005: The feasibility study was completed, and later supplemented by an additional study in 2008.
- 2010: Town Meeting approved paving the off-road portion of the trail.
- 2014: State and Federal funding was approved by MassDOT.
- 2010-2015: Bike accommodations were studied and MassDOT recommended installing a shared-use path.
- 2015: Select Board approved a shared-use path.
- 2016: Town Meeting approved funding for design of the project.
- 2017: 25% Design completed and the project was approved for FY22 Transportation Improvement Plan Funding
- 2019: Meetings with abutters.
- 2020: Design Public Hearing was held in February, and in November, 75% Design Plans were submitted to MassDOT.
- 2021: 75% Right-of-Way Plans submitted to MassDOT with appraisals of all private parcels.
- 2022: 100% Design Plans submitted to MassDOT.
- 2022: Conservation Commission approved the Notice of Intent. Bedford Arbor Resources acknowledged that the plans and mitigation met the Town's Tree Policy. As a result, \$21,700 will be contributed to the Town's Tree Removal Revolving Fund.

### **2. What is being asked of Town Meeting?**

Through the Town's title attorney, it was discovered that sections of the former Boston & Maine Railroad Right of Way that have been part of the historic location of the Reformatory Trail and long-presumed to be Town property, are in fact not owned by the Town, but by the abutting property owners. Article 6 & Article 11 will ensure that the entire Reformatory Branch Trail remains open to the public, and will also provide the Town with absolute ownership rights to the existing water, sewer, fiber optic, and drainage infrastructure previously built along the Reformatory Trail. The easements being acquired as part of this process ensure that the trail stays public. If the Town is not able to acquire the easements – the trail reverts to private ownership. The Town has identified that the private portions of the trail could be changed by any permitted means the owner sees fit. If Town Meeting were to reject the proposal, the Town would need to negotiate utility and conduit easements to ensure access.

**3. What are the next steps?**

If approved at Town Meeting, the project would be advertised for construction and a contractor is selected through MassDOT, with construction beginning in late 2022 or early 2023.

**4. What if Article 6 and Article 11 do not pass at Town Meeting?**

If Town Meeting does not approve both Articles, then the project will be removed from the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) since it did not meet its planned advertisement date. The \$11 million in federal TIP funding will be reallocated to another community or project. This will jeopardize Bedford's standing for current/future TIP funding requests such as for The Great Road Master Plan. Portions of the trail will also remain within private property, and property owners could block access entirely to sections of the trail. Furthermore, the Town would have to seek other funds to purchase rights to maintain its existing utility infrastructure.

**5. Why does this Project's Right of Way Acquisition cost so much?**

As required by federal law, this federally-funded project requires that all 45 properties providing easements or land for this project are compensated at the market value price.

**6. What are the benefits of this project?**

- Accessibility for all residents
- Improved bike and pedestrian safety along Railroad Avenue with a sidewalk
- Improved bikeway crossings along Railroad Avenue and Hartwell Road
- Underpass for bikers and pedestrians at Concord Road
- Three parking areas with porous pavement, benches, bicycle parking, and water fountains
- Trail access to the John Glenn Middle School
- Easier access to conservation land
- Unpaved stone dust shoulders along 75% of the trail

**7. How will the new trail be maintained?**

Maintenance will be similar to the existing Minuteman Bikeway segment in Bedford.