

Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway Table of Contents

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Attachments

A:	Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway Maps and Site Location
B:	Project Site Plan Sketch & Project Components
C:	Project Partners List & Support Letters

The Maine Department of Transportation has prioritized this application 2, of 2 applications submitted.

Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway Application

I. Basic Information – Project Description, Location, and Parties

i. Name/title of proposed project.

Forks Area Scenic Trails Recreational Trailhead and Gateway

ii. The State DOT or Indian Tribe applying for funding (23 U.S.C. 162(b)(1)).

State of Maine, Department of Transportation

iii. Name and contact information for the State DOT or Tribal applicant point of contact.

Matthew Drost
Scenic Byway Coordinator
24 Child Street
Augusta, Maine 04330
207-441-1879
matthew.drost@maine.gov

iv. Name of the byway(s) impacted by the proposed project, and whether the project is a statewide or multi-State project.

Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway. This project is not a statewide or multi-state project.

v. Designation type of the byway(s) impacted by the proposed project. (23 U.S.C. 162(b)(1)(A)(i) – (v)).

National Scenic Byway (2000)

vi. The primary project type under which the proposed project aligns (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.

vii. If applicable, the additional project types identified.

#3. Safety improvements to a State scenic byway, Indian tribe scenic byway, National Scenic Byway, All-American Road, or one of America's Byways to the extent that the improvements are necessary to

accommodate increased traffic and changes in the types of vehicles using the highway as a result of the designation as a State scenic byway, Indian tribe scenic byway, National Scenic Byway, All-American Road, or one of America's Byways.

#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.

viii. Project Abstract (maximum five sentences).

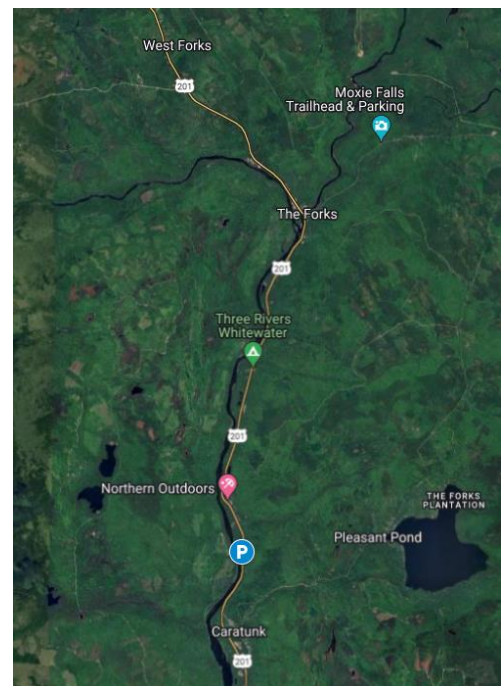
The Forks Area Scenic Trails Recreational Trailhead and Gateway project ("Project") will improve an existing unimproved gravel parking lot on the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway by including amenities to benefit travelers as well as invite recreational walkers, hikers, and rafters to the Forks Area along the Kennebec River in Somerset County, Maine by:

- Installation of Byway Visitor Information Kiosk
- Trailhead and recreational access parking improvements
- Improve turnaround area with space for large vehicles; and
- Installation of portable toilets in wood enclosure to match visitor kiosks

This Project is supported by regional municipalities, local businesses including rafting outfitters, and non-profit stakeholders in the area including the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway sponsoring agency. This project has significant regional and local economic benefits to the rafting community as well as the villages along the Route 201 corridor in northern Maine.

a. Project Description

The Forks Area Scenic Trails Recreational Trailhead and Gateway Project ("Project") is located along Route 201, the Old Canada Road, and the Kennebec River. The Old Canada Road begins in Solon, Maine and continues beyond the Project site to the Canadian Border. Travelers



along the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway have similar views to that of native travelers and the Benedict Arnold's expedition¹ from Cambridge, Massachusetts to the gates of Quebec City, an early event in the Revolutionary War.

The Project will:

1. The Project will provide a trail head for the Forks Area Scenic Trails system with exceptional scenic views and provide byway travelers with education about the history and culture from the Kennebec and Dead River corridors. The development of the Project site is part of a series of projects simultaneously underway to improve the Forks Area Scenic Trails system which is an inviting combination of walking and biking trails along the Kennebec River, connecting this Project site to two commercial campgrounds, as well as traveler amenities in the neighboring plantation of the West Forks to the north.
2. This Project will develop a sense of history for those visiting, a safe space to rest from traveling on Rt. 201, and hopefully a sense of stewardship for the area and a desire to return. An attractive trailhead also opens more of the area water resources. The upper Kennebec Gorge is busy with experienced white-water adventurers. This lower portion of the river, while containing some quick water, is family safe for most ages.
3. Improvements to the Project site will enhance this scenic and very visible location on the Kennebec River and serve as a natural recreation "gateway" to this section of the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway. These critical infrastructure upgrades will enhance the scenic beauty of the area by providing window frames with which to view the river and surrounding mountains with the eternal beauty they hold.

Location	The Forks, Maine
Coordinates	45.253241, -69.989835
Census Tract	23025965302
Urban Area	N/A
Congressional District	Maine District #2 Rep. Jared Golden (D) Sen. Susan Collins (R) Sen. Angus King (I)

¹ "When Benedict Arnold Tried to Capture Quebec." *History.Com*, A&E Television Networks, www.history.com/news/benedict-arnold-canada-invasion-revolutionary-war. Accessed 13 Dec. 2024.

This Project will address the most significant challenge of the site, which is accessible for individuals with disabilities. While scenic views can be shared from the partially accessible gravel area, the Project will improve access for individuals with all abilities to all areas of the area, including a network for accessible bridges and recreational trails.

Now a recreational destination, the Kennebec was, as mentioned above, a necessary travel corridor for native people whose efforts created the shell middens at the coast after years of seasonal visitation. The river was a highway for the timber industry sending sawlogs to mills up to a hundred miles “down river”. As long wood receded in use the river became the conduit for pulpwood to paper mills in Solon, Waterville, and points further south. Families depended on this floating transport for their livelihood with men and boys from area farms retreating to the woods for the winter for harvesting timber often returning on a floating log.

MaineDOT is an experienced recipient of federal funding from the National Scenic Byways Program as well as many other federal grants, including INFRA, BUILD, RAISE, Reconnecting Communities, and Congressional Direct Spending requests. MaineDOT can be relied on to fully fund and deliver the Project and meet statutory obligation deadlines without risk.

b. Project Location

The project site is in the Plantation of The Forks, in Somerset County, Maine. The zip code for the site is 04925.

In the state of Maine a plantation is a minor civil division falling between unincorporated area and a town.

[Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway Project Site - Google Earth](#)

A map of the project location and connections to existing infrastructure is attached as Appendix A to this application.

Additional information:

- i. This project is not located within the boundary of a 2020 Census-designated Urbanized Area, with a population of 50,000 or more.
- ii. This project is not located within one of the four federally designated community development zones.

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

The total Project cost is \$825,000 and includes \$200,000 for Preliminary Engineering and \$625,000 for Construction and Construction Engineering. MaineDOT is requesting \$660,000 equal to 80 percent of the total project cost in National Scenic Byways Program funding.

The Project budget is broken into phases, including Preliminary Engineering, Construction, and Construction Engineering. Right-of-way is not anticipated for this Project. MaineDOT has budgeted 15 percent contingency for Construction.

MaineDOT and the Plantation will split the 20 percent non-Federal Share of \$165,000, contributing \$82,500 each. This funding breakdown is consistent with MaineDOT's revised Local Cost Share Policy, demonstrating broad community support for this project. These financial commitments are not conditional and not subject to any additional restrictions.

III. Merit Criteria

a. National Scenic Byway Programs Goals

Safety

This project will advance the National Scenic Byway Program goal of *Safety* by developing a scenic turnout which allows byway travelers to park out of the travel lanes and shoulders of Route 201, the Old Canada Road, in the Forks. Travelers that wish to explore the region on bicycles may start at the project location and access an off-system trail of more than 20 miles of trails with many more trails in development. With more than 1800 cars travel by the Project location daily, including many commercial trailer trucks hauling raw pulp wood to area mills, which only elevate the importance of providing a safe refuge for travelers and recreationists in visiting The Forks area.

By developing this site into a trailhead, with improved signage along the corridor, safety can be achieved by increasing vehicle operators' awareness of the site and the traffic turning movements that will occur at the site.

Climate and Sustainability

This project will advance the National Scenic Byway Program goal of *Climate and Sustainability* by developing a resilient Byways scenic turnout using materials that are appropriate for the scenic qualities of the site, including natural boulders and wooden split-rail fences. Additionally, the project will advance the Program goal of *Climate and Sustainability* by connecting multiple facilities throughout the Forks Area with the with a fully accessible recreational trail.

Equity

This project will advance the National Scenic Byway Program goal of *Equity* by including interpretive panel describing the historical and

cultural aspects of the Old Canada Road, specifically, the Wabanaki history in the area, as well as the significance of the Kennebec River to the logging industry which was and is the backbone of Maine's economic and heritage.

Additionally, the project will advance the Program goal of *Equity* by developing a site to accommodate increased volumes of travelers and tourists to the Kennebec River region recreational activities, and all facilities will be developed to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The site's multi-lingual interpretative panels and trail system will be accessible for users of all abilities, from all backgrounds, to access the natural and scenic beauty of the Upper Kennebec River Valley.

Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation

This project will advance the National Scenic Byway Program goal of *Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation* by developing a Byway facility that also includes direct access to a portage area for commercial rafting outfitters. Data provided from the State of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Annual Commercial Whitewater report estimates that between 2021-2024 an average of 32,171 individuals rafted the Kennebec and Dead Rivers commercially, and many more have rafted privately.

b. Benefits to the Byways Traveler and Protection of the Intrinsic Qualities

The Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway offers a variety of traveler experiences that represent an entire region of Maine including history, environment, and traditional and new economies. This project creates an exciting window for recreation, education and enjoyment of Old Canada Road.

c. Project Timeline and Phases

This project is part of the Forks Area Scenic Trail development and as such has been conceived, planned, and discussed for many years. Most recently this project has been developed in conjunction with the northly trailhead, located at Ball Field, in the West Forks, which was the subject of a 2022 National Scenic Byway Program application. The development of the two trailheads, along with the Forks Area Scenic Trails between the two sites has received intensive discussion since that time, resulting in the concept to develop these sites and the connective trails system that is support by the communities, the local rafting community present in the area, and Old Canada Road Byway, Inc., the Byway's sponsor agency.

During the development of this project for the purposes of the National Scenic Byway Program application, the Boards of Assessors in the West Forks and The Forks took votes to approve and support for the development of the two sites, recognizing the local and regional economic benefit that scenic turnout developments have for travelers, tourists, and the local rafting community clientele.

Additionally, the Old Canada Road Byway Board of Directions also unanimously supports the concepts developed for this site and are supporting the project financially. The Old Canada Road Byway Board of Directors, as well as the Dead River Outdoor Club who also support the Forks Area Scenic Trails projects, include representatives from several commercial rafting guides and outfitters from the region.

While quality projects do take time to deliver, because this project is ready for funding and has the support of the community, Byway's partners, and MaineDOT, the funds will be obligated within the required period of time, as provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. After MaineDOT received notification of award, the project delivery timeline reflects approximately three months to executive local agreements, after which the required NEPA, design, and right-of-way processes would begin. No significant environmental impacts are anticipated for this project, and no right-of-way will be required for the delivery of the project, reducing the risks and timeline associated with this project. MaineDOT anticipates that the project will be designed starting in 2026 and approvals and procurement will take place in 2027, in advance of the statutory deadline for obligation.

d. Project Budget

Phase	Fed 80%)	Other Federal (0%)	State (10%)	Local (10%)	Total
PE (17%)	\$112,000.00	\$0.00	\$14,000.00	\$14,000.00	\$140,000.00
ROW (0%)	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
CON (76%)	\$500,000.00	\$0.00	\$62,500.00	\$62,500.00	\$625,000.00
CE (7%)	\$48,000.00	\$0.00	\$6,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$60,000.00
Total	\$660,000.00	\$0.00	\$82,500.00	\$82,500.00	\$825,000.00

IV. Project Readiness and Environmental Risk

a. Technical Feasibility

MaineDOT recognizes that assuring sustainability of habitats, ecosystems and transportation infrastructure can occur in concert rather than in conflict. Toward that end, MaineDOT endeavors to exercise reasonable stewardship over both natural resources and transportation infrastructure through its commitment to addressing aquatic organisms, wildlife habitat and fish passage in cooperation with natural resource agencies while weighing all aspects of a proposed project.

b. Project Schedule

Milestone	Date
Project kickoff	3/31/2024
Nepa Complete	6/30/2026
Project Design	3/31/2027
Advertise	9/1/2027
Construction starts	10/1/2027
Construction Complete	9/30/2030

*Dates above may need to adjust depending on date grant agreement is finalized *

c. Required Approvals

i. Environmental Permits and Reviews

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will inform design efforts. Based on the Project scope, the Project will most likely be classified as a Categorical Exclusion in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117(c) (3) & (c)(26) or d(13). MaineDOT will review the Project and prepare NEPA documentation in accordance with the Programmatic Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, Maine Division and the Maine Department of Transportation regarding the Processing of Actions Classified as Categorical Exclusions for Federal-Aid Highway Projects.

ii. State and Local Approvals

MaineDOT anticipates the Project to require several approvals. MaineDOT anticipates the Project will qualify for permits by right, including but not limited to:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Section 404 Clean Water Act Permit (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

- Natural Resources Protection Act (Maine Department of Environmental Protection)
- Stormwater (Maine Department of Environmental Protection)
- Floodway / Floodplains Federal Transportation

iii. Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

MaineDOT recognizes that assuring sustainability of habitats, ecosystems and transportation infrastructure can occur in concert rather than in conflict. Toward that end, MaineDOT endeavors to exercise reasonable stewardship over both natural resources and transportation infrastructure through its commitment to addressing aquatic organisms, wildlife habitat and fish passage in cooperation with natural resource agencies, while weighing all aspects of a proposed project.

MaineDOT and various other state and federal departments have executed agreements to expeditiously but thoroughly review environmental impacts from projects. MaineDOT will take advantage of the following agreements, where applicable, to streamline the environmental review and approval process:

- a) [23 U.S.C. Section 326 CE Assignment MOU](#) between Federal Highway Administration and the State of Maine DOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 326, dated 10/9/2024, in which FHWA assigns, and MaineDOT assumes, the responsibility for determining whether a proposed FHWA action is within a category of action designed as a CCE by the DOT Secretary and meets the definition of a CE as provided in 40 CFR 1508.l(e) and 23 CFR 771.117(a) and (b);
- b) Programmatic Agreement among Federal Highway Administration, Federal Railroad Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Maine State Historic Preservation Officer, and Maine Department of Transportation Regarding Implementation of the Federal Aid Highway and Federal Transit Programs in Maine;
- c) Cooperative Agreement between U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), FHWA and the MaineDOT State Transportation Reviews by the USFWS in Maine;
- d) Maine Atlantic Salmon Programmatic Consultation finalized January 23, 2017;
- e) Programmatic Agreement for the State of Maine concerning identification of listed and proposed species and designation of non-federal representative under the Federal Endangered Species Act between FHWA, Maine Division USACE, MaineDOT, USFWS, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service;
- f) Programmatic Agreement for the State of Maine Between MaineDOT,

FHWA Maine Division, USFWS Regarding Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation for Canada Lynx;

- g) Memorandum of Agreement for Stormwater Management Between the MaineDOT, MTA and Maine Department of Environmental Protection; and
- h) Memorandum of Agreement between United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District and MaineDOT for Expediting Permit Application Evaluations under Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, as amended, and Section 139(j) of Title 23, United States Code, Assistance to Affected State and Federal Agencies, July 2022.

iv. Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

MaineDOT anticipates limited risks to project delivery such as procurement delays, environmental uncertainty, uncommitted local match, pushback from identified stakeholders, or legislative action. No additional real estate acquisition is anticipated for this project.

e. Statutorily-required Project Selection Priorities and FHWA Priority Selection Considerations

- a. This project will advance two or more of the NSBP goals, including Safety, Climate and Sustainability, Equity, and Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation.
- b. The majority of the project's costs will be spent within a Census-designated rural area.
- c. The project does fall within an economically distressed community per the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

<https://eig.org/distressed-communities/?regions%5B0%5D=04961&geo=zctas&lat=45.1&lon=-70.21&z=9.96>

<https://www.statsamerica.org/distress/dist.aspx>

- d. This project leverages non-Federal funds of at least 20 percent and assumes responsibility for project cost overages.