

Picture Main Street is just the beginning. . .

Up until now, the conversation around Picture Main Street has been about the road diet, the separated bike lanes, and the various design elements. Nothing has been said about the bigger picture. No talk of what is about to happen. Let's zoom out for a wider view.

Northampton is about to be the epicenter of a vast network of rail trails that will bring economic development and vibrancy to our city. And bikes, lot of bikes. Let's start at the beginning.

Milemarker 0 for the 104 mile East-West trail from Boston to here and Milemarker 0 for the 81 mile North-South trail from New Haven to here. Both sides of the marker are at 0 Miles. This presciently-placed marker is located at the south end of Union Station in downtown Northampton.

The East-West trail is the longest developing trail in New England. Longest in terms of both miles and years is the Mass Central Rail Trail. As of now 70 miles of the 104 miles are open and the unveiling of a commitment to finish the rail trail will be coming soon. The development of the rail trail has been underway for 50 years.

The North-South trail is the longest interstate trail in the northeast. There used to be 16 different names with each locale having their local name on their couple of mile stretch. The Manhan Rail Trail is the name most known commonly known around here. It is slowly distilling into the New Haven & Northampton Canal Greenway.

Within 150 miles of here lies the densest network of dead steam RR corridor in North America. And this network here led to hundreds of multi-story brick mills where the prosperity in southern New England was produced.

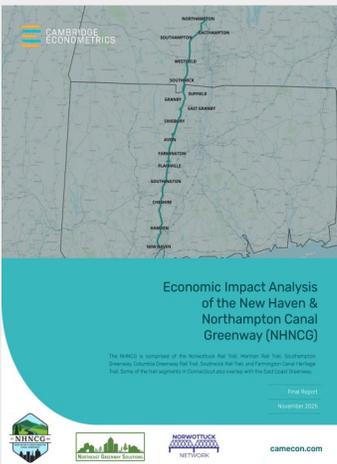
This network of safe, off-road paths connecting interesting cities and towns is like nothing else in the United States. The mills along these trails are now repurposed, and the network of rail trails is becoming a mecca for tourists to come and explore historic communities and vistas by bike or walking on multi-day journeys.

The positive economic impact studies of these corridors was done by one the nation's most respected firm on

this special task. Two years ago, a report came out about what the impacts of a 100+ mile long East-West trail would be worth. Another report was recently completed about the about the 80+ mile long North-South trail. Northampton is positioned perfectly to benefit from this network of trails.

Once these trails are completed between 1 and 2 million bicyclists a year will be coming to downtown Northampton. Many of them will be utilizing the passenger railroad to get here or back to their start point. Most will be without their cars. Picture Main Street is just the beginning.

We need to be thinking about the even bigger picture. Conversations should be starting on what kind of bike parking garages the city should be building. Here is the [link](#) to both reports.



N-S Trail.
New Haven & Northampton
Canal Greenway



E-W Trail.
Mass Central Rail Trail



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