

A Short Bio/Blurb of Craig Della Penna

For 12 years, he marketed rail freight and planned the start-up and managed the operations of seven, contemporary transloading facilities in New England. Including the largest, single wholesaler forest products transloading facility in the northeast, in the 1980s in South Windham, CT on the Central Vermont RR. (on the right) He also helped put together a move on CSX that put the highest dollar value commodity traveling in boxcars on CSX. Coils of food grade aluminum going to a cannery that ran 24/7 and had only 3 hours of inventory on-hand. The move had to deliver on time, always, or the factory would close. Not only did they never fail to deliver on-time, but no one was ever killed or even injured during the course of his time in that highly dangerous profession.

In the mid 90s, with a background in RR history, he was invited to write a series of books about the history of old rail lines that became walking/biking trails. This led to him doing slide lectures with a then-and-now focus on the history. Then as a railroad and now today as a rail trail.

Around 1996, when during the research for his 2nd and 3rd books on trail conversions in NY and NJ, he began hearing about communities in Massachusetts being opposed to the proposed conversions. That was when he transitioned to speak not just on the history of the RR, but to give his real life experience of having biked-on and done research on over 150 trails in 8 states. He began to set up "Friends of the Trail" groups in several rail trail 'wars' in Mass, NH and VT.

In 1997, he was hired by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy as their New England Field Representative focusing on the policy end of building rail trails as well as public outreach—and teaching locals to speak compellingly on why it was necessary to convert their dead RR into a linear park. When RTC left New England, he became a [Realtor](#)—1st Realtor in the US specializing in the sale of property near to Rail Trails or greenways—or antique houses. He is one of the top Realtors in the Connecticut River Valley of Mass. He also holds a Certified Residential Specialist designation. Only two percent of the Realtors in a given marketplace will have this specialized designation.

Now having given well over 1,200 lectures in 21 states and Canadian provinces, Craig is one of the country's most sought after motivational speakers on the economic development, tourism, place-making, and community development aspect of rail-trails, and their leveraging small amounts of public dollars to redevelop forgotten or derelict lands into treasured places. And of course, the effects of Rail Trail on values of houses near to these special places.

He is also the author of 5 books and numerous op-ed/guest editorials on the value of smart growth development, and rail-trails. In their 10th anniversary issue, THE RIDE MAGAZINE named him as the most effective advocate for rail-to-trail conversions on the eastern seaboard. [Link here](#) to 5 books-by him and 5 books that feature him in them as a case study in 21st century marketing, branding + courage to quit a 9-5 job and two books that feature his innovative real estate practice.

He and his wife Kathleen, operate an award-winning bed & breakfast, [Sugar Maple Trailside Inn](#), in a restored Civil War era house where the [restoration was featured on HGTV](#). The house also [sits 8 feet from](#) one of the earliest muni-built rail trails in New England. He doesn't just "talk-the-talk" of antique houses—or houses near to these linear parks. They offer up free, room nights on a weeknight, to folks fearful of the trail getting built in their neighborhood. Donated stays have to be a on a weeknight though, because you have to wake up to the laughter of kids biking to school.

He also is reassembling the longest rail trail in the Northeast. He is the Board President/ Obie-Wan Kenobie of the [Norwottuck Network](#), a 24 year old 501c3 set up to buildout the 104+ mile [Mass Central Rail Trail](#) from Boston to Northampton. He publishes the most widely read, free, e Newsletter about this developing network. This is hosted by Constant Contact and [they noted it as being in the top 10%](#) of all their e-newsletters world-wide. To sign up for it, [LINK HERE](#).

