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Schoodic National Scenic Byway Capital Construction Project

The Maine Department of Transportation has prioritized this application as number 1, of 2 applications being submitted

Schoodic National Scenic Byway (ME) Discovery & Recreation Hub

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I. Project Information

1. **Name of Proposed Project:** Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub
2. **State DOT Applying for Funding:** Maine
3. **Application Point of Contact:** Matt Drost Matthew.Drost@maine.gov (207) 441-1879
4. **Impacted Byways and States:** Schoodic National Scenic Byway, Maine
5. **Designation Type of Impacted Byways:** National Scenic Byway
6. **Primary Project Type under (23 U.S.C. 162(c)):** (4) Construction along a scenic byway of a facility for pedestrians and bicyclists, rest area, turnout, highway shoulder improvement, overlook, or interpretive facility.
7. **Additional Project Type under (23 U.S.C. 162(c)):**
 - (5) An improvement to a scenic byway that will enhance access to an area for the purpose of recreation, including water-related recreation.
 - (7) Development and provision of tourist information to the public, including interpretive information about a scenic byway.

8. Project Abstract (maximum 5 sentences):

The purpose of the proposed project is to transform an existing community site on U.S. Route 1 into a hub for promoting the byway, enriching the interpretive experience, and providing comprehensive visitor information about outdoor recreation opportunities and attractions in byway communities. By improving the quality of the byway visitor experience, the project seeks to boost the economic impact on local businesses and communities by increasing both the number of visitors and their length of stay. Additionally, the project will foster visitor engagement with area residents, offering a more authentic and immersive experience of coastal Maine life.

Partner Entities – Non-Federal Local Share

- Maine Department of Transportation
- Schoodic National Scenic Byway Committee
- Town of Sullivan
- Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center
- Schoodic Area Chamber of Commerce
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- Frenchman Bay Conservancy

(a) Project Description:

The 29-mile Schoodic National Scenic Byway is well known for small villages and working harbors, abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, historic sites, local artisans, and scenic views offering an authentic glimpse of coastal Maine life. Often described as a place where “mountains meet the sea, art meets nature, and lobster meets the belly,” the Schoodic National Scenic Byway embodies Maine's coastal charm.

The proposed **Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery and Recreation Hub** is designed to be the primary visitor site for the byway by providing comprehensive visitor information about outdoor recreation opportunities, byway attractions, interpretive sites, and general visitor services. Located at an existing community complex with free high-speed internet, the project will also improve parking and visitors' access to existing play areas, the local library and the historical society. A standout project

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element will be the new [Kids Quest](#) site, adding to the multiple award-winning byway educational program for school-aged children. (Attachment D: Kids Quest Site #8 – Scope & Sketches). Other key elements will be a green space and visitor information plaza, covered picnic pavilion, a granite discovery play zone for kids, and a fully equipped bike repair station for cyclists preparing for a Downeast biking adventure.

The project's overarching goal is to improve the quality of the byway visitor experience which will boost the economic impact on local businesses and towns along the byway by increasing both the number of visitors and length of stay.

The project goals will be achieved through the transformation of an existing community site into a visitor hub rather than the construction of a new visitor center. The Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center is the ideal site, located near the western end of the byway in Sullivan, Maine. Plans to upgrade this facility have been under consideration since 2021 due to its strategic high-traffic location. U.S. Route 1 is the region's key travel and tourism corridor and provides access to numerous outdoor recreation and cultural resources. Significantly, this area serves as a recognized cycling hub for the Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway, Down East Sunrise Trail, East Coast Greenway, and U.S. Bike Route 1. In addition, the site is located within the [Downeast Maine National Heritage Area](#) which recognizes how natural resource-based economies, like shipbuilding, fishing, wild blueberry farming, quarrying granite, harvesting timber, nature-based arts, recreation, and tourism have shaped and continue to shape the "Downeast way of life".

The Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center is a non-profit organization that has supported community events, recreation, and culture since 1958. Its primary mission is to productively manage a centrally located venue that provides programs that improve quality of life and to address unmet recreational, social, educational, and cultural needs of the surrounding communities. The recreation center building serves people of all ages with an event hall, kitchen, and community meeting room. The large building also houses the Frenchman's Bay Library, the Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society, and Sullivan Thrift Store. On the same site, there is an Age-Friendly Sullivan adult fitness track, playground, basketball court, and skate park owned jointly by the towns of Sullivan and Sorrento. Ultimately, the project will improve the quality of the visitor experience, local quality of life, and the economic impact of the byway through increased tourism.

Primary Project Components

(Attachment B: Site Plan Sketch, Attachment C: Project Components - Sketches & Support Images)

Recreation Center, Picnic Pavilion & Green Space (Section A)

1. Pavilion Structure with Picnic Tables (Approximate Size 30' x 45')
2. Bike Racks and Bike Repair Station with Tools, Pump, EB and Device Charging, Water
3. Outdoor Local History Exhibit
4. Building Facade Landscape, Sidewalk, and Library Reading/Sitting Area
5. Accessible Pedestrian Paths to Building and Activity Areas
6. Information Kiosks: "Schoodic Outdoors Map", Town & Partner Recreation Sites, Biking Routes
7. Interpretive Panels - Schoodic Peninsula Acadia NP Info & Schoodic Natural Wonders
8. Pedestrian and Vehicle Signage

Site Recreation Area & Kids Quest (Section B)

1. [Kids Quest](#) Site #8 "**Coastal Forests**" Accessible Trail with Exhibits
2. New Parking Area for Kids Quest Site, Play Areas, and Regional Bus Stop
3. Playground Shade Structure & Granite Discovery Play Zone
4. Wood Art Fence (Kids Activity), Pollinator Education Garden, Tree Plantings
5. Pet Walk Area and Waste Station
6. Wabanaki Interpretive Signage and Sitting Area

Maintenance: Maintenance of the Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub will be provided by the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, the Town of Sullivan, and local town committees like Sullivan Parks and Recreation, Age-Friendly Sullivan, and community volunteers. Overall, the project design is low maintenance with smart reuse of durable granite materials in many of the project's elements.

Addressing Current Challenges

The Schoodic National Scenic Byway has a well-developed visitor experience that includes interpretive sites, a comprehensive website, printed map and brochure, and engaged communities. However, byway leaders and partners including the Schoodic Chamber of Commerce, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and local businesses have recognized the need for a larger scale physical visitor hub to help capture Acadia National Park travelers and provide comprehensive information about the recreational, cultural, dining, and shopping opportunities along the byway (Attachment E: Project Partners List & Support Letters). This project supports The Maine Office of Tourism Destination Management Plan to ensure the sustainability of tourism in Maine. The plan aims to balance the tourism economy with the stewardship of Maine's natural resources and cultural heritage by diverting visitor traffic to less congested sites and expanded visitation during shoulder seasons.

Accessibility: Significant accessibility improvements will be part of the project including parking, sidewalks, recreation center restroom, byway visitor plaza elements, Kids Quest, Wabanaki interpretive area, picnic pavilion, pollinator garden, local history exhibit, Library Reading & Sitting Area (See Attachment B: Project Site Plan Sketch).

Visitor Services: Although the byway offers visitor services throughout the corridor including food, fuel, lodging, and restrooms, travelers typically do not arrive with maps or other byway materials. The proposed project creates an opportunity to target Acadia National Park visitors and other Downeast travelers with on-site byway information, accessible public restrooms, and QR codes to direct travelers to specific online information about byway restaurants, shopping, and lodging. This feature will be enhanced by existing free high-speed internet access at the site. (Attachment A: Schoodic National Scenic Byways Maps and Site Location).

Experiencing Local Culture: Acadia National Park's popularity often leads visitors to Downeast Maine to crowded areas bustling with fellow tourists. By integrating the Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub into a popular existing community center, the proposed project will create opportunities for travelers to connect with locals for a more authentic and immersive experience of coastal Maine life.

Providing Effective Interpretation: The primary way travelers come to know and appreciate the byway story is through effective interpretation. The proposed project will add new information to the byway experience with interpretive signage featuring the natural wonders of the Schoodic area, Acadia National Park visitor information, and a new Kids Quest site. (Attachment D: Kids Quest Site #8 – Scope & Sketches). The site currently features the [Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society](#) for travelers interested in a deep dive into local history. The proposed project will also fulfill part of the Recreation Center’s Mission to engage the Wabanaki political confederation of the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Mi’kmaq and Maliseet nations to create an interpretive exhibit on the site. Project leaders will work with the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot nations Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to conduct a proper interpretive project. Wabanaki or “People of the Dawnland” live in the Downeast region and throughout the state of Maine.

Gateway Facility: By helping to disperse travelers away from Bar Harbor and Mount Desert Island, the proposed project will have the added benefit of reducing congestion and overcrowding within the Acadia All-American Road corridor, ultimately improving the quality of the visitor experience for both byways.

Safety: As stated in Sullivan’s Comprehensive Plan: “Route One is Sullivan's economic life blood. It brings business and tourists and provides access for residents. For Route One to continue to provide safe, efficient travel for residents and visitors alike, the roadway will need to be carefully managed. Safety is a principal concern...”. The development of the Discovery & Recreation Hub and its proposed features will adhere to the town’s goals of resident mobility, efficient travel for visitors and ultimately increase safety for all that come to and through the area. This new gateway site will allow travelers, especially cyclists and visitors with large recreational vehicles to pull safely off U.S. Route 1. Visitor information will teach cyclists safe ways to travel on the scenic byway.

Equity: The Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center is a community center for all. A full slate of new accessibility improvements (Attachment B: Project Site Plan Sketch) will benefit all people regardless of age or physical constraint. Site improvements will provide easier access for all to the Age-Friendly-Sullivan adult fitness track which provides opportunities for seniors and others with limited mobility to walk in an area where there are few alternatives. The fitness track is also a great place for travelers to walk and take a driving break. Most services and activities offered at the site are free of charge and therefore available to people regardless of economic status.

The project includes a new accessible bus stop to bolster the underutilized bus system. The free Acadia Island Explorer bus and the regional transit bus both stop at the site and can provide transportation for residents lacking personal transportation and visitors who prefer to use public transportation to access the National Park or other byway places.

Sustainability: This project advances Town of Sullivan planning goals to fully develop one site with multiple uses that is within walking distance for many residents, connect this site to other town recreation sites with the future multi-use path project, and move toward the rebirth of a village center and walkable community. Another key sustainability goal of the project is to decrease gas emissions by promoting cycling to byway destinations and beyond from this site and not driving around to find traveler information. The Schoodic park & bike concept of the 2018 Winter Harbor project being applied here promotes visiting byway attractions and the national park by cycling or public

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transportation. One way this will be accomplished is to use outdoor signage with QR code links to website information about the free Acadia Island Explorer bus and Winter Harbor Ferry as alternative ways to explore Acadia National Park. Visitors will learn about local culture at the site including the unique local working landscape that promotes fresh food and community sustainability. The Discovery & Recreation Hub includes other sustainable elements like reusable bottle filling station, solar powered e-bike and device charging, and significant re-use of local granite.

Pre-Secured Resources:

The significant project components listed below have already been secured through existing funding, partnerships, or in-kind contributions and are not included in the project budget or match.

- Granite Sculpture from a local artist valued at \$3,500
- Healthy Acadia Staff Support for Kids Quest & Granite Discovery Play Zone \$5,000
- Down East Sunrise Trail Coalition bike racks installed - valued at \$5,000
- Frenchman's Bay Library Kids Story Walk at existing playground valued at \$12,000

Future Project Components:

Component	Estimated Cost	Timeline	Potential Funding Source/s
Forest Hiking Trail	\$ 35,000	2026	FHWA RTP Program
Two-Port EV Fast Charger Station	\$ 475,000	2028	Recharge Maine and FHWA
Multi-Use Path to Town Parks	\$ 800,000	2028	MaineDOT and Town of Sullivan

(Note: Future project components are for information purposes only and not part of this funding request)

Lead Applicant

The lead applicant is the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) which has extensive experience with receipt and expenditure of Federal-aid highway program funds under 23 U.S.C.

(b) Project Location

The project site is located in Sullivan, Maine, on the north side of U.S. Route 1 at approximately [44°31'48.0"N 68°13'29.1"W](#)

(Attachment A: Schoodic National Scenic Byway Maps and Site Location).

[Google Earth](#) (Project area) [Google Earth](#) (Regional view)

Project Zip Code: 04664

- The project is **not** located in a 2020 Census-designated urban area.
- The project is **not** located in a federally designated community development zone.

II. Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of all Project Funding

The total project cost is \$1,000,000. Construction costs are estimated to be \$800,000 and the remaining \$200,000 for Preliminary and Construction Engineering. MaineDOT is requesting \$800,000 or 80% of the total project cost from the FHWA National Scenic Byways Program Grant. The nonfederal share of 20% will be split 50/50 between MaineDOT and the Town of Sullivan. All overages will continue to be split 50/50 between MaineDOT and the Town of Sullivan per MaineDOT's local cost sharing policy. The dedicated volunteers of the Schoodic Byway Committee have over 20 years of experience with community byway management and completing byway infrastructure projects. With minimal funding available for a large project, the Schoodic Byway Committee reached out to community partners for

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assistance to secure the financial commitments for the project. See the breakdown below and (Attachment E: Project Partners List & Support Letters).

Fund Sources	CON/CE	Contingency	Project Total	Percent of Total
Local	88,000.00	12,000.00	100,000.00	10%
MaineDOT Non-Federal	88,000.00	12,000.00	100,000.00	10%
Grant Request	704,000.00	96,000.00	800,000.00	80%
Funding Stage Totals	880,000.00	120,000.00	1,000,000.00	100%

III. Merit Criteria

(a) NSBP Goals

(4) Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation

The core aim of this project is to support local businesses by connecting visitors with information about what to do and see in the Schoodic area. A dedicated location for visitor information on U.S. Route 1 has been a longstanding need. The Schoodic National Scenic Byway offers some of the best hiking, kayaking, fishing, and biking opportunities in Maine, but better access to information is essential to help visitors discover these experiences. Improving the quality of the byway visitor experience will encourage word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately attracting more travelers to the byway.

The state of Maine welcomes over 15 million travelers per year ([Maine Office of Tourism](#)). In 2023, visitors spent \$9 billion and supported 131,000 jobs (a 5.6% increase from 2022). Every 117 visitors support a job. Maine is a drive-market destination for most visitors, with 82% choosing to travel by car instead of by plane, train or motor coach/bus.

In 2022, Outdoor recreation made up 3.9% of Maine's economy, making Maine sixth in the country in the value outdoor recreation adds to a state's economy ([Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation](#)). 32,000 people work in the outdoor industry in Maine, including 2,184 jobs added in 2022 (a 7% increase from 2021). [Economic data released November 2024](#) by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reveals that outdoor recreation continues to be a major driver of the U.S. economy, jobs, and local communities. According to the latest data from the BEA Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, outdoor recreation generated \$1.2 trillion in economic output (2.3% of GDP), comprises 3.1% of U.S. employees and accounted for five million jobs in 2023. The data shows significant growth in sectors including bicycling (11%), climbing/hiking/tent camping (6%), and snow activities (23%).

In 2023, 3.88 million people visited Acadia National Park and spent \$475 million. That spending supported 6,600 jobs in the local area ([NPS.gov](#)). Although similar in scenic splendor to portions of Mount Desert Island, the Schoodic Peninsula of Acadia is more secluded and intentionally managed by Acadia National Park as a minimally developed, low-visitation area. This means that the bulk of the

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park's almost four million visitors spend most of their time on Mount Desert Island unaware of the scenic and recreational resources of the nearby Schoodic National Scenic Byway.

Tourism and outdoor recreation are major economic drivers in Maine. Increased tourism creates direct economic impact to byway communities in the form of increased revenue and jobs. A key objective of the Schoodic National Scenic Byway Committee is to promote economic development. The byway provides exactly what travelers seek: scenic vistas, charming small towns, cultural attractions, local dining, and a wide range of outdoor activities ([NSB Foundation](#)). The Schoodic Byway offers year-round recreation, including cycling, camping, hiking, and cross-country skiing, alongside stunning scenery, unique restaurants, shops, and museums that are less crowded than those on nearby Mount Desert Island.

A vital strategy supported by the proposed project is targeting travelers already in Maine to explore its coast. The Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub will address a critical need for visitor information along U.S. Route 1, making the byway's resources more accessible and linking local businesses with eager customers. The site will be promoted through the byway's website, and advance signage will guide travelers to this valuable information resource.

Byway visitor data indicates that travelers most often learn about byways through recommendations from friends and family ([NSB Foundation](#)). Delivering a high-quality byway visitor experience increases word-of-mouth recommendations, and subsequently, travelers to the byway. Increased tourism creates direct economic impact to byway communities in the form of increased revenue and jobs. Therefore, implementing a project that improves information and access to scenic, cultural, natural, and recreational experiences on the byway will result in increased local revenue and job creation.

(b) How the Project Benefits the Byway Traveler and Local Community

Interpretation: Interpretation plays a vital role in helping visitors connect with and appreciate the story of the byway. Well-designed interpretive services not only attract visitors but also encourage them to stay longer, deepen their understanding of the byway, and foster responsible stewardship of its resources ([Scenic Byways: A Design Guide for Roadside Improvements](#)). According to the same source, interpretive signs placed near high-use areas like picnic tables and restrooms are more likely to engage visitors than those in isolated locations. The Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub will feature interpretive information highlighting the unique coastal forests, local recreational opportunities like the Down East Sunrise Trail, and the rich heritage of the Wabanaki native peoples, creating a meaningful and educational experience for visitors.

Visitor Services: The proposed project will enhance the visitor experience by providing accessible restrooms and integrating modern conveniences. QR codes on interpretive panels will guide travelers to information about nearby restaurants, shopping, and lodging, further supported by free high-speed internet available sitewide. By addressing essential visitors' needs, such as access to food, fuel, lodging, and restrooms, the project helps to ensure a rewarding experience for all travelers.

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Wayfinding Signage and Information: Information available at the Discovery & Recreation Hub regarding outdoor recreation, museums, shopping, and dining will help visitors plan activities that align with their personal interests and increase their length of stay in Schoodic byway communities.

Accessible Features: According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, more than a quarter of American adults (26%) live with some form of disability, including 14% with mobility disabilities. Many new accessible features are part of this project. Refer to the site plan for new accessible project components. (Attachment B: Project Site Plan Sketch).

Expanding Stewardship: Travelers who connect with the byway story through meaningful interpretation at numerous sites and through personal interaction with locals are more likely to become active stewards of the byway's resources.

(c) Project Timeline

The project is ready for funding and has MaineDOT and broad community support. Project funds will be obligated within the required period, as provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and as shown below. See Project Schedule under IV. (b)

(d) Project Budget

Phase	Federal	State	Local	Total
PE	120,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00	150,000.00
ROW	-	-	-	-
CON	640,000.00	80,000.00	80,000.00	800,000.00
CE	40,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	50,000.00
TOTAL	800,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00	1,000,000.00

IV. Project Readiness and Environmental Risk

(a) Technical Feasibility

MaineDOT is an accomplished, experienced, and responsible recipient of past successful TIGER, FASTLANE, INFRA, BUILD, and RAISE grants and can be relied upon to fund and commence the Project well in advance of the obligation date and to complete the Project well in advance of the expenditure deadline without risk.

MaineDOT also adheres to Administrative and National Policy Requirements during all phases of all projects. MaineDOT's Federal grant and formula fund experience includes the management of numerous infrastructure projects and the associated Federal requirements and regulations, such as compliance with Title VI/Civil Rights, Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, and Davis Bacon Act.

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Since the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), MaineDOT has successfully managed a total of \$292 million in various grants programs. Prior to BIL, MaineDOT received various awards from TIGER and BUILD and has extensive experience managing projects that meet all Federal requirements and regulations.

MaineDOT is very experienced working with the U.S. Department of Transportation to fund, construct, manage, and complete Federally funded infrastructure projects. Should there be additional cost overruns, MaineDOT and IDEALS are equipped to provide all additional funding.

(b) Project Schedule

Activity	Date
Project Kickoff/Local Agreements	12/31/25
Project Design	12/31/26
NEPA Complete	3/31/27
PSE Complete	6/30/27
Advertise	7/31/27
Construction Begin	9/30/27
Construction Complete	9/30/29

(c) Required Approvals

i. Environmental Permits and Review

Based on the Project Scope, the Project will most likely be classified as a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117© & (c)(26) or d (13). MaineDOT will review the project during design and prepare the NEPA documentation in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, Maine Division and MaineDOT.

ii. State and Local Approvals

Public Engagement: The proposed project has broad support within the community and region as evidenced by the number of organizations committing financial and general support (Attachment E: Project Partners List & Support Letters). Since 2021, significant input has been provided on the project development and components by the Schoodic National Scenic Byway Committee and the Town of Sullivan. The project has received votes of approval from both relevant town committees, Sullivan Select Board and the property owners. Also, a recent local business survey demonstrates full support for the project.

iii. Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

Upon awarding, this project will be added to the STIP and the MaineDOT work plan with appropriate WIN numbers.

iv. Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

MaineDOT has reviewed the project to mitigate risk. There are no Right of Way impacts on the project. There is strong local support, funding is there. MaineDOT has allotted enough time for environmental permitting as well.

V. Statutorily Required Project Selection Priorities and FHWA Priority Selection Considerations

- a. Statutorily Required Project Selection Priorities
 - i. The Schoodic National Scenic Byway Discovery & Recreation Hub is associated with the Schoodic National Scenic Byway (ME) and consistent with the byway's Corridor Management Plan (CMP) goals of promoting economic growth and tourism, dispersing visitors from congested areas to less crowded places and attractions while also promoting resource protection through education.
- b. FHWA Priority Selection Considerations
 - i. The majority of the project's cost will be spent within a Census-designated rural area.
 - ii. The project falls within an economically distressed community per the U.S. Economic Development Administration.
 - iii. Match = 20%