Sam Doran and Tom Fortmann

Presented at the Lexington Depot
September 5, 2018

Sponsored by the Lexington Historical Society
and the Friends of Lexington Bikeways
Part 1
When the Railroad Came to Town

Remarks and notes by Sam Doran appear at the end of Part 1

Engine No. 1, Lexington Railroad Station, 1886
Post-revolutionary Lexington had bustling thoroughfares and a thriving tavern business, but commercial traffic shifted to turnpikes and canals in the early nineteenth century and by 1844 only Cutler’s Tavern and Benjamin Muzzey’s Monument House remained. Muzzey, seeing an opportunity to attract new traffic, obtained a charter and organized investors for the **Lexington & West Cambridge Railroad Company**.
Muzzey’s railroad business was disappointing for its first two decades. An awkward and time-consuming train connection to Boston, the Civil War, and competition from “horse railroads” all took their toll and left the stockholders under water. By then called the Lexington & Arlington Railroad, it was sold to the Boston & Lowell Railroad in 1870, extended to Bedford and to the Reformatory in West Concord, and a direct link to Boston was added.
Business improved in the 1870s. Lexington’s hotels soon became a weekend and summer “countryside” destination for Boston tourists, and both passenger and commercial traffic increased.

Centennial train delivering visitors in 1875
Lexington Depot circa 1850. It originally served as the town's function space, auditorium, banquet hall, and even temporary ballroom.

East Lexington Station in 1894.
Wooden walkover and 26,630-gallon water tower in the railroad yard behind Lexington Depot, February 1916.

1923 schedule
The *Boston & Maine* (B&M) acquired the Lexington Branch in 1887. An abundance of trains (nineteen daily round trips in 1908) established Lexington’s early adoption as a commuter suburb, and commercial traffic grew as well.
RR crossing at South Road near the Bedford Depot in 1956.
The building on the right is now the Bikeway Source.
The B&M filed for bankruptcy in 1970 and in 1976 sold the Lexington Branch to the MBTA, which continued to operate one train per day until a major snowstorm terminated passenger service in January 1977. Timothy Mellon’s Guilford Transportation Industries purchased the B&M in 1983 and its residual rights in the right-of-way—two decades after the bankruptcy—became the final obstacle blocking construction of the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway.
Remarks and Notes by Sam Doran

On this special occasion for the Bikeway, it's good to “look back”—and I’m pleased to offer a few historical notes tonight on what came before the Bikeway. Really a prelude, the context, for Tom's remarks.

One theme I'll highlight in passing tonight—perhaps not fundamental, but one I find interesting—is that of community-building. The railroad brought people together. At a basic level, it did so in “this building” that we're gathered in tonight. The Centre Depot originally acted as the town’s function space, auditorium, banquet hall, even temporary ballroom ... in those early years, from its opening in 1846 (172 years ago next month) until the town relocated our town hall to the Centre, from the Munroe District, in 1871.

Prior to 1846, Lexington wasn't lacking in “direct routes” to Boston, before the arrival of our first steam engine—the engine was appropriately named “the Muzzey,” by the way, after the father of the Lexington RR, Benjamin Muzzey.

We had “three” roads that each ran the length of the town, as the railway later did. We had the Concord Turnpike, or Concord Ave., the Middlesex Turnpike on the north side of town, and the Old Concord Road, or what is now Mass. Ave., straight through the Centre. These three roads were served by stagecoach lines, and certain places were designated stagecoach stops—taverns, or homes—like the house that is now the rectory of the evangelical church on Lowell Street. But these are old roads, some parts of them from the 17th century, and they wind. Which is why even today, as bikers and walkers and runners, we should thank Benjamin Muzzey for his resourcefulness in clearing a pretty straight line through the town.

Founding of RR, motivations (a RR and corporate enterprise that would also enhance business holdings of Muzzey, but also a civic contribution to enhance the town, publicly minded), purpose as a connection to Boston—Muzzey was proprietor of the Monument House which was in need of business—though RR wasn’t initially successful. Best laid plans. He came from the town’s first family, literally, innkeepers since they opened the tavern later called Buckman's.

Muzzey was resourceful in clearing that right-of-way—in dealing with his fellow townsmen to acquire land rights across farms. Supposedly, one unnamed farmer refused to allow his barn to be demolished, and Muzzey dumped gravel against the barn until it fell in.

Corporate origins of RR—As we would years later, Lexington had to deal with the folks down the road in Arlington. Men from Arlington, then West Cambridge, had been agitating for a RR. They banded together with the Lexingtonians for a combined effort. Route was surveyed, and in 1844 the group applied for a charter. First meeting was April 14, 1845, with stock offerings not to exceed $200,000! Larkin Turner, well known retired sea captain, and Benjamin Muzzey were among the first officers—Lexington men took the lead on the board. And in 1846 Amos Locke, another Minuteman descendant, was operator of the Muzzey engine on its inaugural run up the single track.

This was just a single-track railroad, for nearly 50 years, and you could only travel as far as this Depot in Lexington Centre.

It wasn't so easy to get out here from Boston in the early days. Board a train car in the city, and it was just one car from the train that would make it to Lexington. The engine would leave that car on a spur track near Fresh Pond. You would wait there in the car praying that the schedule held and another engine would pick up the car from the spur and pull it to Lexington.

The hometown railroad, Lexington and West Cambridge, sold out to the regional Boston and Lowell in 1870 after Lexington stock had plummeted due to the Civil War. The price tag for our local line was all of $140,000. That's estimated around $2.7 million in today's currency. The Boston and Lowell seems to have then pushed to invest in their newly-acquired line, which had been hard up on cash.

In the summer of 1873, a major extension was opened, to carry passengers from Lexington Centre through North Lexington and on to Bedford and Concord, with a connection available to Lowell.
This was well-timed, and perhaps not coincidentally. “1875”, the great Centennial of the Battle of Lexington, brought a wave of tourism to Lexington and Concord. Passengers clung to the rooves, and sides, of train cars … to clamber their way out here in April 1875. Some couldn’t even manage that, the likes of Mark Twain, for one, who went to the station in Boston but took a look at the crowd and gave up on his hopes of visiting Lexington Common. Traveling with Twain was William Dean Howells.

Howells eventually made it out here some years later, and wrote of his time visiting Lexington for a British magazine at this time. He stayed at the latest Muzzey hotel, a grand Victorian building originally built as an exhibition hall at the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876. “It was like arriving at some enchanted castle, or if it were not, so much the worse for the enchanted castle.” he wrote. The railroad—“A railroad that was on domestic and almost affectionate terms with us all. When the trains came scuffling and wheezing up the incline from Boston, the sound was as if the friendly locomotive were mounting the back stairs, and might be expected to walk in without ceremony, and sit down at the fire like any other boarder. We could see the trains backing and filling at the station as we sat at breakfast, and such of us as were going to town could time ourselves to the last half-minute and count upon some sympathetic delay when we were late. Saturday evening, the trains all drew in with the air of having done an honest week’s work, and the engines having run their empty cars up the siding, found their way to the locomotive house at their leisure, as if they were going to wash up there for Sunday while a sabbath peace settled with the nightfall upon the village.”

A second parallel track was laid in 1886, ensuring more trains per day, each way.

As the railroad built its success, the Boston and Lowell was absorbed by the Boston and Maine the next year in 1887. It’s the B&M name we know, for they operated the commuter trains until the MBTA acquired the right-of-way in the 20th century.

And how the railroad blossomed—by the early 20th century there were more than 20 trains per day each way. Some of the improvements made in the 19th and 20th centuries to the “railbed” continue to benefit us today. A number of bridges were built in 1905 to eliminate grade crossings, so the trains passed either over or under the major cross streets. Just across the municipal parking lot, that bridge over Grant Street was built more than 100 years ago, in 1905—in what was the “backyard” of the Muzzey family homestead.

One bridge, the one at Maple Street, has regained notice in recent years for its historical, long disused, name of Pierce’s Bridge. There was a station there for many years, and it’s convenient to have precise place-names available. So, I’ve heard several people in recent years refer specifically to “Pierce’s Bridge.” It’s nice when the old becomes new and useful again.

Circling back to camaraderie on the RR—a favorite anecdote of mine from modern times, actually told here in the Depot several years ago at a panel discussion: this man had been a regular commuter on the B&M Lexington branch, at the point in the 1970s when service was down to just one train a day each way. When you commute to work on the train with the same people every day, you get to know each other. This man was on one of the final commuter trains before the commuter line was suspended in 1977 following a major snow storm. He recalled that the “regulars” on the train popped a bottle of champagne on board to recognize the end of the Lexington Branch.

Because of the establishment of the Bikeway, which Tom will detail in a moment, this right-of-way “again” fosters a useful social space in the Lexington community. And, importantly, it serves as a direct, “smooth-grade” transit link … still fulfilling its early mission to attract visitors to our historical town as the RR did on this same path in 1875 … and serves still as a commuter link for those who commute via bicycle.
Part 2
Birth of a Bikeway
Back in the Last Century

Does anyone here recall the 1970s?

Three events led—over 17 years!—to the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway.

1975: The Lexington Recreation Committee recruited a subcommittee to plan local bikeways near the Vine Brook and Lincoln Fields. Participants included

   Judy Uhrig            Tom Fortmann          Jeanne Krieger          Sue Solomon
   Betsy Whitman         Erna Greene            Mickey Hinkle           Weiant Wathen-Dunn

Members soon drifted off-topic to speculate about turning the B&M railway—by then down to one train per day—into a commuter bikeway.

1977: A major snowstorm* shut down B&M passenger service and freight service ended 3 years later.

1978: Angela “Jere” Frick of the Lexington Conservation Commission received a letter from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) soliciting air-quality proposals to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Air Act of 1963.

She sent it to Tom Fortmann, who proposed to lure commuters out of their cars with a bikeway along the B&M right-of-way from Bedford to the planned Red Line station** at Alewife.

The Proposal

“The Minuteman Bicycle Highway”

Here it is: three typewritten pages, estimated cost $450,000, dated 14 November 1978.
The Study

• Arlington Planning Director Alan McClennen (also their MAPC representative) and Town Manager Don Marquis were hatching similar plans and the towns’ efforts soon converged. Don Blake coordinated Bedford’s part of the project.

• The proposal, supported by the MAPC and the four towns, received critical behind-the-scenes support from Cathy Buckley, a bicycle activist on the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS).

• The EPA funded a study, completed and published in 1981. Estimated cost: $1,520,000, including some lighting.
The Study

Minuteman Commuter Bikeway Study, February 1981, 92 pages. Conducted & published by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The authors were Barbara Bernard, Cathy Buckley, and Tom Humphrey. The marvelous Minuteman logo was designed by David Speidel.
The Foundation

- The Cycling Transportation Foundation (CTF) was formed in August 1981 to advocate for construction of the bikeway.

  Board members:
  Joel Bard  Cathy Buckley  Dave Fisher  Tom Fortmann  Dick Fryberger
  Alan McClennen  John Scalley  Howard Gilbertson  Eric Vogt  Rich Withers

- In March 1982 CTF’s proposal to Mass DPW & MBTA called for an “innovative alliance of the public and private sectors” with a budget of
  $1,123,000 (including lighting) from Bikeway Bonds
  $500,000 in donated equipment, scrap value, volunteer labor, & local in-kind services
  $1,623,000

- A key contact was made with State Representative Mary Jane Gibson of Belmont, Assistant Majority Whip and Vice-Chair of the legislature’s Transportation Committee.
The Abutters

“I don’t want people from the high-crime areas of Cambridge and Somerville riding by my house.” —— Ingleside Road resident, at a public hearing

• Abutters in Lexington attended public hearings and Selectmen’s meetings in force to oppose the bikeway.
• A pre-Internet “telephone tree” summoned supporters to turn out in response.
• The most contentious hearing was chaired by Selectman Jim Crain, September 22, 1982. 60 people spoke: 21 opposed, 37 in favor, 2 neutral.
• Opponents portrayed the bikeway as a major threat to civilized life in Lexington.
• Objections included invasion of privacy, noise, vandalism, burglary, litter, intrusion of “undesirables” from out of town, inadequate policing, decreased property values, cost, safety at grade crossings, threat to wildlife, environmental damage, etc.
• Opposition was almost non-existent in Arlington, Bedford, and Cambridge.
The Secretary

- **Fred Salvucci** was a well-regarded Secretary of Transportation (twice, under Governor Dukakis), but he didn’t accept bicycles as a serious mode of transportation and he wanted to retain the option of extending the Red Line to Route 128.

- He opposed the Minuteman Bikeway and stalled its funding from 1983 until August 1985. In September 1986, he and Rep. Mary Jane Gibson announced approval and funding ($1.5M) in a press conference at the newly opened Alewife Station.

- Vollmer Associates carried out the design phase during 1987-88 and construction cost estimates ballooned to as high as $4.3M.

- Construction funding ($3.5M) did not appear until the Weld administration took office in early 1991.
The Commonwealth

• Mary Jane Gibson, State Representative from Belmont & East Arlington, Assistant Majority Whip and Vice-Chair of the Transportation Committee, inserted a million-dollar bikeway line into a billion-dollar transportation bond bill in 1985.

• Gibson and Deputy Secretary Ann Hershfang persuaded Fred Salvucci to accept the bikeway, announced at the 1986 press conference.

• Dick Kraus, State Senator from the 4th Middlesex District and a bicyclist, built support for bikeway funding in the Senate, as did State Senator Carol Amick.

• CTPS Bicycle Coordinator Cathy Buckley and Director Arnie Soolman (both bicycle commuters) shepherded the project around the shoals of state government.

• After five more years’ delay, the legislature passed and new Governor Bill Weld signed a transportation bond bill with $3.5M for bikeway construction in May 1991. The lowest of nine bids was only $2M.

• In an economic downturn, Weld wanted bond funds committed quickly and the “shovel-ready” Minuteman was first in line.
The Selectman

Jack Eddison was elected Lexington Selectman in 1984
• He campaigned on support of the Minuteman Bikeway.
• He rallied the Board against naysayers and abutters.
• He worked with towns & MAPC to sustain momentum.
• He lobbied legislators & negotiated with Secy Salvucci.
• He chaired the Lexington Bikeway Implementation Committee.
• He served on the MassDOT Bikeway Advisory Committee.
• He passed away in January 1993, before completion.

The Lexington section was dedicated to Jack in May 1993.
The Maestro

**Alan McClennen**, Arlington’s Planning Director, supported and encouraged by Town Manager Don Marquis, worked quietly and effectively behind the scenes to make the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway a reality.

- He lobbied the [MAPC](https://www.masspca.state.ma.us), MPO, MBTA, Mass DPW, towns, Mass Departments of Transportation and Environmental Management, and key legislators.
- He provided moral and political support to bikeway proponents facing serious opposition in Lexington.
- With legal abandonment of the right-of-way the final obstacle, he collaborated with the [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](https://www.rails-to-trails.org) (RTC) to convince Timothy Mellon’s [Guilford Transportation Industries](https://www.gti-outdoors.com) and the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to accept it.
- His patience, perseverance, and perspicacity paid off after 17 long years.
- **Alan McClennen Park** on Summer Street is a tribute to his service.
The Construction

- Conway Construction broke ground in October 1991.
The Launch

- Lexington and Bedford sections were completed in the spring of 1993.
- A grand opening ceremony was held May 29, 1993.
- The Lexington section was dedicated to Jack Eddison.
- The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) dubbed it the “Nation’s 500th Rail-Trail.”
The Result

“I went out on your bloody bikeway yesterday. It looked like the start of the Boston Marathon!” ——David Wells

• The Minuteman Commuter Bikeway was and continues to be a phenomenal success, inspiring other bikeways throughout the region.
• It was the fifth inductee into the national Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in October 2008.
• Usage is difficult to measure but is probably around 300-500,000 trips/year.
• CTPS surveys indicate that it’s the busiest bike path in Massachusetts.
Bicycle parking cage at Alewife Station

Original Buddliner at Bedford terminus

Autumn runner
The original four members of Lexington’s “Bikeway Bobbies:” Officers Paul Callahan, Rick Corazzini, Dan Hoag, and Dana Ham

Officers Dan Hoag and Paul Callahan on patrol in 1993 or 1994
More railroad and bikeway photos are on display this month in the CVS windows.
Lexington Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway, 1993

Bedford Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway, 1993:
sites.google.com/site/bedfordbike

Jerry Van Hook leads the Friends on the first official ride
More Friends
Here are some members of various bikeway committees and other supporters in Lexington, collected for posterity

Harvey Bingham
Dick Canale
Dave Cannon
Laurel Carpenter
Bob Dangel
Jack Eddison
Peggy Enders
Robert Enders
Tom Fortmann
John Frey
Jere Frick
Andy Friedlich
George Gagliardi
Erna Greene
Steve Groves
Bill Hadley
Joyce Hals
Mike Hanauer
Marita Hartshorn
Bob Hausslein
Steve Hill
Mickey Hinkle
Steve Hurley
Peter Kelley
Stew Kennedy
Jeanne Krieger
David Kucharsky
Patria Lanfranchi
Alan Lazarus
Carolyn Levi
Alan Levine
John Livsey
Jennifer Melot
Barbara Munkres
Keith Ohmart
Dan Palant
Joe Pato
Dave Pinsonneault
Wendy Reasenberg
Bob Sawyer
Sandra Shaw
Abe Shenker
Jackie Smith
Sue Solomon
Richard Spencer
Bill Stern
Webb Sussman
Mike Tabaczynski
Judy Uhrig
Jerry Van Hook
Weiant Wathen-Dunn
Betsy Whitman
David Williams
Rich Withers

If your name or that of someone you know belongs on this list, tell me and I’ll add it.
In September of 1993, at Lexington's Bowman School, Steven Levy* asked his 4th-grade class, “What is the biggest change in your town since you were born?” An amusing variety of answers ensued until finally an astute 9-year-old said, “The bike path was built.”

They then embarked upon a 9-month intellectual odyssey, researching every aspect of bicycling and the bikeway, interviewing key players, polling abutters, counting users, repairing bicycles, and documenting their efforts in this marvelous 80-page volume.

The book has been reprinted verbatim in a 25th Anniversary Edition that is on sale now.

* 1993 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year
The kids autographed my copy in 1994. Mr. Levy is here tonight to autograph your copy of the 25th Anniversary edition ($5 each).
The Future

“Middlesex County, with more than 200 miles of bike paths and another 150 miles in the works, is poised to become the Netherlands of America!”

—Richard Fries, former MassBike Executive Director

Middlesex County Bikeways

• Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
• Assabet River Rail Trail
• Nashua River Rail Trail
• Somerville Community Path
• Minuteman Extension West
• Narrow Gauge Rail Trail & Yankee Doodle Bikeway
• Bay Circuit Trail
• Cochituate Rail Trail
• Upper Charles Trail
• Mass Central Rail Trail (next slide)
Mass Central Rail Trail: tkmaps.com/MCRT, masscentralrailtrail.org

Also see the MAPC’s *LandLine Vision Plan*:

“We are proposing 913 miles of greenways and 515 miles of foot trails across the MAPC region.”

mapc.org/resource-library/landline-vision-plan
trailmap.mapc.org
Rails-to-Trails article about LandLine
## Railway to Bikeway Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>Lexington &amp; West Cambridge Railroad opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Boston &amp; Lowell Railroad extends to Bedford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>21 trains run each day between Lexington &amp; Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Route 2 widens to 4 lanes for car travel to Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Route 128 connects Lexington to points north &amp; south of Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>First discussion of converting railway to bikeway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Ice storm halts passenger train service to Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Proposal for EPA air quality funds to study “Minuteman Bicycle Highway”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Cycling Transportation Foundation proposal to Mass DPW &amp; MBTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>State approval with design funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Bikeway construction begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Minuteman Commuter Bikeway opens as the nation’s 500th Rail Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Bikeway inducted into Rail-Trail Hall of Fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Bikeway plowed in winter for first time in Lexington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>25th Anniversary Celebrations in Lexington, Arlington, and Bedford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web Links

- Lexington HS: lexingtonhistory.org & lexingtonhistory.pastperfectonline.com
- Cary Library—Worthen Collection: carylibrary.org/worthen
- Arlington HS: arlingtonhistorical.org & arlingtonhistorical.pastperfectonline.com
- Bedford HS: bedfordmahistory.org & bedfordmahistory.pastperfectonline.com
- Beverly HS: historicbeverly.net & beverlyhistory.pastperfectonline.com
- Boston & Maine RR HS: bmrrhs.org
- Mystic Valley Railway Society: mysticvalleyrs.org
- Friends of Bedford Depot Park: bedforddepot.org/history
- Abandoned Rails: abandonedrails.com/Lexington_Branch
- Rail-Trail Hall of Fame: railstotrails.org/our-work/trail-promotion/rail-trail-hall-of-fame
- Minuteman Bikeway: minutemanbikeway.org & wikipedia.org/wiki/Minuteman_Bikeway
- 25th Anniversary Sites: bikeway25.org & lexingtonhistory.org/bikeway25
- 25th Anniversary Video: youtube.com/watch?v=gBY81yjAD2E
- Friends groups: www.folb.net & sites.google.com/site/bedfordbike
- Wikipedia: wikipedia.org/wiki/Minuteman_Bikeway
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexington_and_West_Cambridge_Railroad
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Lexington_Depot
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedford_Depot
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Arlington_Centre_station
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Street_station_(Arlington,_Massachusetts)
  wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierce%27s_Bridge_station
Thanks to all for attending.
Don’t miss the big 25th anniversary event on Sept 29th

bikeway25.org and lexingtonhistory.org/bikeway25
Photo credits

Slide 1: Edwin B. Worthen Collection at Cary Memorial Library; Jixue Yang; Worthen; Worthen
Slide 2: Worthen Collection
Slide 3: Arlington Historical Society; Lexington Historical Society
Slide 4: Worthen Collection; Lexington Historical Society
Slide 5: Worthen Collection
Slide 6: Lexington Historical Society; Worthen Collection
Slide 7: Unknown; Historic Beverly
Slide 8: Historic Beverly
Slide 9: Historic Beverly
Slide 10: Alan E. MacMillan
Slide 13: Historic Beverly
Slide 14: H. Bentley Crouch
Slide 15: Tom Fortmann
Slide 17: Tom Fortmann
Slide 22: Tom Fortmann
Slide 23: Alan McClennen
Slide 24: Lexington Minuteman
Slide 25: Kim Downey
Slide 26: Jixue Yang; Stephan Miller
Slide 27: Kim Downey; Kim Downey; Peggy Enders
Slide 28: Paul Callahan
Slide 29: Various (DuckDuckGo search)
Slide 30: Friends of Lexington Bikeways
Slide 32-33: Mr. Levy's 4th-graders
Slide 38: Worthen Collection; Jixue Yang