



TOWN OF HATFIELD

MASSACHUSETTS

MEMORIAL TOWN HALL
59 Main Street
Hatfield, MA 01038

Select Board

~
Diana M. Szydal, Chair
Edmund E. Jaworski
Brian F. Moriarty

(413) 247-9200, Ext. 100
(413) 247-5029 FAX

Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator

August 24, 2022

The Hatfield Select Board, Open Space Committee and Wayne Feiden, former FAICP, Director of Planning & Sustainability for the City of Northampton, will hold a public meeting on Thursday, September 22, 2022 @ 6:00 pm in the Conference Room, Town Hall, 59 Main Street, for the purpose of discussing the proposed CT River Trail. The meeting materials are enclosed for your review.

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

resilience | regeneration | design | conservation | placemaking | mobility | accessibility | community development | historic | zoning | GIS | agriculture

Wayne Feiden, FAICP

Planning & Sustainability • Wfeiden@NorthamptonMA.gov • 413-587-1265

August 23, 2022

Diana M. Szynal, Edmund Jaworski, and Brian F. Moriarty, Hatfield Select Board

Marlene Michonski, Hatfield Town Administrator

Richard Abbott, Angelica Dewey, Mark Gelotte, Steven Touloumtzis, and Micki Sanderson, Jim Crowell,
Hatfield Open Space Committee

Hatfield Memorial Town Hall

59 Main Street

Hatfield, MA 01038

Dear Hatfield Select Board, Town Administrator, Open Space Committee, and interested community

I am looking forward to working with you at the September 22, 2022 forum on the proposed Connecticut River shared use/bicycle path from Damon Road, Northampton, to Elm Court, Hatfield.

As you know, this trail provides several benefits to Hatfield residents. This includes:

1. Provide Hatfield residents the opportunity to walk or bicycle to access an eventual 200 mile network of shared use paths without using the busy and unsafe North King Street.
2. Generate Hatfield business from trail users.
3. Add to Hatfield property values generally.
4. Provide Hatfield residents with access to one of the most beautiful recreation paths in the region.



The concept of this path has been around for well over a decade.

1. **Chapter 312, Act of 2008 (Representative Peter Kocot)** provided funding for the City of Northampton for the design of the Northampton's Connecticut River Greenway, including the initial topographic and land survey in support of the shared use path.
2. **Hatfield Select Board meeting of October 7, 2010** (reported in a 10/28/10 letter from Open Space Committee) supported in concept the future bike path, subject to details being worked out.
3. **Northampton purchased three key parcels to support a shared use/bicycle path, specifically:**
 - a. **A 50% interest in a parcel in Hatfield (11.6 acres) and Northampton (10.7 acres) in 2011**, with authority to transfer the City's interest in the land to Hatfield if Hatfield wants it.
 - b. **An easement from Northampton's Connecticut River Greenway to MassDOT land (2013)** that also and includes the use of the driveway from the greenway to Damon Road.
 - c. **The Northampton Connecticut River Greenway, which includes a parking lot** that can provide any necessary Connecticut River trail needs.
4. **Hatfield Open Space and Recreation Plan (2014)** Action Plan section reports that Hatfield and Northampton completed an initial feasibility study (a topographic and land survey) and acquired some key parcels of land for a Connecticut River path that "the Town has endorsed for a proposed bike path route." The plan also reported on a town survey that showed bike paths second in priority only to nature trails.
5. **The Northampton Shared Use Path Feasibility Study (VHB, 2022)**, examined the feasibility for four shared use paths, including the Connecticut River Trail. Excerpts of that report and the plans drawn up by VHB showing the proposed route are attached.
6. **MassTrails grant (2022)**, the City of Northampton, with the support of the Town of Hatfield Select Board (4/5/22 Select Board letter) obtained a grant to start the formal design process and go as far as possible by the end of the grant next June.
7. **An Act relative to Massachusetts's transportation resources and climate, Chapter 176, Acts of 2022** includes \$300,000 towards the project in Hatfield. If the Governor releases those funds (which is not guaranteed) those funds can be used to advance the design.

At the Select Board's June 14, 2022 meeting, there was a request for some additional information.

1. **Would there be a need for parking at the Elm Court trailhead or on Elm Court?**

Parking Lot: This would be Hatfield's choice. A small parking lot on Elm Court would almost certainly be an eligible construction item for future state and federal funding if Hatfield can spare land from the DPW yard there. On another shared use path that Northampton is designing of almost exactly the same length (Rocky Hill Greenway from the Route 10 bike path bridge to Route 66), MassDOT was fine with a parking lot on only one end. The City already has a large

Connecticut River Greenway parking lot on the south end, so we assume MassDOT will not require an additional parking lot.

- a. **Elm Court On-Street Parking:** Again this would be Hatfield's choice and the town is welcome to pass no parking or, if you have the authority, residents only parking.

2. What would signage be?

This will be Hatfield's choice. Northampton has always installed only very simple signage for our shared use/bicycle paths, but Hatfield is free to have less or more extensive signage if they choose.

3. Can shared use paths just dead end and drop users onto area streets?

Yes. For recent examples of this, visit the northerly end of the MassCentral Rail Trail in Williamsburg at the South Main Street trailhead, the southerly and northerly ends of the Rocky Hill Greenway trail at Burts Pit Road and Sandy Hill Road, respectively, in Northampton.

4. Does Hatfield have a local match for the trail?

- a. **MassTrails grant**—For this grant, which starts the formal design phase, no Hatfield match is required. Northampton has committed that 25% match knowing that the project could end in Northampton and become a recreation path only depending on what Hatfield decides.
- b. **Design completion and construction administration**— There are too many unknowns at this point to anything, but we expect that if we can get the \$300,000 released from Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2022 no match would be needed. Hatfield is not being asked to commit to any funds at this point.
- c. **Construction**—A Northampton to Hatfield trail can only be built with state and/or federal funds for construction with no local match (unless either community asks for extra non-state participating costs such as underground infrastructure).
- d. **Land acquisition**—We are assuming that Hatfield will donate an easement on their DPW land for the trail. Northampton will donate its 50% interest in the one private parcel for this project. If the privately held portion of that one parcel is required, Hatfield would be responsible for the appraisal and purchase price, but it is likely that we can help obtain grants and/or donations to cover some or all of those costs. Again, Hatfield is not being asked to commit to any funds now.
- e. **Future trail maintenance**—Each community is responsible for maintaining their own trails. In Hatfield, that distance is very short. Many communities rely heavily on volunteers creating almost no cost to the community (e.g., Easthampton) and many volunteer organizations are available to help (e.g., Friends of Northampton Trails in Northampton and Manhan Rail Trail committee in Hatfield).

5. Project commitment- For the project to proceed into Hatfield:

- a. **Hatfield Select Board or Town Meeting** need to make it clear that they want the project. The design details and standards will be different if the project is going to be a Northampton only project.
- b. **Hatfield will need to appoint a town representative (most likely the Town Administrator) to attend meetings with MassDOT and represent the town.**

6. Can you share more detailed design concepts?

The design is just beginning and we want to get Hatfield's input on anything in Hatfield. Attached is the concept plan from the VHB feasibility study.

I look forward to meeting with you all on September 22nd, and I am available before then for any questions or, if desired, a site visit.

Thank you for your good questions and for helping advance this process

Sincerely,

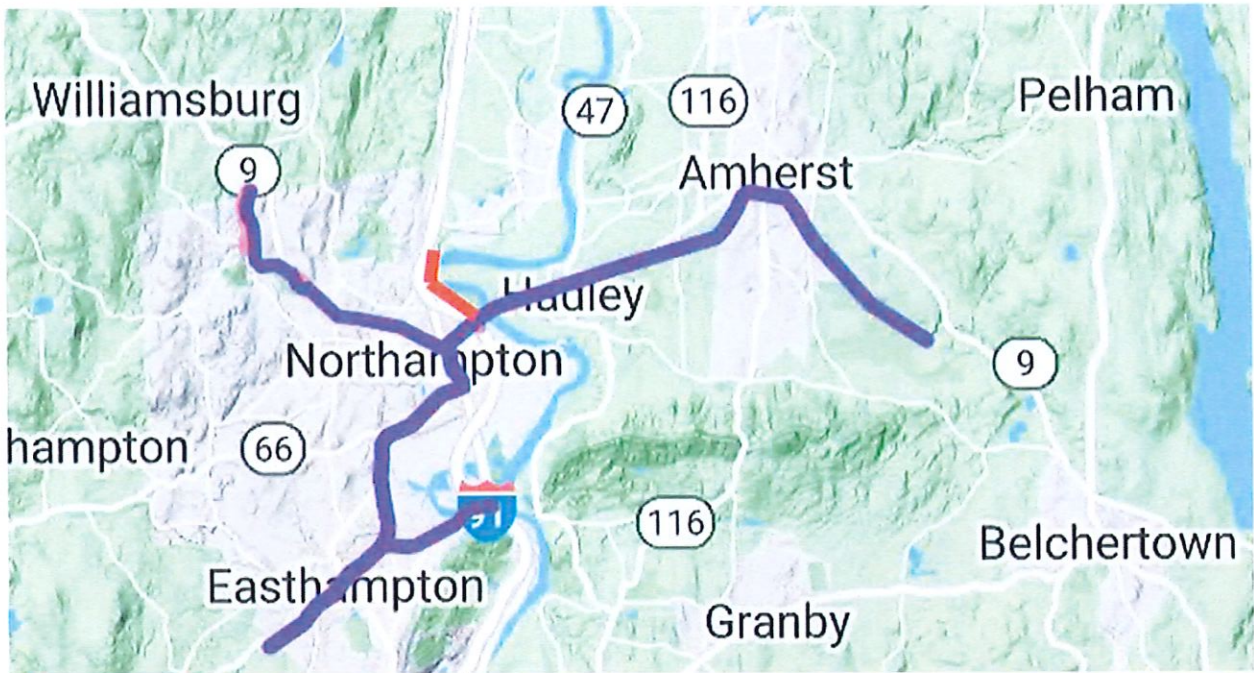


Wayne Feiden, FAICP

Project Manager

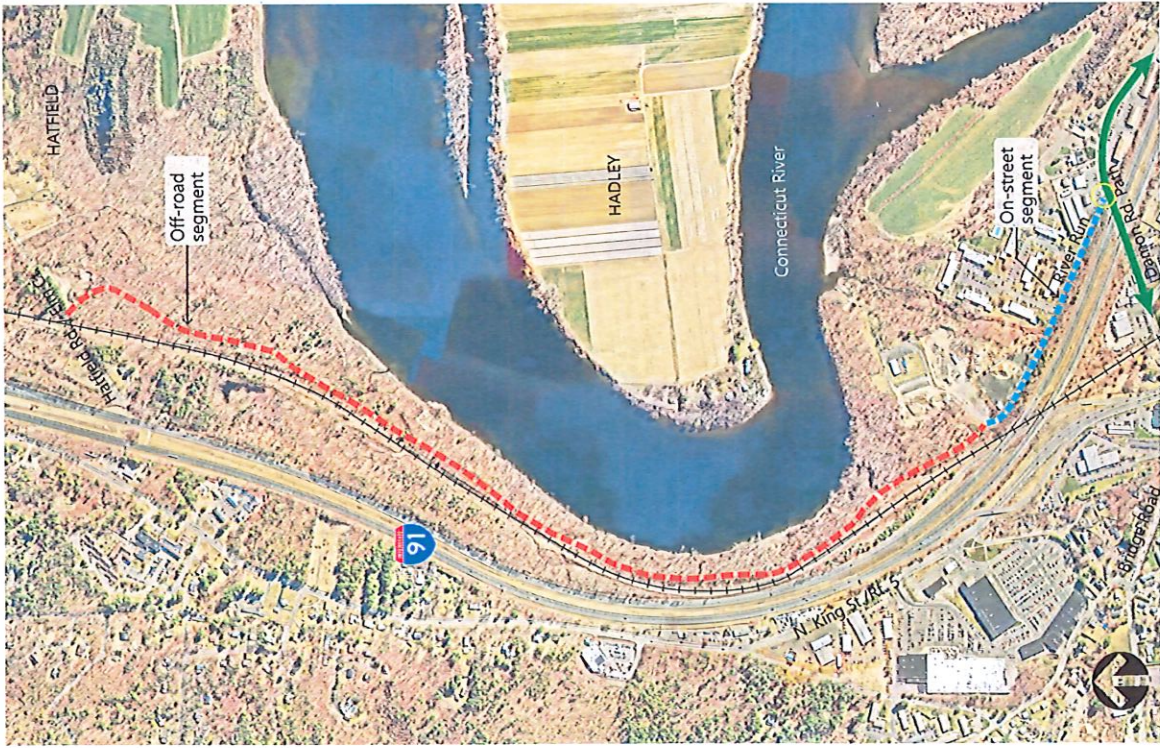
Cc Carolyn Misch, AICP, Director of Planning & Sustainability





- Mass Central Rail Trail from Boston to Northampton 104 miles total.
- Longest and most complicated Rail Trail project in the northeast.
- 51 miles open now. More segments open each year.
- 85± miles in public or protected ownership.
- Three communities still with B&M RR owned pieces of the corridor are making arrangements to purchase these stray pieces this coming year.
- **New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway 84 miles total.**
- Longest interstate trail in the northeast.
- 70± miles now open. 80± miles in public or protected status.
- Northampton's connection between the E-W and N-S trails are open now—funded by American Recovery Act (ARA) funding during the Great Recession.
- Rebranding discussions to have an umbrella name and then the local name are underway.
- Scheduled passenger rail service between Boston and New Haven to take trail

CONNECTICUT RIVER GREENWAY Northampton, MA



LOCUS PLAN

120 FRONT STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01608
(508) 752-1001



DATE	DESCRIPTION	REV #



Connecticut River Greenway

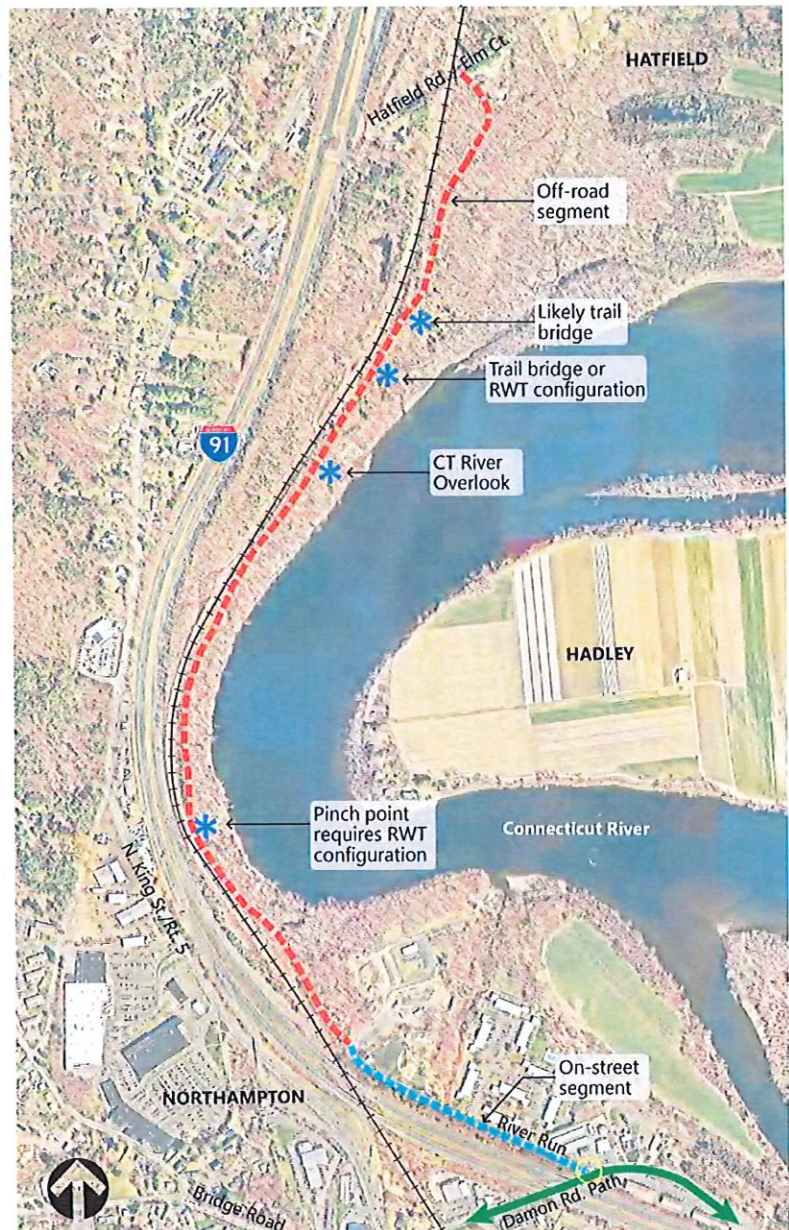
In the future, the Connecticut River Greenway (CRG) trail will be a tremendous amenity for residents for both Northampton and Hatfield. The 1.35-mile scenic trail will provide a recreational and transportation resource that links to two communities. Currently, no connection exists for pedestrians north of the River Valley Co-op and bicyclists must ride in the shoulder of Route 5 which varies from 4' to 6' in width. A shared use path would provide a direct connection from Hatfield Road/Elm Ct to the existing shared use path along Damon Road. The Damon Road path links to the Norwottuck Rail Trail further to the south and into Hadley. Therefore, the CRG trail provides a link from Hatfield to a trail network that provides bicyclists to access Amherst Center, the UMass campus, Downtown Florence, and Easthampton. Some of the critical issues in need of additional study include:

› River access and views:

Although the northernmost ½ mile of the proposed path does not parallel the Connecticut River, much of the lower portion of the path lies 100'-150' from the edge of the river. In some locations, the steep riverbanks offer opportunities for trail users to look out over the river and to the scenic farmland on the east side of the river in Hadley (see photo bottom right). The recommended alignment includes a footpath to a planned overlook that could also be a popular rest stop and picnic area.

› Streams and gullies:

In two locations along the corridor, existing streams and culverts create the need to cross the gully with a trail bridge (see photo on page 2). The preliminary design plans in the Appendix include 14' wide bridges (including railings) that span 135' and 230' respectively (though the



Connecticut River Greenway Routing Diagram

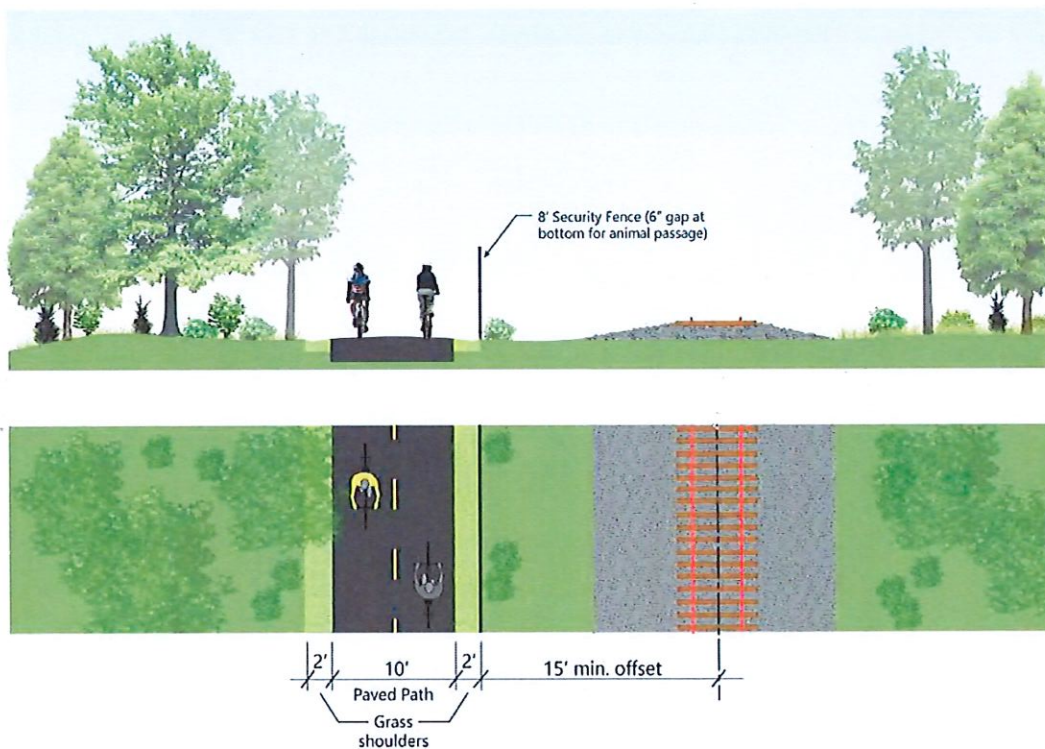


Scenic view east to Hadley from planned overlook along the CRG trail

latter could be reduced depending on opportunities to shift the location of the bridge abutments). As an alternative to the 230' long bridge, the CRG trail alignment could shift west into the state-owned rail corridor to avoid the gully and associated wash-out entirely. To do so requires a rail-with-trail (RWT) configuration. The location of the RR right-of-way will need to be finalized and coordinated with the State through the design process

› **Rail-with-Trail alignment:**

Besides the optional alignment to avoid a gully described above, a RWT configuration would also be required at one other locations within the CRG corridor (near the sharp bend in the river). Because the former Pan Am Railway corridor is now owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, coordination with MassDOT's rail division will be required to accommodate these locations. Per MassDOT standards for RWT, the Feasibility Study recommendation assumes a minimum 15' setback from the centerline of the tracks to the security fence. A two foot-wide grassy buffer would separate the paved path from the security fence (see graphic below).



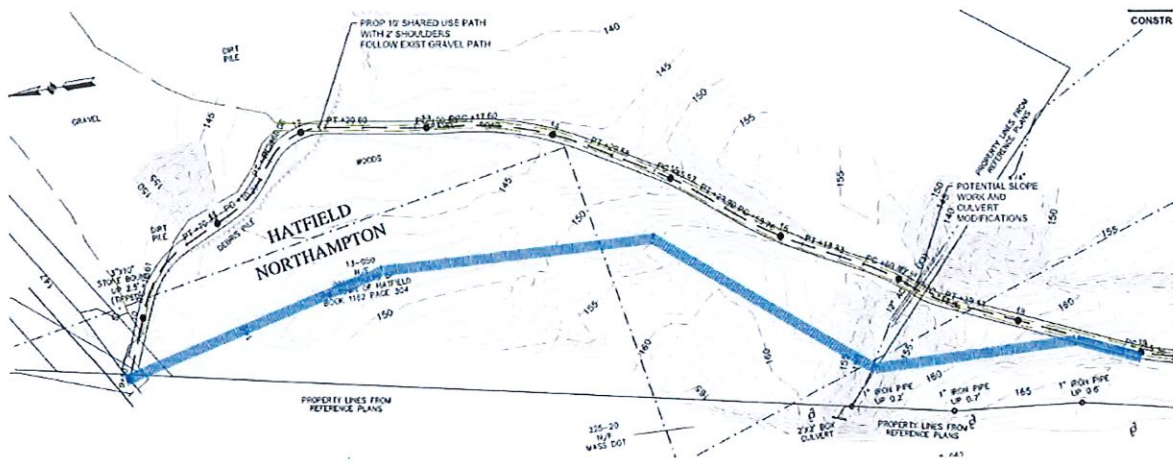
CRG trail cross section showing relationship of the paved path with the railroad tracks (see page 2 for photo of the existing rail corridor)

› **River Run segment:**

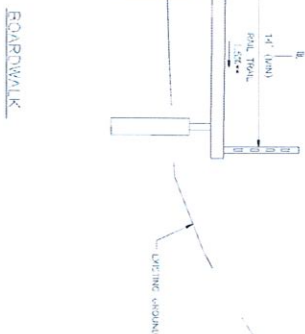
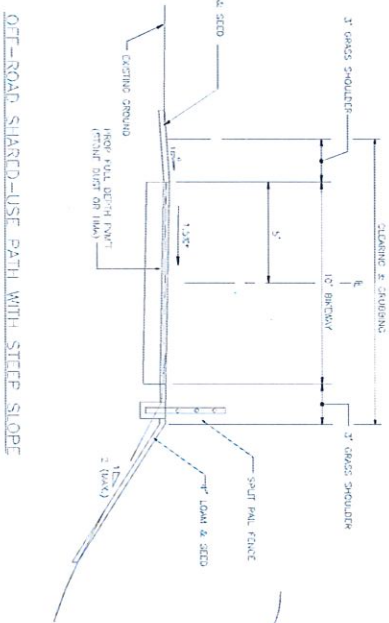
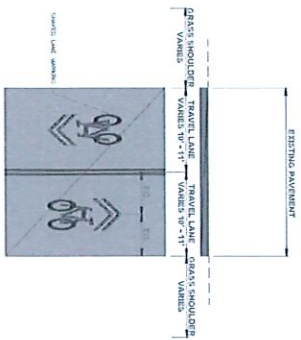
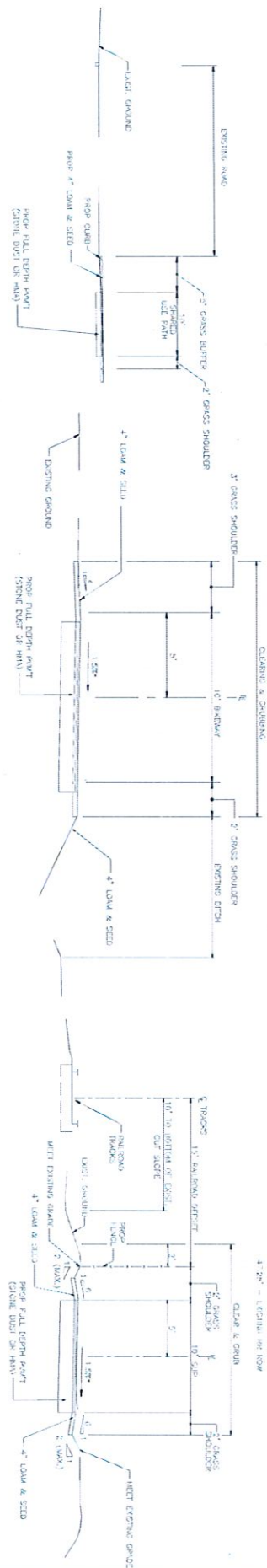
Near the southern terminus of the CRG, the trail alignment includes an on-road segment from the end of the off-road segment at River Run Road to the Damon Road intersection. Because traffic volumes and speed along the dead-end road are low, pedestrians and bicyclists should be able to share the roadway. The 1,500' segment would include shared lane markings and signage to guide path users to the signalized intersection of Damon Road. Crossing Damon Road, path users can connect to the new sidepath leading west to the King Street corridor or southeast to the Norwottuck Rail Trail. It is noted that shared lane markings are something unlikely to be supported by MassDOT if included in a State funded project through the TIP.

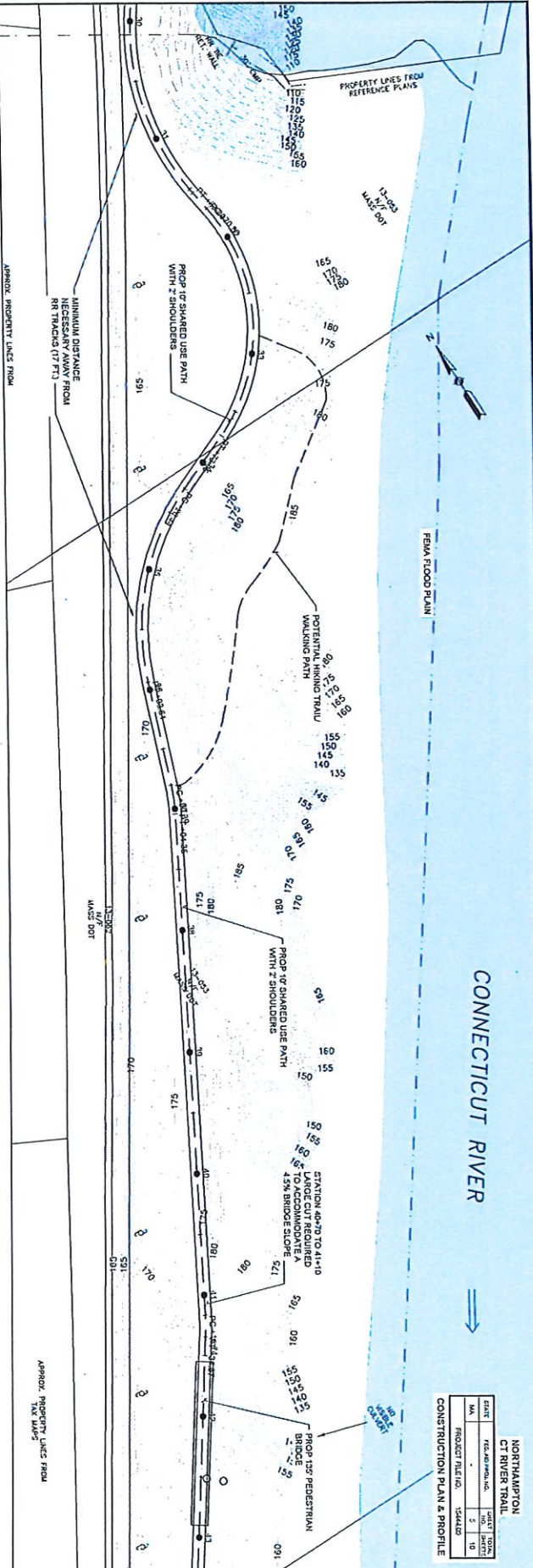
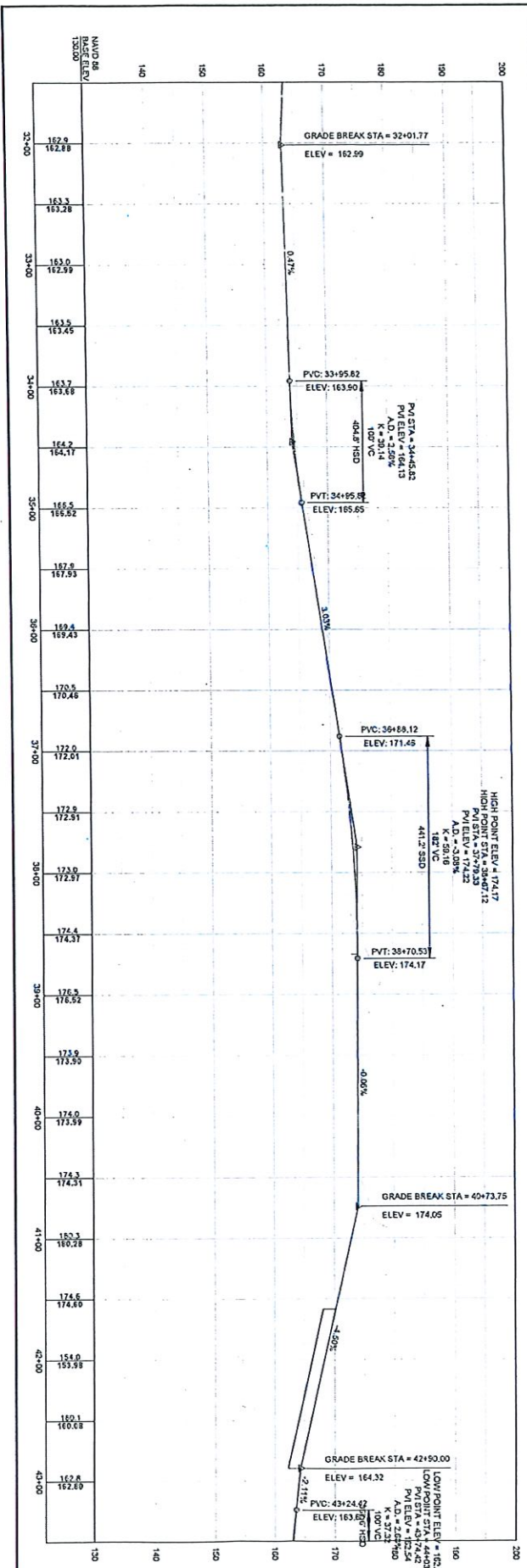
› **Trail alignment in Town of Hatfield:**

As the shared use path enters the Town of Hatfield, the alignment will need to be vetted with Town Officials and key stakeholders to build consensus and confirm there are no impacts to future uses of the land in Hatfield. The path will require a permanent easement for public access. This will need to be coordinated during the design process, especially if state and federal funding is being obtain from the State TIP. This could mean the path alignment would need to be shifted away from the current proposed alignment away from an existing dirt trail. The image below shows a potential shift in the alignment that may need to be explored as the design advances.



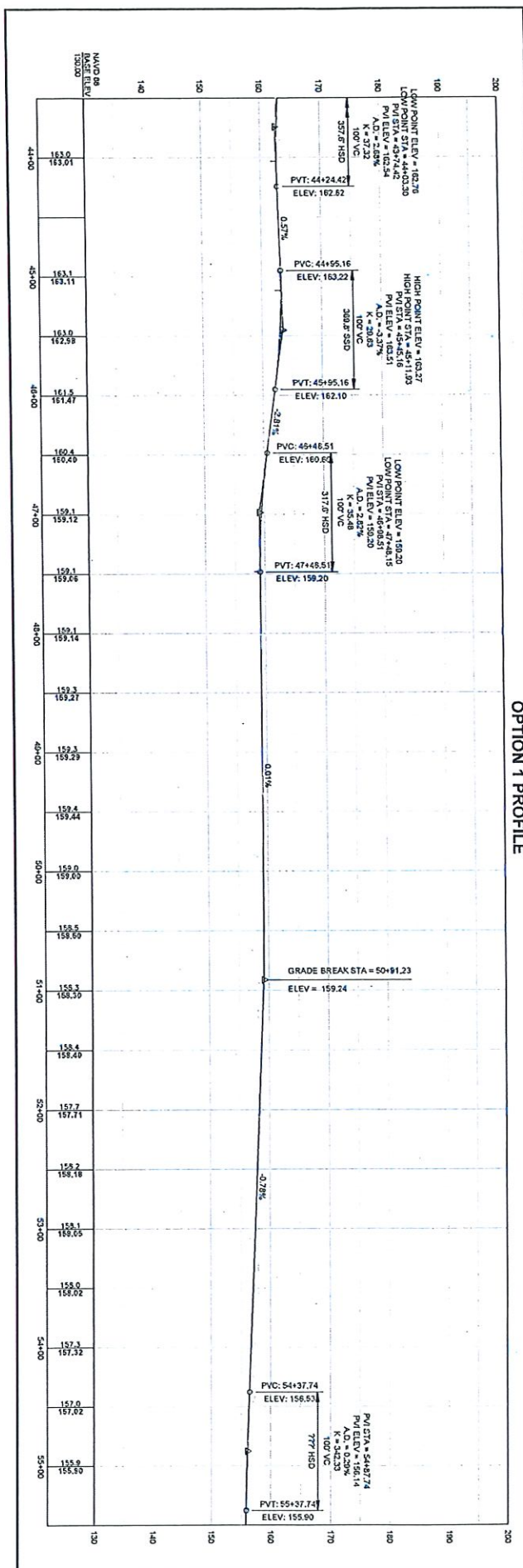
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PROJECT FILE NO. 124410		CONSTRUCTION PLAN & PROFILE	



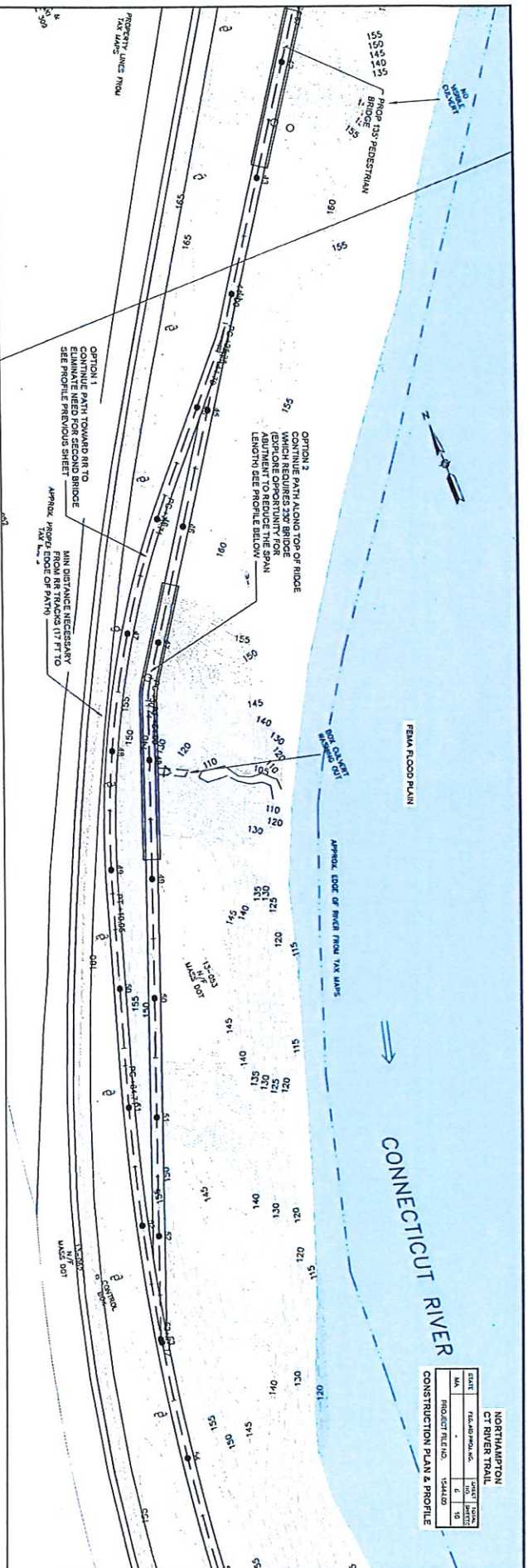


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10/10/02			

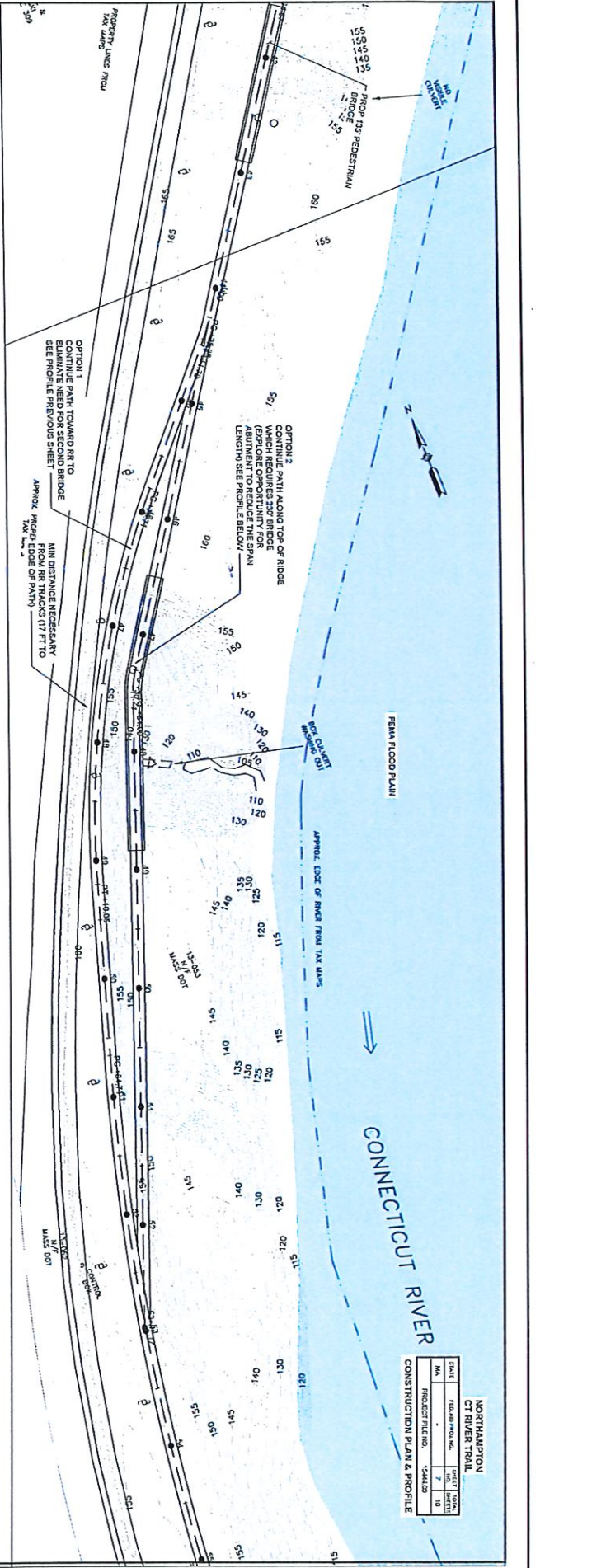
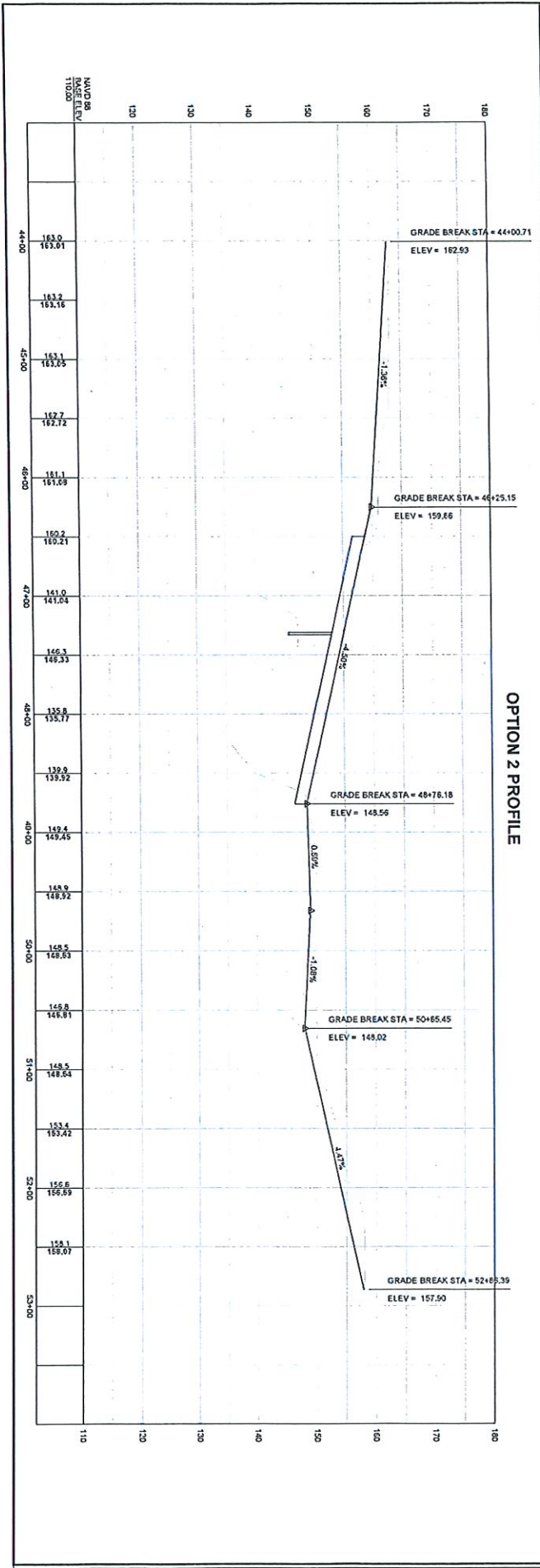
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 SHEET 3 OF 10
 CONSTRUCTION PLAN & PROFILE



OPTION 1 PROFILE



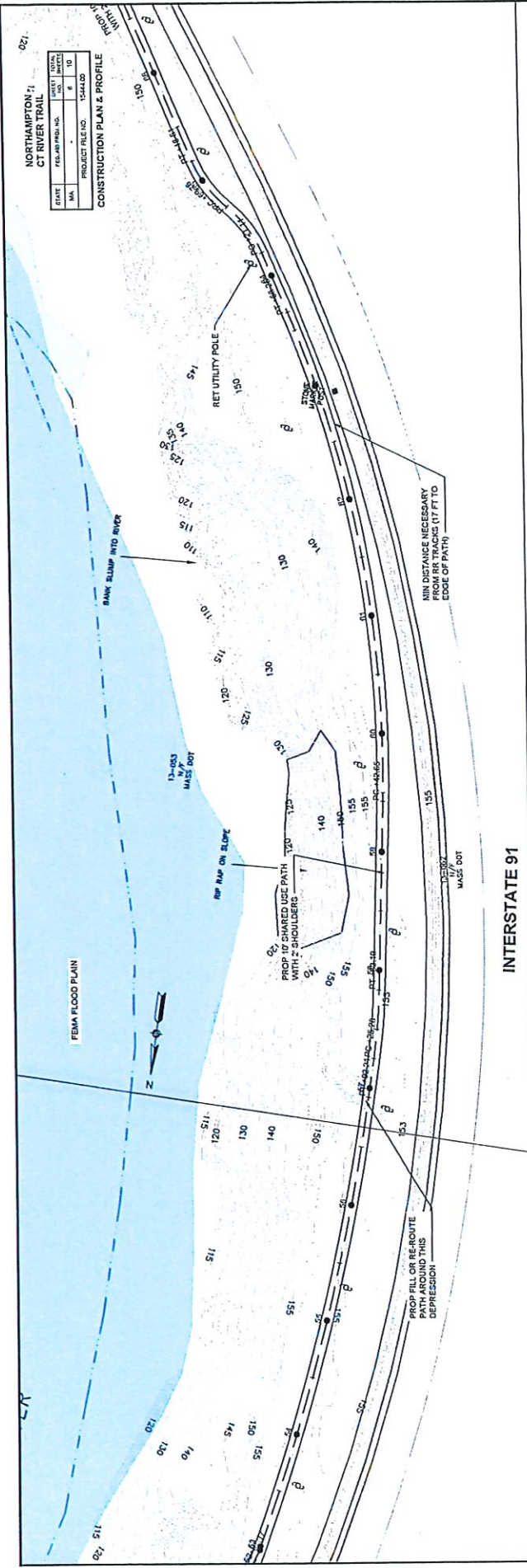
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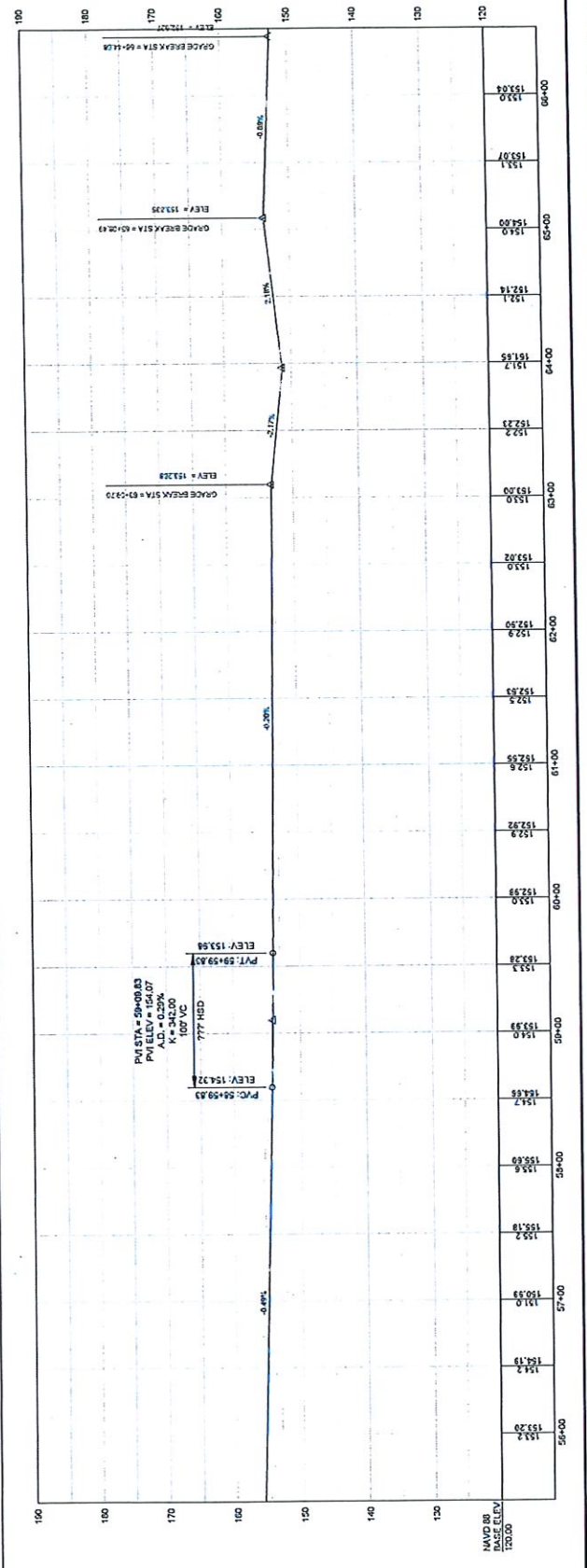
**NORTHAMPTON 71
 CT RIVER TRAIL**

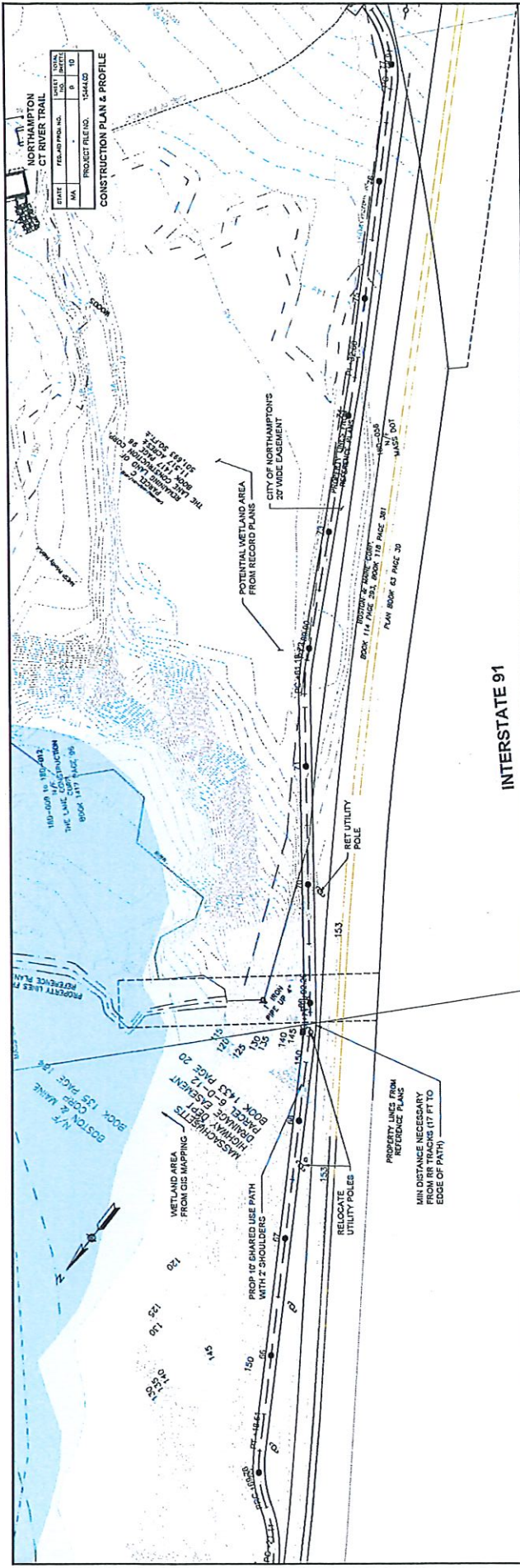
CONSTRUCTION PLAN & PROFILE

STATE	PROJECT NO.	SHEET NO.	TOTAL SHEETS
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DATE	PROJECT FILE NO.	SCALE	
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INTERSTATE 91





INTERSTATE 91

