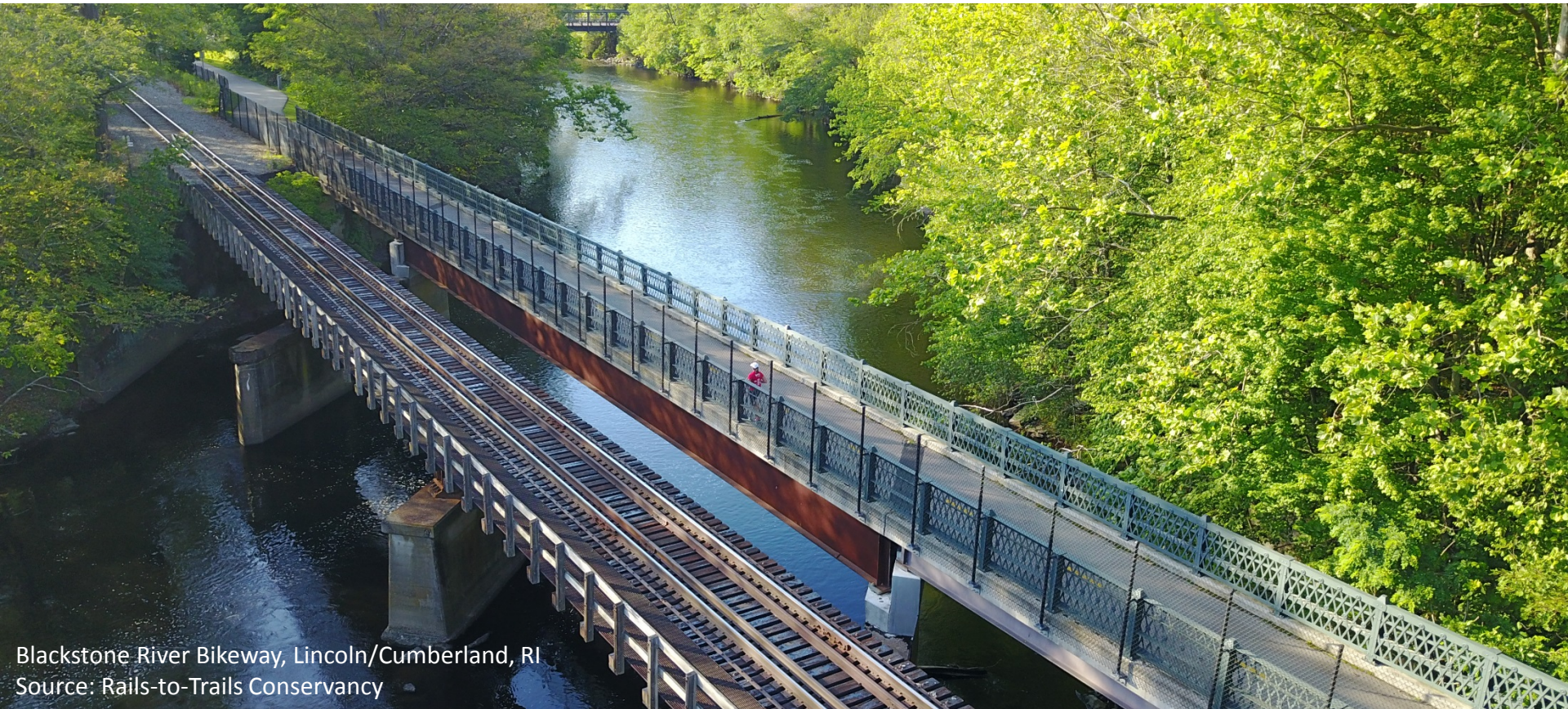


Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned

Best Practices for Developing, Designing, and Maintaining Rails-with-Trails



Blackstone River Bikeway, Lincoln/Cumberland, RI
Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

4/30/2019



Outline

- ❑ Introduction
- ❑ Policies and Perspectives
- ❑ Development Process
- ❑ Liability and Risk Management
- ❑ Design
- ❑ Construction, Operations, and Maintenance
- ❑ For More Information

Rails-with-Trails:

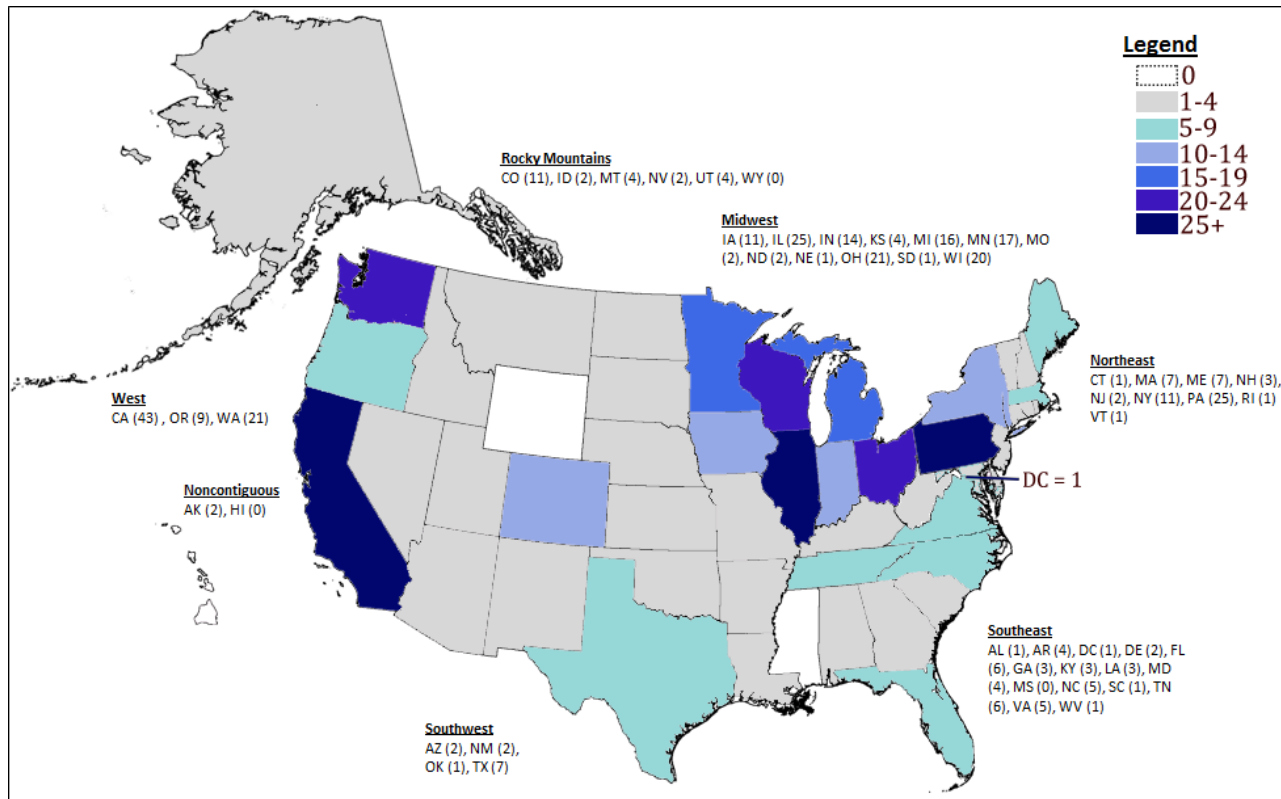
A shared-use path or trail open and developed for public use that is located on or directly adjacent to an active railroad or rail transit corridor.



East Boston Greenway, Boston, MA
Source: US DOT Volpe Center

How many? Where are they?

343 rails-with-trails in **47** States comprising **917** miles



Benefits and Challenges

Benefits:

- Active Transportation
- Health and Wellness
- Access
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection

Challenges:

- Property acquisition
- Concerns about safety and liability
- Concerns about trespassing



San Clemente Beach Trail, San Clemente, CA
Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Policies and Perspectives: Railroads

- Half of Class I railroads have written policies against locating trails within railroad ROW; few Class II and III railroads do.
- Concerns:
 - Trespassing
 - Work Hazards
 - Quiet Zones
 - Liability
 - Impacts to Future Rail Operations



Minneapolis Southwest Corridor, Minneapolis, MN
Source: Southwest Journal

Policies and Perspectives: Public Transportation Agencies

- Few public transit agencies have written RWT policies, but more are developing them.
- Some see RWTs as opportunities for increasing ridership.
- Concerns:
 - Grade Crossings
 - Fencing
 - Signage



Neponset River Greenway, Boston, MA
Source: Bay Colony Rail Trail

Policies and Perspectives: State DOTs

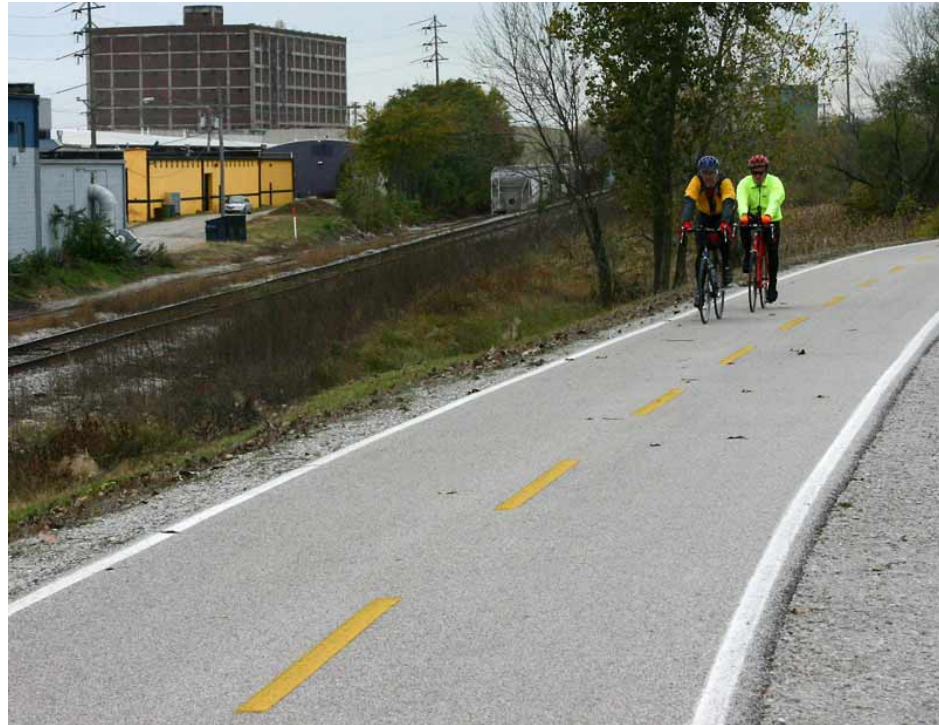
- 15 State DOTs have policies, design guidelines, or other information about RWTs.
- Some State DOTs actively promote RWTs; others recommend avoiding them.
- Guidelines provide minimum design standards, but most are meant to be flexible/adaptable.



Sierra Bike Trail, Palmdale/Lancaster, CA
Source: TrailLink User vikemaze

Policies and Perspectives: Trail Builders

- See RWTs as ways to fill gaps in off-road nonmotorized trail networks.
- Successful RWT developers work closely with stakeholders to address concerns.



Great River Trail, Rock Island, IL
Source: American Trails

Best Practices: Development Process

- ✓ Locate RWTs outside of the railroad ROW, if possible.
- ✓ Determine feasibility.
- ✓ Conduct an environmental analysis prior to land acquisition and design.
- ✓ Involve stakeholders early in the process.
- ✓ Engage railroads early and often.



Downtown Lakewalk, Duluth, MN
Source: American Trails

Best Practices: Liability and Risk Management

- ✓ Conduct initial legal research early in the process.
- ✓ Gather information about trespassing in the corridor.
- ✓ Follow design recommendations in the forthcoming U.S. DOT report, AASHTO Guide, and MUTCD.
- ✓ Consider using indemnification agreements and/or insurance to address liability.

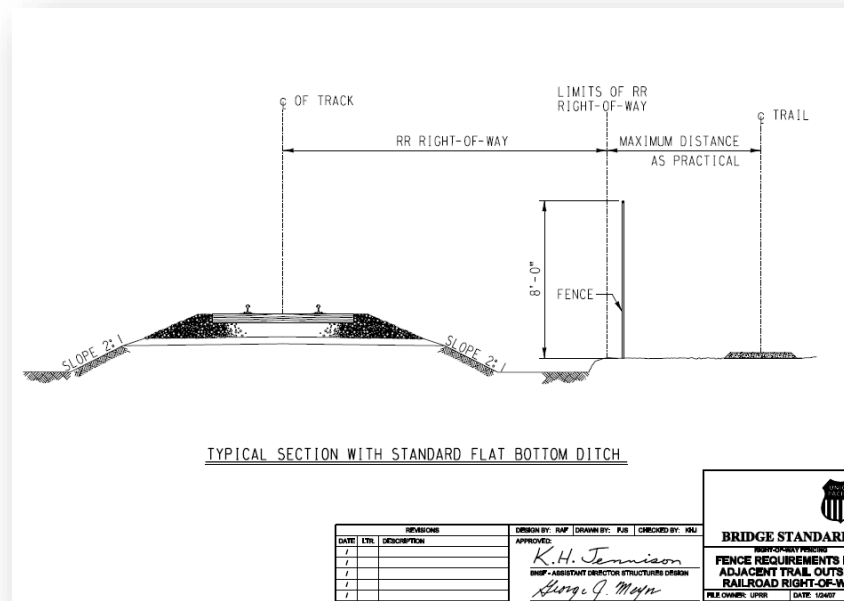


Frisco Trail, Fayetteville, AR
Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Best Practices: Design

Regulatory and Railroad Requirements:

- ✓ Adhere to all relevant Federal, State, and local regulatory requirements, as well as the requirements of the adjacent railroad.



Example: 2007 Union Pacific

Best Practices: Design

Setback:

- ✓ Set back RWTs as far as possible from railroad tracks. Consider:
 - ✓ Train speed, frequency, and type
 - ✓ Rail maintenance and operations
 - ✓ Track curvature
 - ✓ Environmental and physical constraints
 - ✓ Separation type
 - ✓ Trespassing and vandalism



Winona Interurban Trail, Winona, IN

Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Best Practices: Design

Separation:

- ✓ Separation between the RWT and railroad tracks can be fencing, ditches, berms, and/or vegetation.
- ✓ When fencing is needed, consider the following when selecting a fence type and height:
 - ✓ Setback distance
 - ✓ Location of grade crossings
 - ✓ Type, speed, and frequency of trains



Whittier Greenway Trail, Whittier, CA

Source: City of Whittier

Best Practices: Design

Crossings:

- ✓ Propose new at-grade crossings only where there are no other reasonable alternatives.
- ✓ Use existing road-track crossings where possible.
- ✓ Include safety measures such as crossbucks, flashing lights, bells, crossing arms, and signage.
- ✓ Bridges/trestles and tunnels are expensive and railroads often do not allow them.



Martin Luther King Promenade, San Diego, CA
Source: American Trails

Best Practices: Design

Accommodating Future Tracks and Sidings:

- ✓ RWTs should be designed and located so as not to preclude potential future rail expansion, if anticipated.
- ✓ Where corridor width, topography, and other factors allow, RWTs should be located on the opposite side of the proposed track or siding expansion.



North Cedar Lake Regional Trail, Minneapolis, MN
Source: Simon Blenski, Minneapolis Public Works

Best Practices: Design

Access to Stations:

- ✓ RWTs should promote access to rail and transit stations, taking into account both accessibility and safety.
- ✓ Bicycle parking should be installed near the stations in coordination with the rail or public transportation agency.



Lance Armstrong Bikeway, Austin, TX
Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Best Practices: Design

Drainage:

- ✓ Consider the impact the rail-with-trail may have on the adjacent rail line's drainage system.
- ✓ In certain cases, a new drainage system might need to be installed to serve both the railroad and trail.



California Railroad Museum, Sacramento, CA
Source: California Parks

Best Practices: Construction, Operations, and Maintenance

- ✓ Coordinate with the railroad(s) prior to and during construction.
- ✓ Satisfy the adjacent railroad's requirements for safety and impacts on operations.
- ✓ Have a comprehensive operations and management plan.
- ✓ Conduct trail user safety and trespassing education if necessary.
- ✓ Plan activities to address trespassing and vandalism.



A-Train Rail Trail, Lewisville, KY
Source: Lewisville Leader

For More Information

The U.S. DOT Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned report will be released in summer 2019.

Questions? Contact us at railswithtrails@dot.gov.

Thank you!



Expo Line Trail, Los Angeles, CA
Source: Curbed LA