



**rails-to-trails**  
conservancy

# **America's Rails-with-Trails:**

A Resource for Planners, Agencies and  
Advocates on Trails Along  
Active Railroad Corridors

California Trails and Greenways Conference  
Palm Springs, CA  
April 9, 2014

Barry Bergman  
Western Regional Office  
[barry@railstotrails.org](mailto:barry@railstotrails.org)



# **rails-to-trails** conservancy



[www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)

# Rails-with-Trails 2013: Safe, Common and Growing



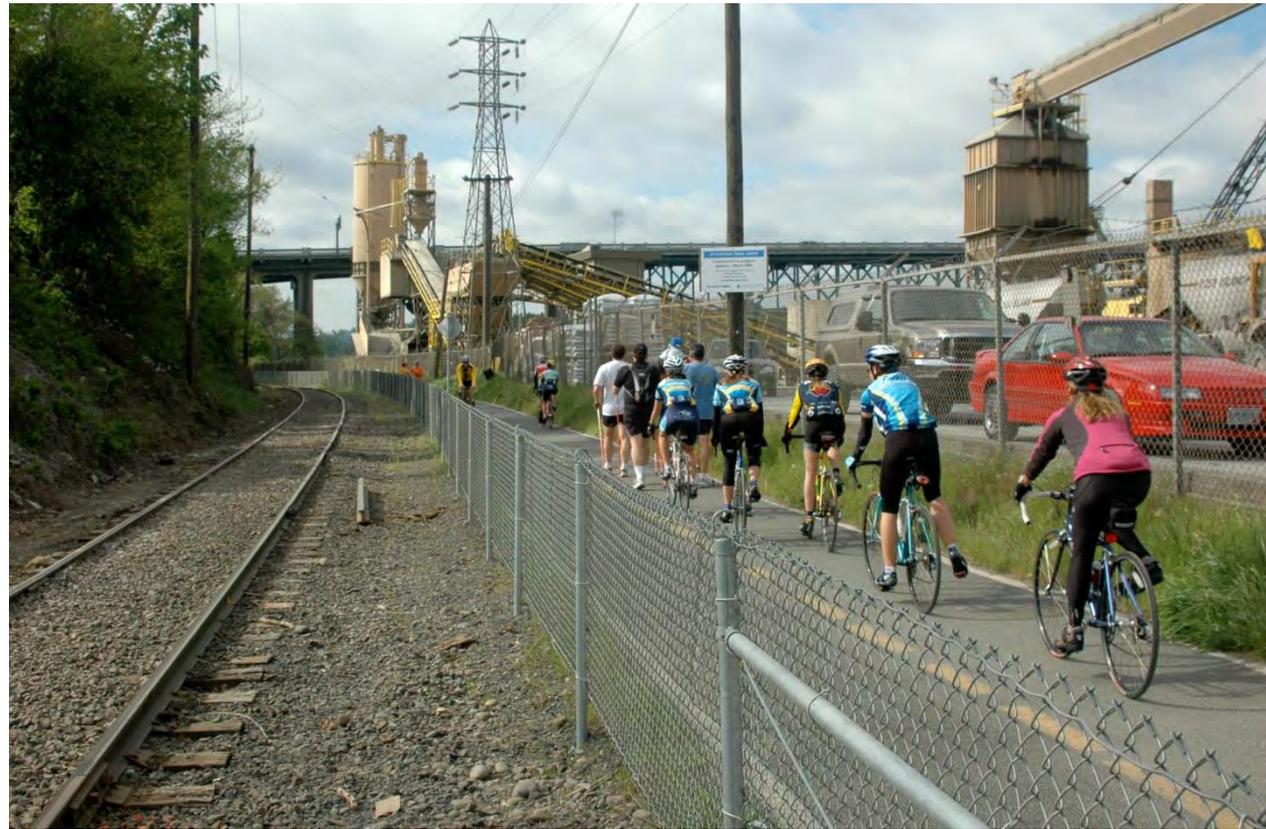
RWT = shared-use path directly adjacent to active rail corridor

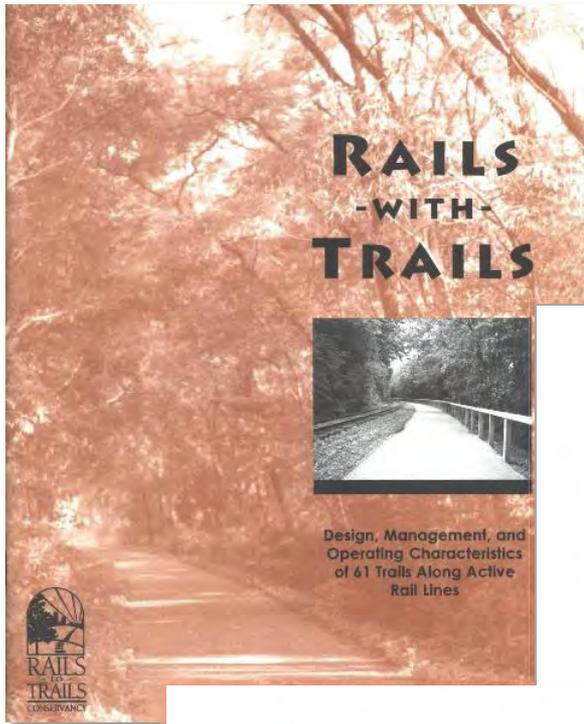


Pinole, CA

# 2013 Rail-with-Trail Report

- National scope
- PA DCNR funded
- 88 Trail managers from 33 states participated
- On-line resources for trail managers, staff, and advocates





Design, Management, and Operating Characteristics of 61 Trails Along Active Rail Lines



## California Rails-with-Trails

A Survey of Trails Along Active Rail Lines



SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL (PHOTO: RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY)

### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) serves as the national voice for more than 100,000 members and supporters. We've help develop more than 15,000 miles of rail-trail throughout the country, and thousands of miles of potential rail-trails waiting to be built. We have supported the successful growth and development of rail-trails since opening our doors on February 1, 1996, and we remain dedicated to the creation of a nationwide network of trails and connecting resources. Further, RTC is committed to advancing the health of America's environment, transportation, economy, neighborhoods and people—ensuring a better future made possible by trails and the connections they create.

NOVEMBER 2009



U.S. Department of Transportation  
 Federal Highway Administration  
 Federal Railroad Administration  
 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
 Federal Transit Administration

## Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned

Literature Review, Current Practices, Conclusions



August 2009  
 H:\A\A\25\00152\04 1



## Rail-with-Trail: Tracks and Trails Can Share the Corridor

seek to accommodate both recreation, rail-with-trail has become a popular concept. Many rail-with-trails exist in not uncommon for local companies to be developing multi-use paths rights-of-way (ROW). RTC supports the claim that rail-with-trails can coexist, and more are in development across the United States and Canada. At RTC, we encourage local and state groups that want to know how to advocate for rails-with-trails to help build the case for rail-with-trail. Through this exchange, we have a growing comprehensive list of studies, reports and photos of our **Trail-Building Toolbox**. Also, be sure to check out RTC's **Nanaimo Rails-with-Trails: A Survey of Trails Along Active Rail Lines** and other resources available elsewhere online:



- John Luton's Flickr site:** Luton is a councillor for the city of Victoria, British Columbia, and executive director of the **Capital Bike and Walk Society - Rail Trail** (named for the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway) as well as the **Society - Rails-with-Trails Photo Gallery:** John Luton's Flickr site includes a collection of rail-with-trail photos provides a glimpse of the other jurisdictions. Find in this photo gallery, which includes images from Nanaimo, British Columbia.
- Trail Solutions, Rails-with-Trails:** This gallery includes photos of rail-with-trails in California, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon and Washington.
- Trail Alliance - Trail Crossings Photo Gallery:** Between 2003 and 2007, the **Trail Alliance** (formerly Free the River Park Trail) successfully advocated for CSX Transportation to allow safe street-level crossings and crossings between the trail and the "original" Schuylkill River Park. This gallery illustrates dozens of safe trail and rail crossings.
- Policy Efforts:** The **Trail Alliance** has garnered support from dozens of national and state organizations and a formal endorsement from Virginia Governor Timothy W. Kaine. **Their effort** to implement innovative rail-with-trail policy at the state level.
- Trail Authority of Austin, Texas:** The **Trail Authority of Austin, Texas** completed a feasibility study in 2007 that illustrates how a rail-with-trail can be developed and integrated with transit development. The **Trail Authority** in Washington, D.C., includes a segment that is a multi-use path along a railroad ROW used by CSX Transportation, Amtrak, MARC

# Rails-with-Trails are Common



- 167 RWT (9% of rail-trails)
- 1,437 miles of trail (39% or 560 miles adjacent to rail)
- 41 states
- 33 RWT in CA

Martin Luther King Jr. Promenade, San Diego, CA

# CA Trails Included in Survey

- Oceanside Coastal Rail Trail
  - Folsom Parkway Rail Trail
  - Solana Beach Coastal Rail Trail
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. Promenade
  - Santa Clara River Trail
  - Carlsbad Coastal Rail Trail
  - Rose Canyon Bike Path
  - Fillmore Trail
  - Mission City Bike Trail
  - Richmond Greenway
  - Alton Bike Trail
  - Escondido-San Marcos Inland Rail Trail
  - Manteca Tidewater Bikeway
  - Old US 40 Bike Path
  - Sacramento River Parkway Trail
  - San Clemente Beach Trail
  - San Francisco Bay Trail (Pinole, Hercules)
  - San Luis Obispo Railroad Safety Trail
  - Santa Maria Valley Railroad Trail
  - Walnut Trail
  - Watts Towers Crescent Greenway
  - Westminster Hoover Street Trail
- 

# Rail-with-Trail Growth

Date	Number of Trails	Total Trail Length (in miles)	# of states with existing RWTs
1996	37	299	N/A
2000	61	523	20
2013 total	167	1,437	41

+60 rail-with-trail projects in development

# Rails-with-Trails Under Development in CA



Cal Park Tunnel,  
Marin County, CA

# Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART)

- Cloverdale to Larkspur
- 70 miles
- 54 miles of Class I facilities
- Estimated 7,000-10,000 trail users/day
- Multi-modal: rail, trail, connections to airport and ferry terminal
- Multi-jurisdictional: SMART responsible for constructing and maintaining all w/in ROW
- Target completion date 2016



# Impact on Communities



- 14 stations
- Trail provides solution to “last mile”
- Transit-oriented development = Trail-oriented development

# Coastal Rail Trail

- 44 miles from Oceanside to San Diego
- MOU between Oceanside, Del Mar, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Solana Beach, and San Diego
- Identified as priority by SANDAG, which has approved \$200 million for priority bicycle projects over 10 years



# Rails-with-Trails are Safe



Manteca Tidewater Bikeway, Manteca, CA

# Range of Designs

- Findings similar to characteristics reported in 2000.
  - US DOT's "RWT: Lessons Learned" report remains the most comprehensive design guidance available.
  - Several trail managers reported setback and fencing requirements imposed by the railroad.
  - AASHTO now provides guidance on "Railroad Grade Crossing" in the 2012 *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*.
  - The California MUTCD includes guidance for shared use paths that cross railroad corridors at grade.
- 

# Crossings

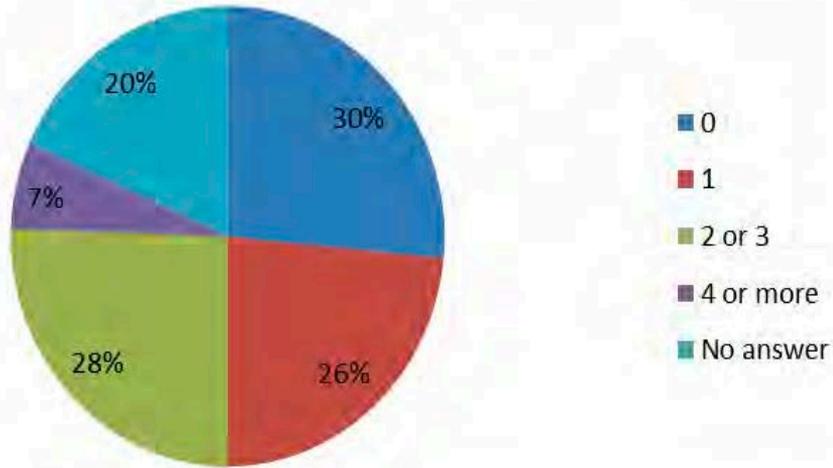


Walnut Trail, Irvine, CA

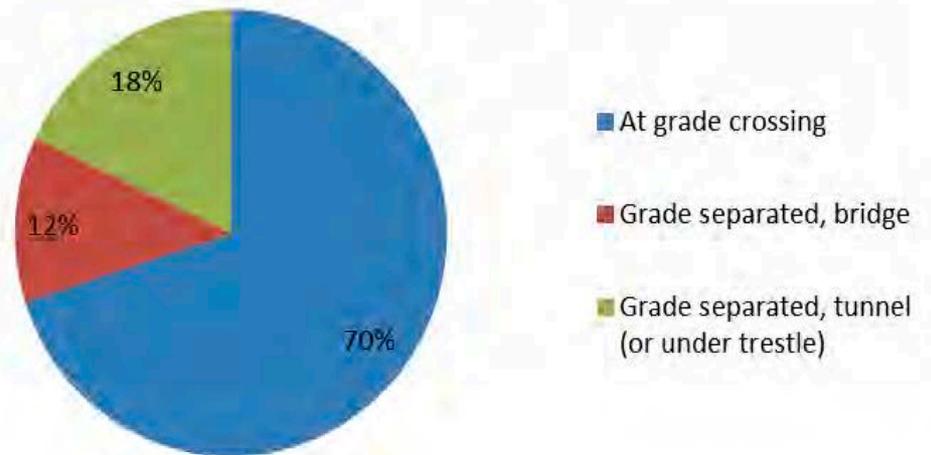


San Clemente Beach Trail, San Clemente, CA

### Number of Times Trail Crosses Railroad Tracks



### Trail/Rail Crossing Type



*\*Multiple crossing types were reported for some trails*

# Barriers





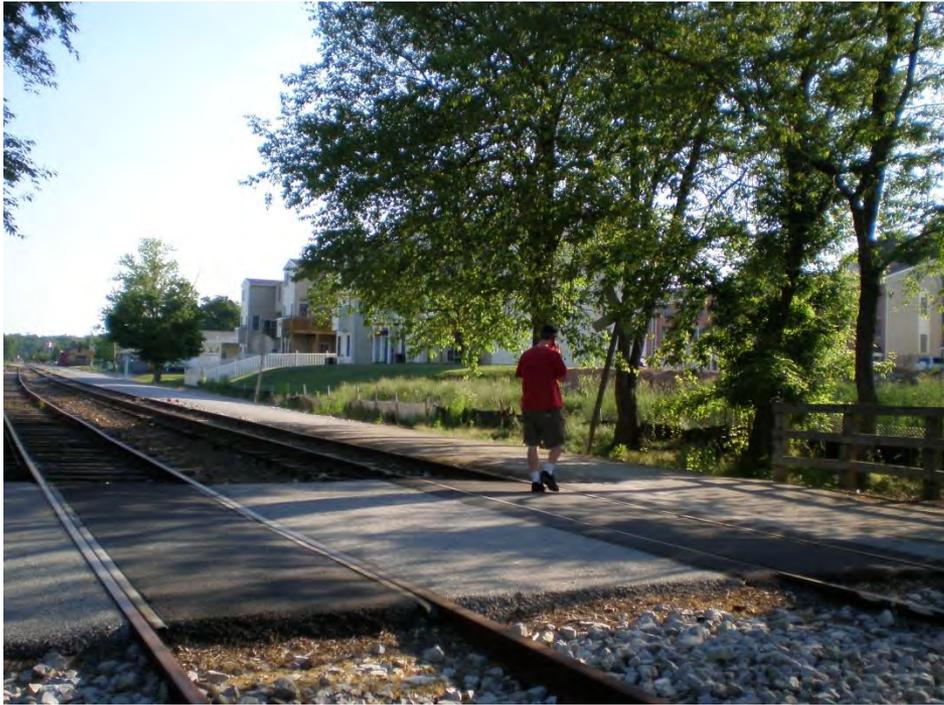
Camp Chase Rail-Trail, OH



Santa Fe Rail-Trail, New Mexico



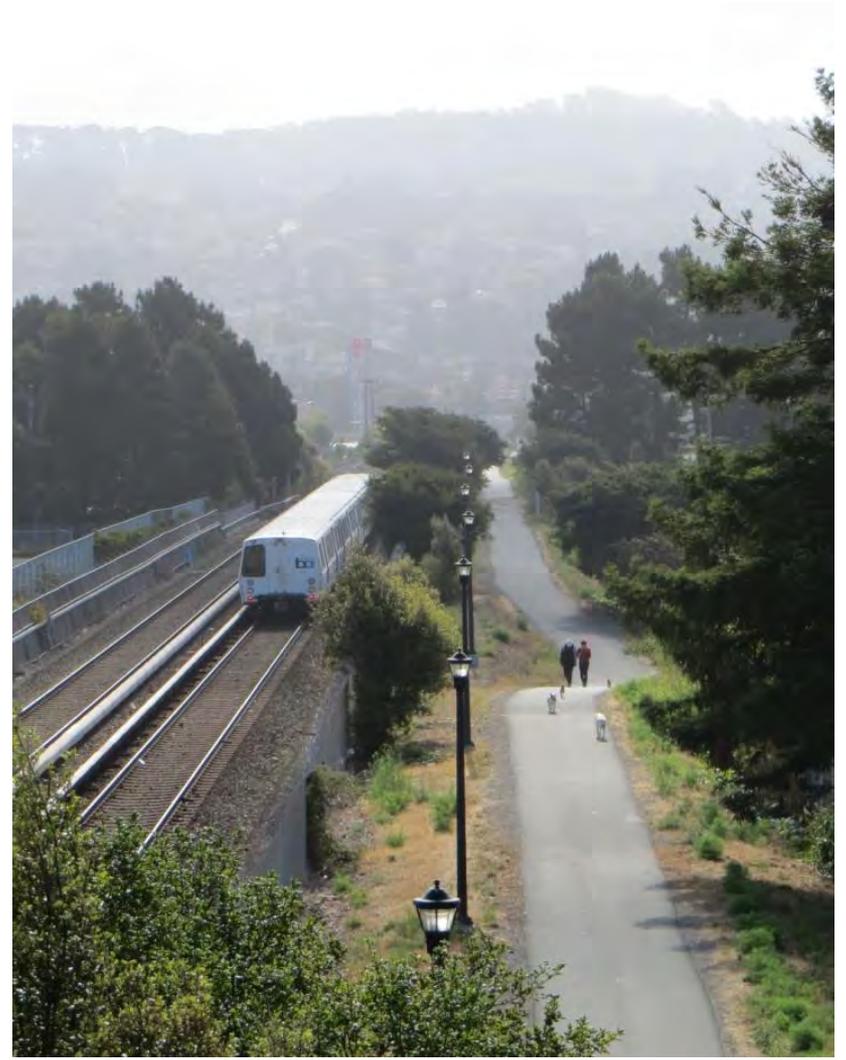
Allegheny Highlands Trail, MD



Heritage Rail Trail County Park, Pa

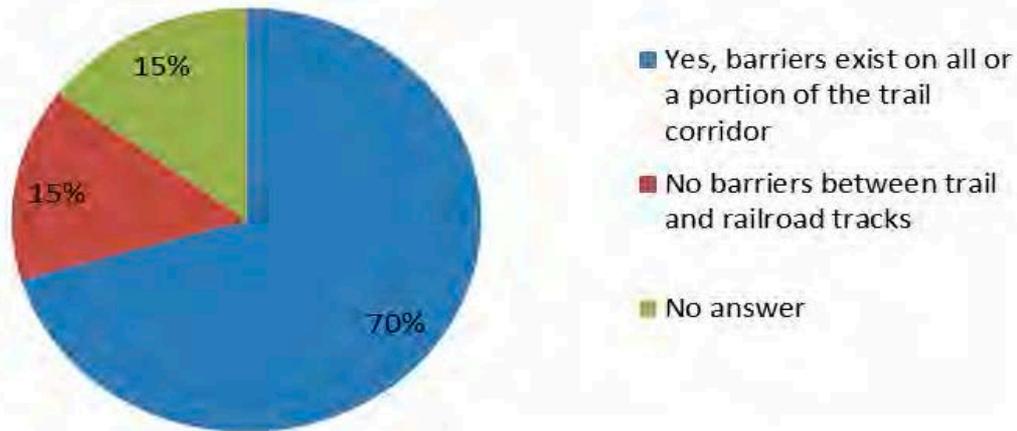


Ohlone Greenway, Berkeley, CA

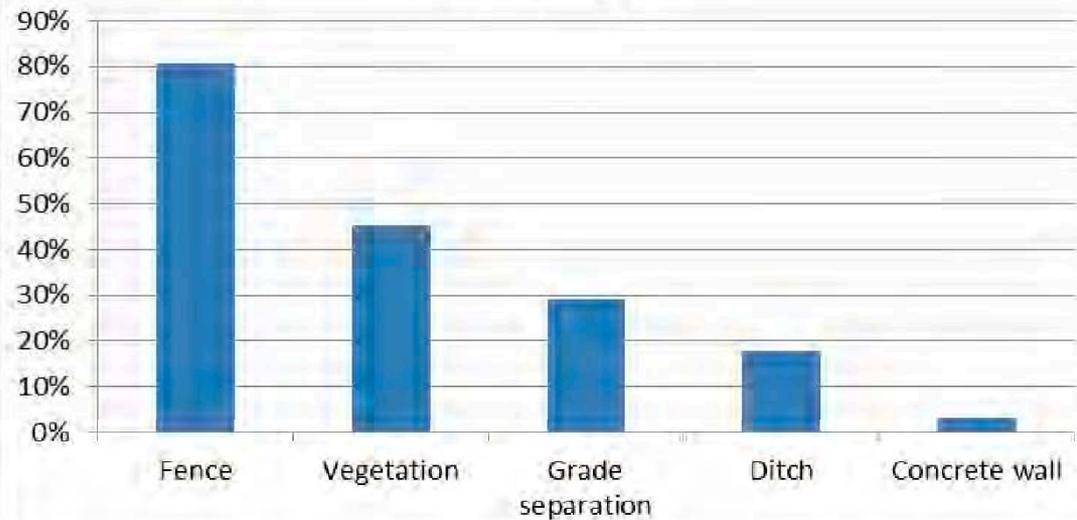


Richmond Greenway, Richmond, CA

## Existence of barriers between trail and rail



## Barrier type



*\*Several trails reported multiple barrier types*

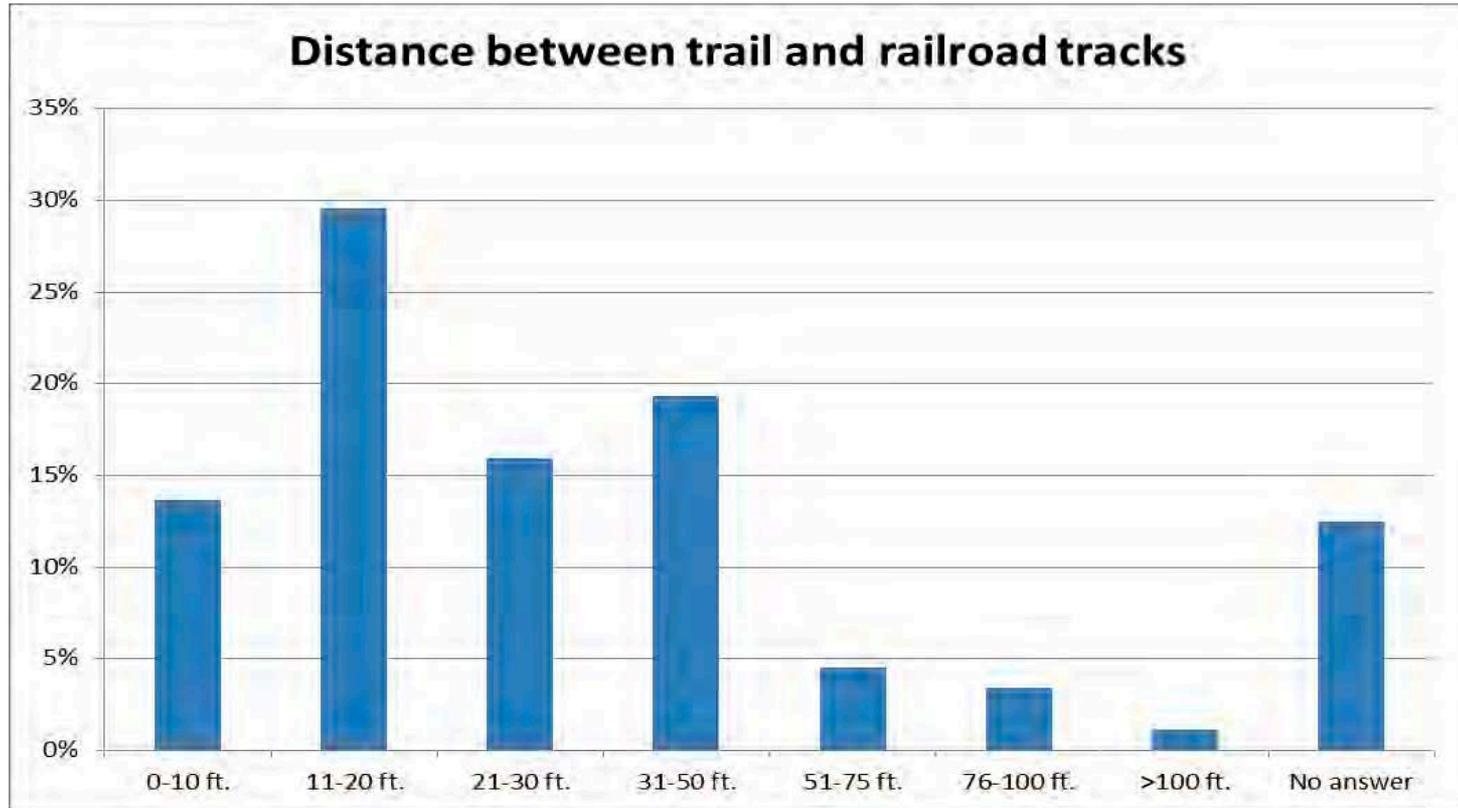
# Setback





Alaskan Way Trail, Seattle, WA

# Setback

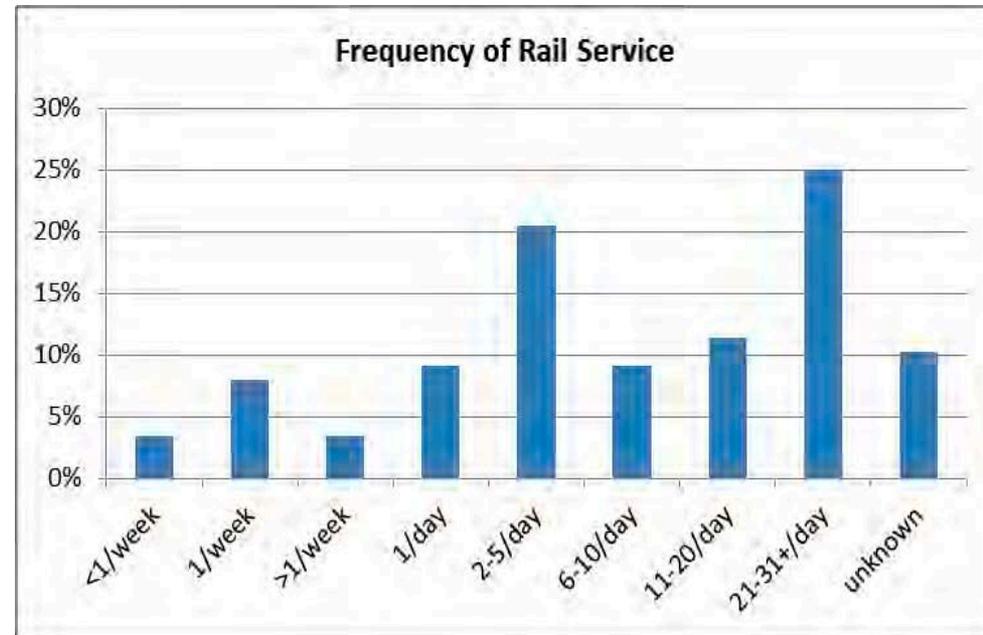
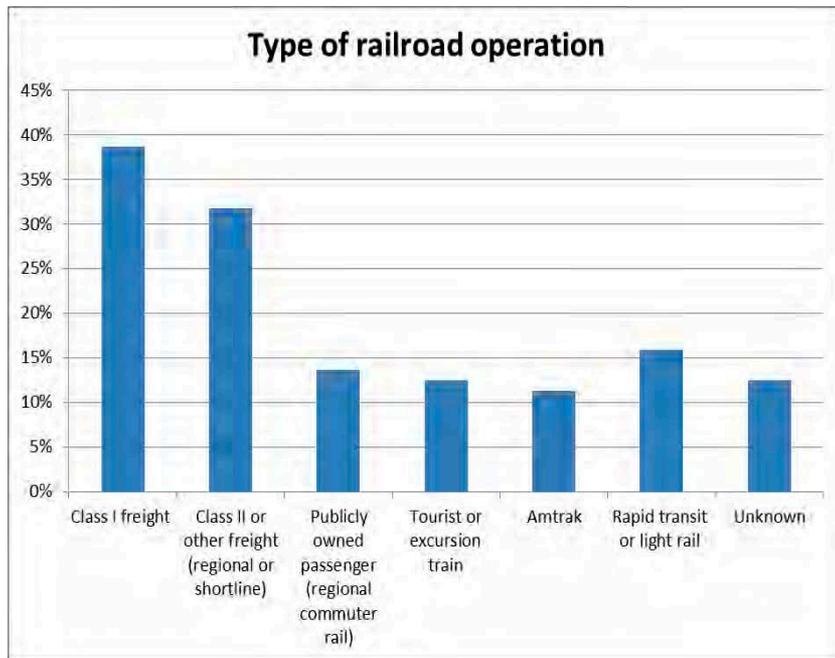


# Railroads

- Class I railroads are increasingly resistant to RWT development. CSX, BNSF and UP have policies prohibiting new RWT development in their ROW.
  - Most railroads with trails located *within* their rights-of-way are in publicly owned corridors.
  - 44% trail managers report the current attitude of the railroad as “supportive or cooperative.”
- 

# Rail Service Characteristics

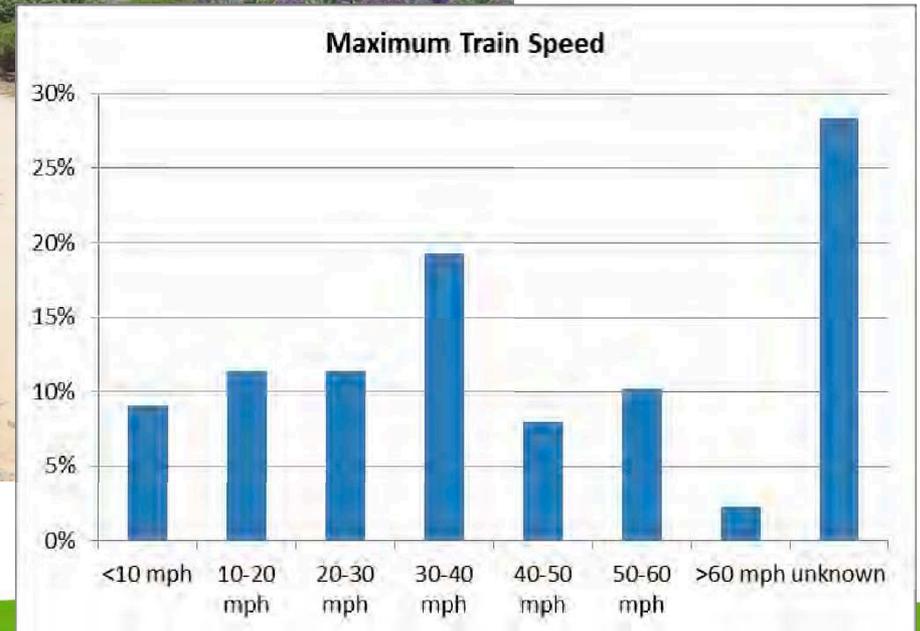
Characteristics of railroad operations similar to those reported in 2000 (majority of corridors have freight service, frequency is daily, speeds average 30-40 mph)



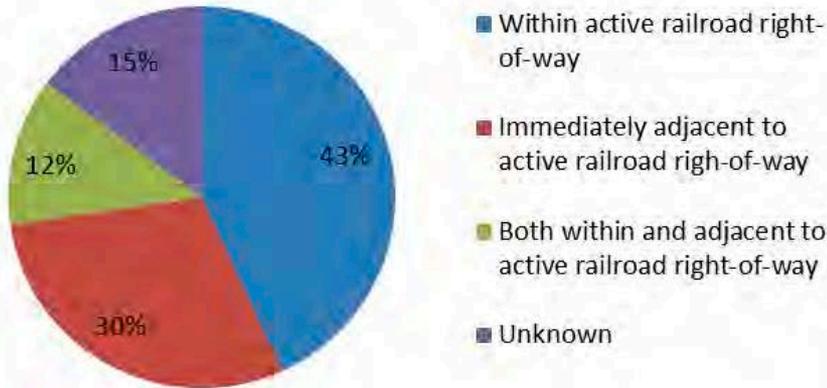
*\*Multiple types of service exist along many RWTs*



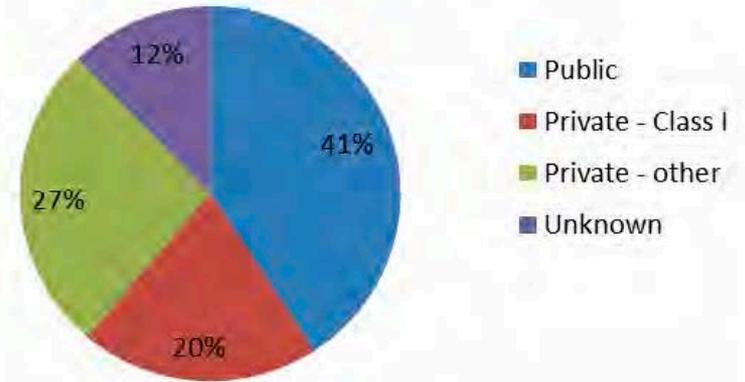
San Clemente Beach Trail, California



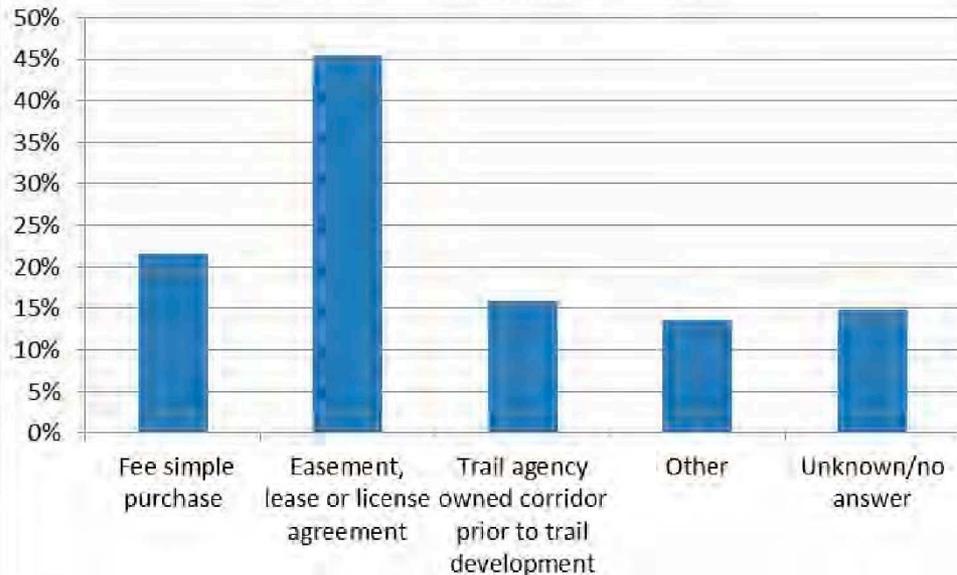
**Location of trail corridor relative to active railroad right-of-way**

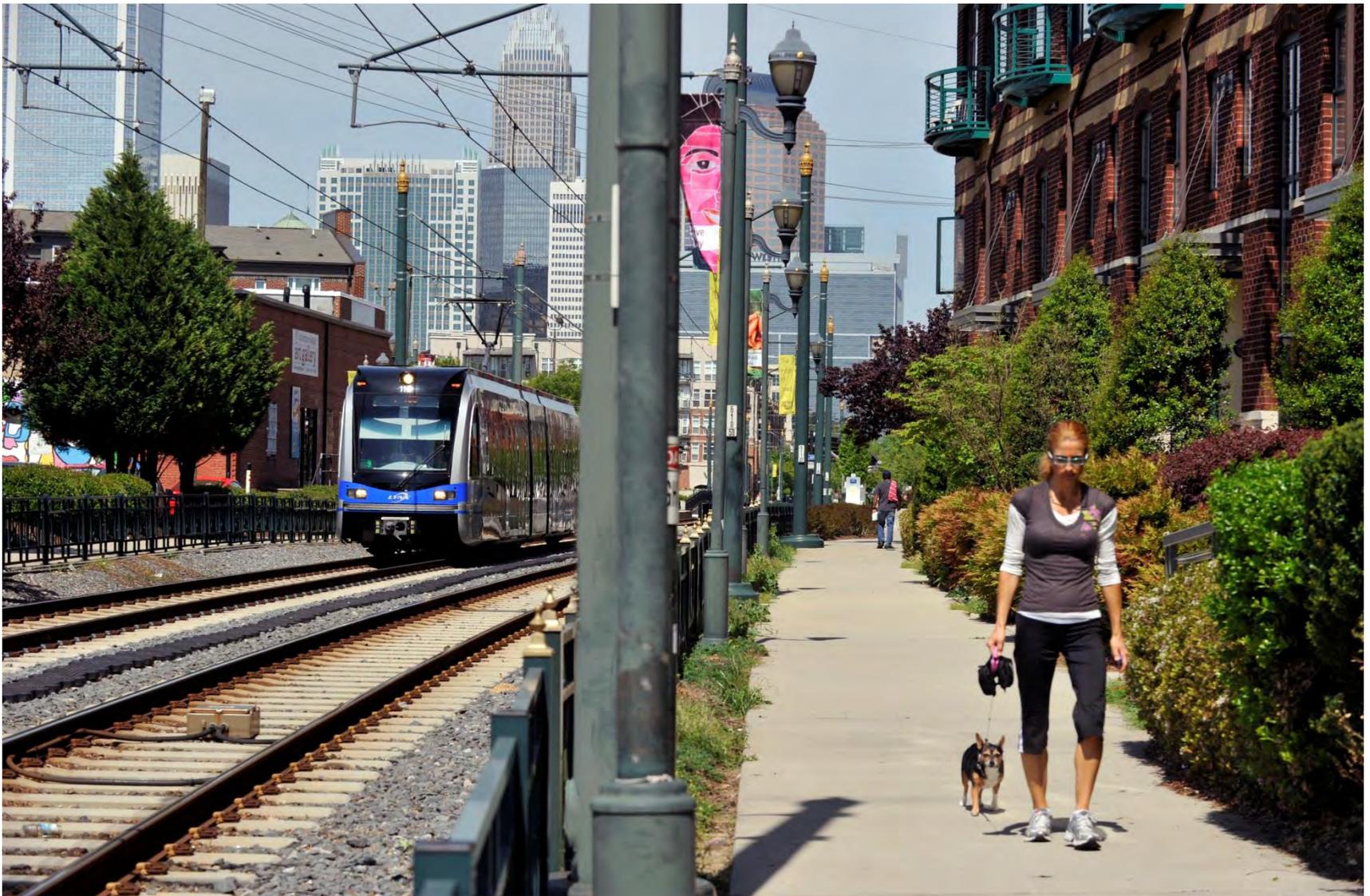


**Corridor Ownership of RWTs Within the Railroad ROW**



**Trail Corridor Acquisition Method**





Charlotte Trolley Trail, Charlotte. NC



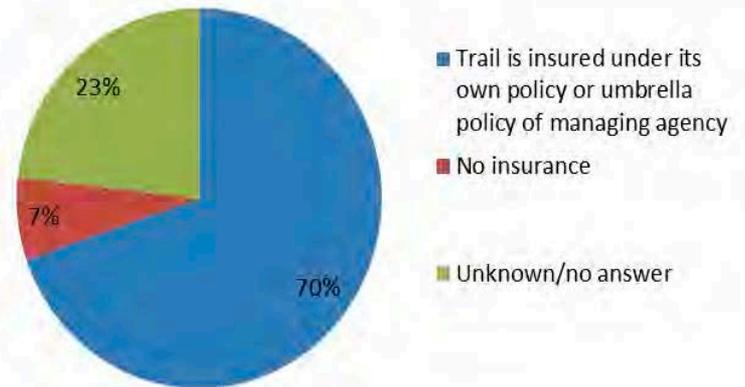
Lance Armstrong Bikeway, Texas

# Liability

## Indemnification of Railroad



## Insurance Coverage



# Policies & Encouragement

- Recreational use Statutes (VA, ME)
- State agency policies (MassDOT)
- Design standards (SEDA-COG, PA)





Deval L. Patrick, Governor  
Timothy J. Murray, Lt. Governor  
Richard A. Devey, Secretary & CEO

**massDOT**  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

April 3, 2013

Stephen Smith, Executive Director  
Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District  
88 Broadway  
Taunton, MA 02780

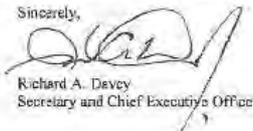
Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to clarify MassDOT's policy on the introduction of shared use trails along active rail lines. While MassDOT has consistently supported the appropriate development of trails with trails, we have considered their implementation on a case-by-case basis. This method of analysis has, unfortunately, caused unnecessary difficulties and tended to result in little to no progress for proposed trails with trails. Going forward, therefore, MassDOT will as a matter of policy permit the construction of shared-use paths along active or planned railroad rights-of-way provided appropriate fencing separates the two uses. Further, the design and construction of such fencing is an eligible project cost for such projects and MassDOT will participate in funding as appropriate.

MassDOT is firmly committed to improving bicycling and walking conditions across the Commonwealth. We are actively pursuing the implementation of the 740-mile, seven-corridor Bay State Greenway (BSG) that is identified in the 2008 Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan. To that end, the Governor's transportation finance plan (*The Way Forward*) provides approximately \$430 million for the construction of bicycle facilities, including the implementation of much of the BSG. Going forward, MassDOT will continue to seek new opportunities to increase healthy transportation options and to prompt mode shift from single-operator vehicles to more sustainable transportation options. MassDOT asks that you join us in developing and funding such multi-modal transportation opportunities.

Should you have any questions on this policy, please feel free to contact David Mohler, MassDOT's Executive Director of Planning, at (857) 368-8865 or david.mohler@state.ma.us.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Devey  
Secretary and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Frank DePaola, Highway Administrator  
Dr. Beverly Scott, Rail and Transit Administrator  
David Mohler, Executive Director of Planning

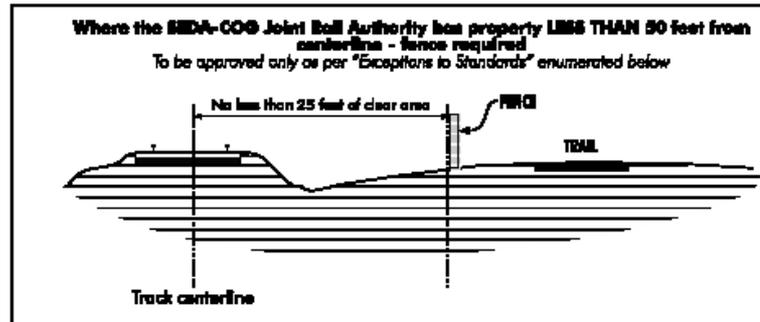
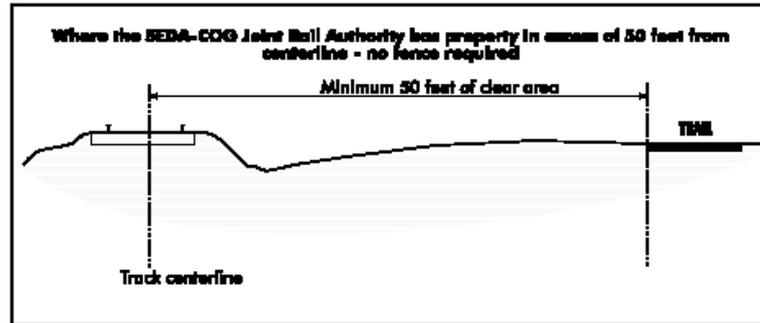
Ten Park Plaza, Suite 4150, Boston, MA 02116  
Tel: 857-308-6636, TDD: 857-368-0653  
[www.mass.gov/massdot](http://www.mass.gov/massdot)

Leading the Nation in Transportation Excellence

MassDOT will as a matter of policy permit the construction of shared-use paths along active or planned railroad rights-of-way provided appropriate fencing separates the two uses. Further, the design and construction of such fencing is an eligible project cost for such projects” ...

The SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority (JRA) is opposed, in principle, to pedestrian/bike trails on its property. The Authority may consent to working with a trail sponsor if its proposal meets the following criteria:

**TYPICAL CROSS-SECTIONS:**



Standard R/W is 30-33 feet from track centerline. Where the Authority R/W extends beyond 30-33 feet and there is no other parallel track, a trail may be considered. If accepted by the Authority, separation by a chain link fence (minimum 60 inches high) installed no less than 25 feet from track center shall be required.



# Conclusions

## Rails-with-Trails are:

- **Safe**  
In nearly 20 years of examining RWTs, one fatality revealed.
- **Common**  
167 RWTs (9% of rail-trails in RTC's database) have been identified to date.
- **Growing**  
Nearly a quarter of the trails included in our study have been developed since 2002.  
60 more RWT project in development.

# Next Steps

- Convene advocates, agencies & railroads
- Encourage collection of detailed metrics



# RWT Online Resources

- Individual survey and interview responses
  - Recreational Use Statutes
  - Legal Agreements
  - Rail-with-Trail Feasibility Studies
  - Image Library
  - List of known Rail-with-Trails, links to descriptions
- 



**rails·to·trails**  
conservancy

**[www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)**