
2 The South Sudbury Industrial Track

This chapter provides a short history of rail service on the right-of-way, followed by a physical description of the corridor and the right-of-way width, and discussions of roadway crossings, environmental issues, and current corridor uses.

A HISTORY OF RAIL SERVICE

This section presents a summary of past and present ownership of the line, as well as the history of its passenger and freight services. Appendix A contains more details. Historically, local freight and passenger traffic on the line was relatively light because of the rural nature of much of the territory through which it passed.

Ownership

The original charter for the line was issued in 1870. The line opened the following year. It went through several ownership changes before becoming part of the New Haven system in 1893. The Penn Central took over in 1961 following the bankruptcy of the New Haven. Although the Penn Central went bankrupt within the decade, it continued to operate the line until 1976. In that year, the federally established Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) took over the segment from South Sudbury to Framingham Center, which was named the South Sudbury Industrial Track in 1982. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts eventually purchased the line north of South Sudbury to Lowell through its Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC, now the Executive Office of Transportation).

The present owner, CSX Transportation, took over part of the Conrail system in 1999, including the South Sudbury Industrial Track.

Passenger Service

During the first four decades of operation, passenger service typically consisted of three round-trips a day over the full length of the route: one morning, one midday, and one evening. One station, Nobscot, originally known as North Framingham, was located in the study area, south of Water Street. Two other stations were located barely outside the study area, at both ends: South Sudbury, just north of the Central Mass., and Framingham Center, just south of Route 9. The South Sudbury station is still standing.

In 1917 the midday round-trip was dropped to facilitate serving wartime freight needs; it was never restored. In 1932, during the Great Depression, service was cut in half, leaving a southbound morning trip and a northbound evening trip between Framingham and Lowell. All passenger service ended in 1933.

Freight Service

Freight service in the early 1900s usually consisted of several daily trips in each direction. Service to Lowell included trains to and from New Bedford and Fall River. Through freight trips were operated six days a week; they ran from New Bedford to Lowell until about 1950, after which they were routed to Boston. Through freight service ended in 1973; local service continued five days a week.

When the Boston & Maine Railroad abandoned the Central Mass. Branch in 1980, a lumber dealer at South Sudbury that had used that line became a customer of the South Sudbury Industrial Track. In 1982, contiguous service north of South Sudbury was discontinued. The last train on the South Sudbury Industrial Track derailed in Sudbury on April 13, 2000. In June 2001, CSX applied to the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) for approval to abandon the line. In October 2001 the STB approved the abandonment.

The Town of Sudbury filed notice with the STB to request that abandonment be postponed in order to allow negotiations with CSX for acquisition of the line for use as a rail trail, with a small section proposed for a highway bypass. CSX, as the property owner, has requested and received several extensions for implementation of abandonment. By August 2004, CSX had removed the rails and ties. Because the bridges would be used if a path were built, CSX left those in place.

B DESCRIPTION OF THE SOUTH SUDBURY INDUSTRIAL TRACK

The South Sudbury Industrial Track is the 4.8-mile segment of the Lowell Secondary between the Central Mass. right-of-way in Sudbury and the active Fitchburg Secondary in Framingham.⁸ Approximately 1.4 miles of the South Sudbury Industrial Track are in the town of Sudbury, and approximately 3.4 miles are in the town of Framingham. Land uses adjacent to the right-of-way differ significantly in the two communities. The Sudbury Water District owns much of the adjacent land in that town; there are only a few residential abutters. In Framingham, single-family homes abut almost all of the right-of-way; 16 homes are within about 50 feet of the corridor.

A brief description follows of the right-of-way, traveling north. All crossings are at grade unless otherwise noted. The locations of the culverts are taken from the Valuation (VAL) plans obtained from CSX.

Framingham

The right-of-way begins at the junction with the Fitchburg Secondary, between Route 9 and Pleasant Street. (See Figure 3.) The surrounding land use initially is commercial. As the line approaches Pleasant Street, adjoining use becomes residential. There are single-family homes on the west side set back at least 75 feet. There are apartment and townhouse complexes on the east side that are also 75 feet or more from the right-of-way except the one closest to

⁸ This freight line, which extends to Leominster, averages one trip per day.

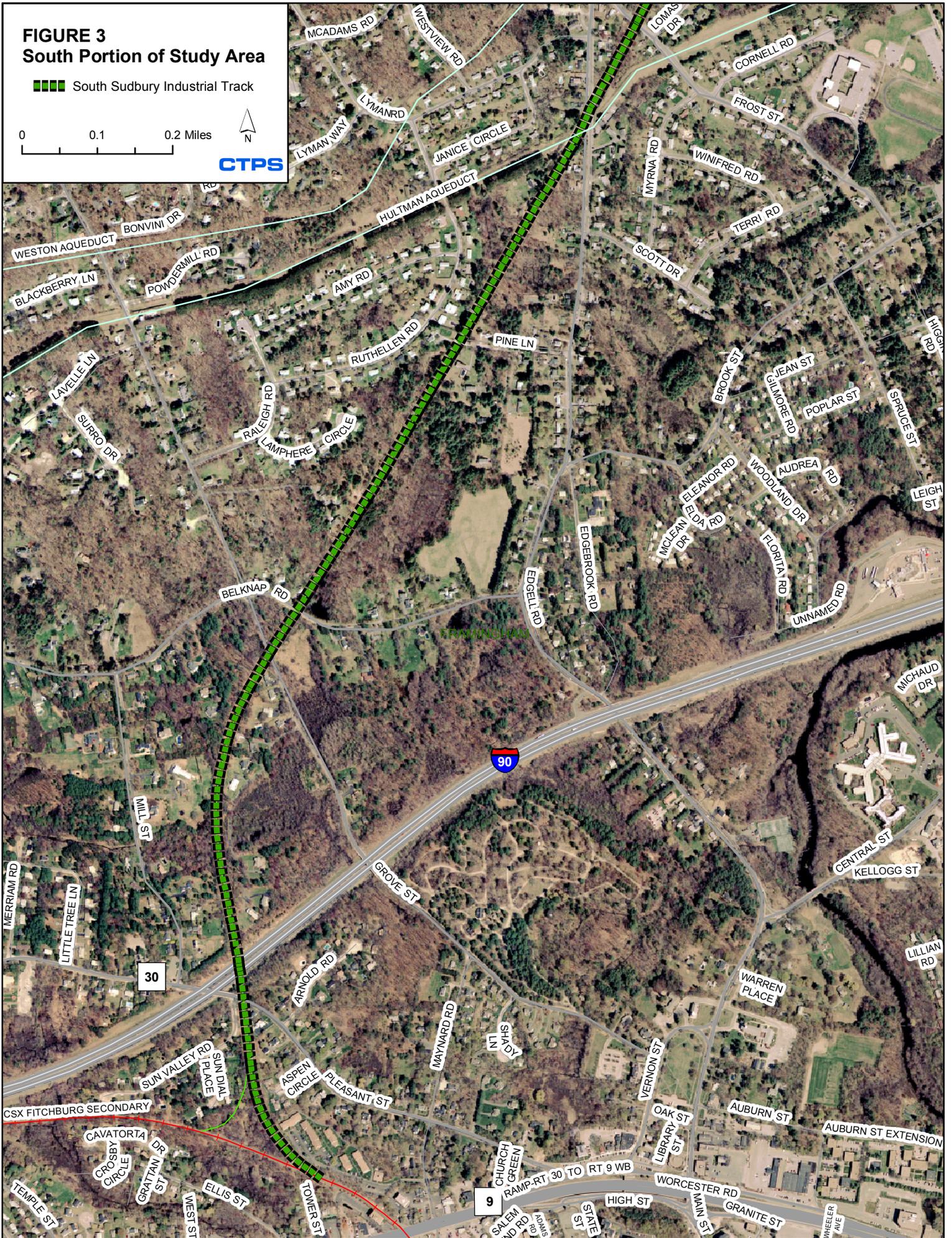
FIGURE 3
South Portion of Study Area

■ ■ ■ ■ South Sudbury Industrial Track

0 0.1 0.2 Miles



CTPS



Pleasant Street, which is about 20 feet away. The Jonathan Maynard Historic District runs east along Pleasant Street from the railroad crossing.⁹

The right-of-way crosses Pleasant Street (Route 30), then, about 20 feet further north, crosses I-90 (the Massachusetts Turnpike) on a bridge. Between I-90 and the next crossing, a bridge over Grove Street, all of the homes on the west side are set well back except one just north of I-90, which is about 30 feet away. On the east side, three homes near the Grove Street Bridge are between 20 and 50 feet from the right-of-way. There is a culvert located about 600 feet north of the I-90 bridge.

There is then a short section from Grove Street to Belknap Street; no houses are located here. There is one culvert about 75 feet north of Grove Street.

Between Belknap and Pine Lane, there is one house on the east, set back about 50 feet, and there are two on the west, about 25 and 50 feet away, respectively. There are two culverts, one about 200 feet north of Belknap Road and one about 1,050 feet further north. Pine Lane is essentially a driveway to a single home set back over 200 feet. Between Pine Lane and Edgell Road, there are three culverts. One is about 530 feet north of Pine Lane, one is 500 feet south of Edgell Road and the third is 50 feet south of Edgell Road. In this segment, the homes on the west side on Ruth Ellen Road are set back 200 feet or more, although the yards of some are within 50 feet. Further north there are a few more homes set back about 75 feet. There are two homes on the east side: one near Pine Lane set back about 75 feet and one near Edgell Road set back about 25 feet. The Hultman Aqueduct crosses the right-of-way at Edgell Road.

In the short section between Edgell Road and Frost Street, a home on the west side is about 40 feet away and a home on the east side about 60 feet away. There is a culvert about 400 feet north of Edgell Road.

Between Frost and Water Streets (see Figure 4), there are nine homes on the west side; two are set back about 50 feet, the others 75 feet or more. There are also nine homes on the east side, close to the Frost Street end, all of which are set back approximately 150 feet or more except the one closest to Frost Street, which is about 40 feet back. There are two culverts in this segment: one crosses 800 feet north of Frost Street and the next is 375 feet further north. Dunsdell Brook crosses under the right-of-way about 450 feet south of Water Street. The Weston Aqueduct crosses the right-of-way 150 feet further north, about 300 feet south of Water Street.

The Hemenway School is on the west side just after Water Street. There are wetlands on the east. Just past the school, there is a short path, now overgrown, that leads west from the right-of-way to another trail that connects to the school. Near the same spot is a short connection on the east side to Hemenway Road. Hemenway Road then parallels the right-of-way on the east side. A culvert is located at this point, which is about 1,300 feet north of Water Street. Five homes on the west side are set back 200 feet or more, and then there is a home within 50 feet. Further on, where the right-of-way veers away from Hemenway Road, there are wetlands on

⁹ Town of Framingham, *Historic Preservation Plan*, July 24, 2002, p. 9. This district, created in 1994, includes thirty-two 19th-century properties. It extends east to Framingham Center, the original hub of the town.

FIGURE 4
Central Portion of Study Area

■ ■ ■ ■ South Sudbury Industrial Track

0 0.1 0.2 Miles

