

An Act authorizing municipalities to expend certain funds for the acquisition of land to be used for rail trails

H.286	Representative Carmine Gentile Representative Lindsay Sabadosa
S.148	Senator James Eldridge

Rail Trails have widespread community support and land acquisition is a major hurdle facing communities seeking to build new trails

This bill would clarify that municipalities can use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to acquire federally rail banked right of ways to develop rail trails.

Municipalities across the commonwealth are currently seeking funding for rail trail land acquisition. Across the state, municipalities and local advocates are putting together a statewide trail network piece by piece. Land acquisition is often one of the biggest funding hurdles these popular rail trails face. From 2019-2020, the MassTrails program supported over 120 trails projects across the commonwealth but funded only 2 rail trail land acquisition projects. The ability to use CPA funding will expedite crucial trail links and help communities who desperately need land acquisition funding to move their projects forward.

These trails not only increase the bike-friendliness of their communities by providing a recreational resource but have far reaching economic benefits. A linked network would bolster tourism and allow bike-commuters to travel between towns on low-stress, safe pathways— connecting them to jobs & economic opportunity.

Rail Trails are popular with bicyclists of all ages & abilities

From children to older adults and from casual bicyclists to daily riders, rail trails are highly popular with bicyclists of all ages and abilities. Rail trails allow for low-stress bicycling, due to their separation from cars and often gradual grading that enables a fun, easy ride. Bicyclists enjoy these trails for both recreation and transportation. Building a connected network statewide would bolster both local use and tourism.



Included in this bill:

- » Clarifies that municipalities are allowed to use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to be used for acquiring federally rail banked right of ways for the development of rail trails



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