



## Meeting Notes

**Meeting Date:** June 22, 2023

**Notes Prepared By:** Phil Goff, Project Manager

**Place:** Virtual Meeting

**Date:** 06/23/2023

**Project No.:** WIN: 24759.00 / VHB: 55647.00

**Project Name:** MaineDOT RUAC Supporting Study – Lower Road Rail Corridor

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### Lower Road RUAC Public Meeting

- › RUAC Chair Matt Eddy kicked off the meeting at 6:03 pm
- › Nate Howard from MaineDOT presented introductory slides explaining what a Rail Use Advisory Council is, what its purpose is, and what uses were considered during the Rail Use Advisory Council process.
- › Phil Goff from VHB presented a series of slides summarizing highlights of the Draft Lower Road RUAC Summary Report. He emphasized that VHB's role is not to include a recommendation but to provide the Council with the background knowledge and data to inform their recommendation to the Commissioner. (A PDF of the slides is available)
- › Note: as of 6:15 pm, 115 individuals were logged in to the meeting via Zoom (including project staff and consultants)

### Summary of Public Comments

- › Tony Donovan – resident of Portland, and with the Maine Rail Transit Coalition. Stated that the RUAC process has already concluded that rail cannot be done. Tony disagreed and said that rail can, in fact, be done for several reasons including fighting climate change.
- › Richard Rudolph – with the Maine Rail Transit Coalition. Agreed with Tony that it is a huge mistake to tear up the tracks. Noted that it is possible to have a trail and keep the rail service. Noted that the MaineDOT transit propensity study indicated that there is not sufficient ridership potential to support passenger rail, but that the study did not capture the full potential for passenger rail ridership. Referenced the success of passenger service on the Vermonter.
- › Kristine Keeney – Represents East Coast Greenway Alliance in Maine, supports using the corridor as a trail. Cited economic benefits of the Eastern Trail sections that have already been built based on a recent study. Cited MaineDOT's Active Transportation plan which supports a larger connected trail network.
- › David Asmussen – Bowdoinham Comp. Planning Committee- Bowdoinham Comp. Plan supports the creation of the Merrymeeting Trail along the entire Lower Road corridor. Trail would be the backbone of the area the Town is redeveloping.
- › Allison Burson – Excited that a trail use is being considered for this corridor.



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- › Joseph Leonard – Bangor City Councilor – Do not rip up the railroad tracks. If tracks are ripped up they are gone forever. While generally a supporter of trails, he wants to keep rail corridor for rail use because of climate change considerations and mobility options for Bangor residents.
- › Roger Bintliff – resident of Gardiner. Loves the idea of having passenger rail service to Bangor, but the high estimated cost makes it prohibitive. Encouraged the use of a lower cost/interim trail now.
- › Nan Cumming – resident of Richmond. Has had experience with trails in Portland. Supports using corridor for a trail.
- › Patty – from Hiram – To her, it doesn't make sense to spend \$\$ on an interim trail that may have to be removed later if a rail use comes back. Wants to maintain the corridor for rail use primarily but also supports rail with trail.
- › Ed Hanscom – Wants to maintain the corridor for rail use, don't remove the tracks.
- › John Raymond – President of ATV Maine – If a trail is recommended by the RUAC, he recommends that snowmobiles and ATVs be allowed to use the trail.
- › Eric Sofen – Freeport resident – Supports using the corridor to create the interim Merrymeeting trail.
- › Ken Capron – resident of Hope Harbor – Noted that he believes the estimated construction costs are too high by a factor of two. Wants to keep the rail line but also recommended considering SkyWay by MicroRail for an alternative rail use on the corridor.
- › George Lapointe – Mayor of Hallowell – Hallowell City of Council voted last week to recommend the interim trail alternative for use of the corridor to connect to the existing Kennebec River Rail Trail.
- › Mike Shaughnessy – resident of Bowdoinham – Supports either of the trail options, noted that the interim trail appears to be most feasible based on construction cost. Advocates against use of trail by motorized vehicles.
- › Robin Sanford – Supports use of corridor as a trail, either interim trail or rail with trail. Does not support use of trail by motorized vehicles.
- › Atlee Reilly – Resident of Bowdoinham – Supports use of the corridor for interim trail.
- › Jennifer Stonebraker – Resident of Bowdoinham, runs a food pantry – Supports use of corridor for interim trail.
- › Ryan Gordon – lives in Hallowell – Uses KRRT to commute to Augusta. Supports use of the corridor for interim trail. Supports rail with trail but considers it impractical due to cost.
- › Ian McConnell – Doctor in Brunswick – Supports use of the corridor for interim trail because of the health benefits that physical activity brings to users.
- › Lisandro Berry-Gaviria - Supports use of the corridor for interim trail because of the health benefits that physical activity brings to users.
- › Bill Allen – resident of Hallowell, involved with KRRT for 20 years – supports use of the rail corridor for interim trail.



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- › Cameron Fisher – works at BIW, resident of Richmond – supports use of the rail corridor for interim trail.
- › Jennifer Small – resident of Richmond, abutter to corridor - supports use of the rail corridor for interim trail.
- › Alan Claude – business owner in Gardiner - Supports use of the corridor for interim trail.
- › Andrew Walton – resident of Standish – Supports use of the corridor for interim trail.
- › Jenny Little – President of Topsham Trail Rider ATV Club – Supports use of corridor for trail and recommended considering allowing ATV and snowmobile use.
- › William Steinbach – Asked about the RWT set back requirements noting that the national best practices design guide includes examples of trails closer than 10.5ft to active rail lines. Asked if MaineDOT would reconsider their setback requirements. (Matt Eddy: defer this discussion to next week’s RUAC meeting.)
- › Bud G – resident of Richmond – Not supportive of trail use because of concerns about safety of trail users due to rural remote sections in Richmond which would be a magnet for crime.
- › Carol Minnehan – Richmond resident - Supports use of the corridor as interim trail.
- › Kirsten – resident of Richmond – Supports use of corridor as interim trail or rail with trail.
- › Victor Langelo – Supports use of corridor as interim trail; rail with trail is not feasible due to high cost.
- › Scott Moucka – Supports use of corridor as interim trail. Mentioned that will be travelling to ride the Gap trail rail trail and believes that the Merrymeeting Trail will bring bike tourism economic benefits.
- › Linda S – resident of Hallowell - Supports use of corridor as interim trail.
- › Robert Klose – Orono resident – Recommended considering rail bikes for use of corridor because it allows rails to remain but bicyclists to use corridor.
- › Ben Whatley – Resident of Topsham, owns a farm – Strongly in favor of using corridor as interim trail.
- › Jesse Begin – Calling from Cheyenne Wyoming, grew up in Richmond, planning to move back to Richmond – Noted that in Cheyenne there are 59 miles of greenway which has increased property values. Supports use of corridor as interim trail.
- › Karyn Varney – Member of ATV Maine – Asked that use of ATVs be considered for any trail alternatives. Supports use of corridor for interim trail.
- › Chris – Property values will likely increase if trail is created. Supports use of corridor for interim trail.
- › DJ Merrill – resident of Topsham – Supports use of corridor for interim trail, including use by ATVs.
- › David Mention – resident of Bowdoinham – Supports use of corridor for interim trail.
- › Susan Reinheimer - resident of Bowdoinham – Supports use of corridor for interim trail, including by horses.
- › Neil Stottler - Supports use of corridor for rail with trail.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm