



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Reformatory Branch Trail

Massachusetts



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The Reformatory Branch Trail connects the historical towns of Bedford and Concord along a nearly 4-mile dirt path through wildlife refuges that ends a short distance from the North Bridge, the location of “the shot heard round the world”, where the patriot militia stood down British soldiers in 1775.

About the Route

Bedford Depot Park is a good place for services and connections to the Minuteman Bikeway and the Narrow-Gauge Rail Trail. The Bedford Freight House features railroad exhibits, photos, and tours of a vintage railcar. The Reformatory Branch Trail starts at a gravel parking lot and a trailhead 0.3 miles west of the park on Railroad Avenue.

Traversing the trail by foot or mountain bike is recommended because of the rough conditions. Soon after getting underway, the trail reaches the 9-acre Elm Brook Conservation Area and then the 20-acre Mary Putnam Webber Wildlife Preserve. Both wetlands serve as wildlife corridors for animals in the area. The trail emerges into a small gravel parking lot about 1.7 miles from the trailhead. Use caution crossing busy Concord Road/MA 62 here.

The trail enters the 3,850-acre Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge after crossing the road. Birders flock to this freshwater wetland along the Concord and Sudbury Rivers as it's visited by 220 species of birds annually. It also shelters white-tailed deer, muskrats, red fox, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, weasels, amphibians, and several nonpoisonous snake species.

Look for a Trail of the Colonial Militia stone marker about 0.9 mile past the refuge. A side path leads to Author's Ridge at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where there are the burial sites of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Louisa May Alcott, among others.

Another 0.1 mile down the path, the trail crosses the Monument Street in Concord. A side trip to the right leads 0.2 mile to the North Bridge, site of the “shot heard round the world,” the Minute Man Statue, and a visitor center. Bicycles are allowed throughout the Minute Man National Historical Park, although cyclists must dismount on the North Bridge and in many crowded locations.

The trail reaches its southern end at Lowell Road. Take the crosswalk to Keyes Road, where parking and restrooms are provided at city offices during normal business hours. A trail west of these offices leads to the old trestle site across the Sudbury River and a boat launch.

Connections



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States: Massachusetts

Counties: Middlesex

Length: 3.9miles

Trail end points: Railroad Ave. (Bedford) to
Lowell Rd. (Concord)

Trail surfaces: Dirt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Mountain

Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Reformatory Branch Trail runs between Railroad Ave. (Bedford) and Lowell Rd. (Concord), with parking available at either end.

Parking is also available at:

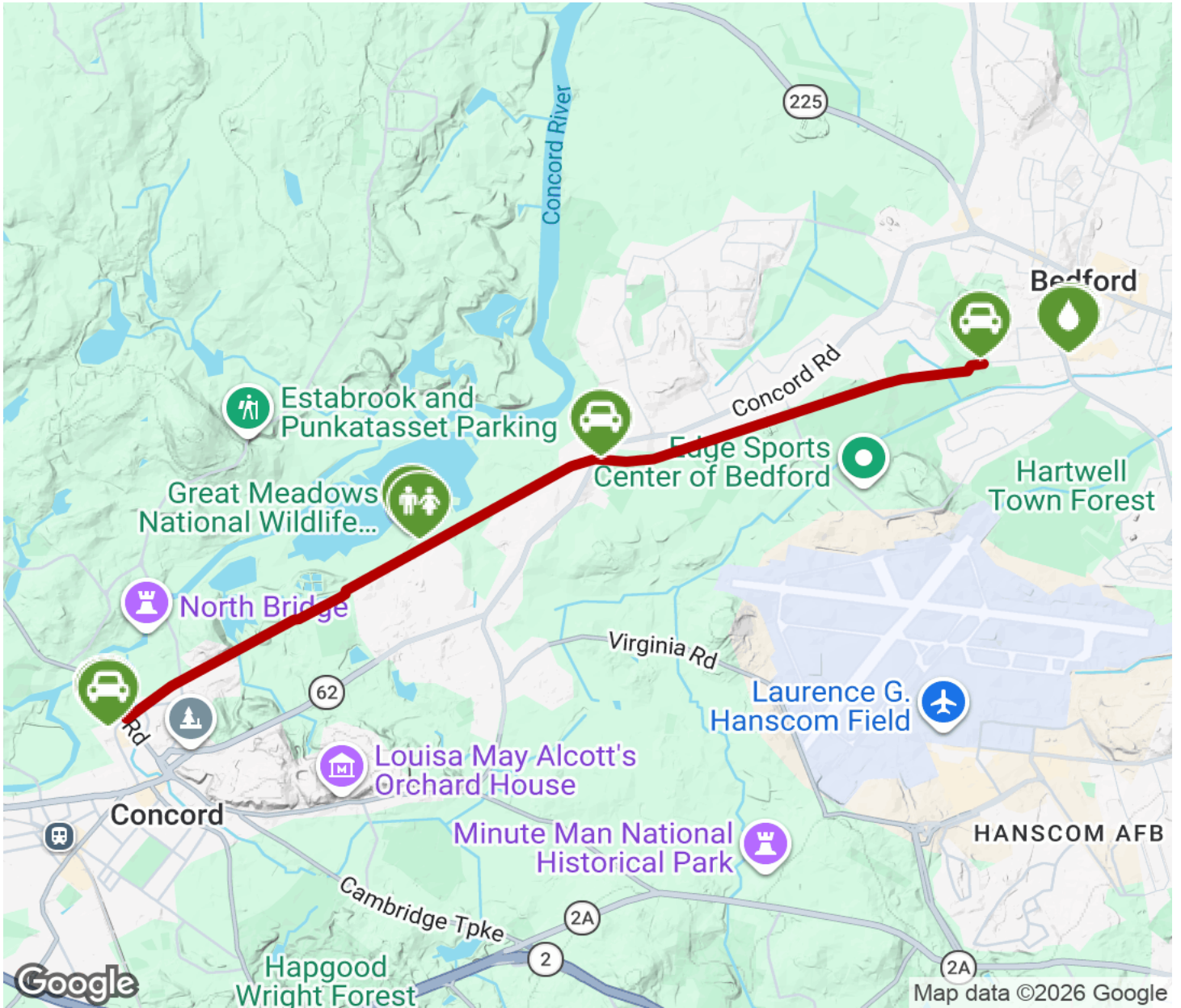
- 398 Concord Rd. (Bedford)

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com