

## 1. Project Description

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is seeking \$ 4,000,000 from a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for the “*Eastern Trail Expansion - North Berwick, Wells, and Kennebunk*” Project (the Project). This request will build 2.7 miles of off-road trail that continues the expansion of the Eastern Trail in Southern Maine.

As shown in Figure 1-1, the Eastern Trail in Maine is a segment of the larger 3,000-mile East Coast Greenway which spans from Key West, Florida to Calais, Maine and connects 15 states and 450 cities and towns. Approximately 35 percent of the East Coast Greenway is made up of firm-surface trails that are protected from vehicle traffic. The East Coast Greenway has received more than \$2 billion in public investment since 1991. On an annual basis, there are over 50 million bike rides, runs and walks on the East Coast Greenway. The Eastern Trail is a 65 mile long, 10-foot-wide multi-use trail that traverses from Casco Bay at Bug Light in South Portland to Kittery and provides a recreational and active transportation corridor. Approximately 30 percent of the 65-mile Eastern Trail is currently off-road. In 2018, the 22 miles of off-road trail had 250,000 users and provided \$3M in local community investment.

Figure 1-11. East Coast Greenway



The Eastern Trail is built, maintained, and promoted by the Eastern Trail Alliance (ETA) and the Eastern Trail Management District (ETMD). The goal is to eventually provide an almost entirely off-road corridor covering approximately 55 miles, and this Project works to support that vision in the towns of North Berwick, Wells and Kennebunk. MaineDOT is pursuing this Project to further develop the Eastern Trail, which in turn will increase quality of life in these communities, support economic opportunity, shift a portion of vehicle trips to pedestrian and bicycle trips, reduce traffic congestion and emissions, provide alternative modes of transportation for those who do not have access to a car, and improve the efficiency and safety of a portion of the Eastern Trail that is currently on-road by constructing a new off-road facility.

This 2.7-mile extension of the current Eastern Trail will provide vital off-road connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between North Berwick, Wells, and Kennebunk. Located in Southern Maine, North Berwick, Wells, and Kennebunk are towns that have historically been involved in continuous coordination with the ETA and ETMD regarding developing the Eastern Trail. Each community is in favor of moving this project forward. This 2.7-mile project is comprised of the two outer segments of an overall envisioned larger 11-mile off-road shared use corridor between Route 9 in North Berwick and Route 35 (Alewife Road) in Kennebunk along the Eastern Trail.<sup>1</sup> Through a partnership between MaineDOT, ETMD, and the three municipalities, the project has undergone a feasibility study to evaluate and analyze alternatives to extend the off-road Eastern

<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1-4 and 1-5 in Appendix A for a map of the Project Area

Trail segments. Input and guidance have been provided from MaineDOT, in partnership with ETMD, on each alternative to ensure the purpose and need for the Project is met.

The Project supports MaineDOT’s vision for an integrated, safe, and connected active transportation system, as outlined in the *Maine State Active Transportation Plan (AT Plan)*. In particular, the Project is an important step towards realizing the *AT Plan*’s goal of making prioritized expansions to the off-road AT network through partnerships with stakeholders like the ETMD and municipalities. Development of the two outer segments highlights MaineDOT’s practical approach of making incremental improvements to the AT system that provide immediate local benefits while also fitting into a longer-term vision of a more comprehensive network.

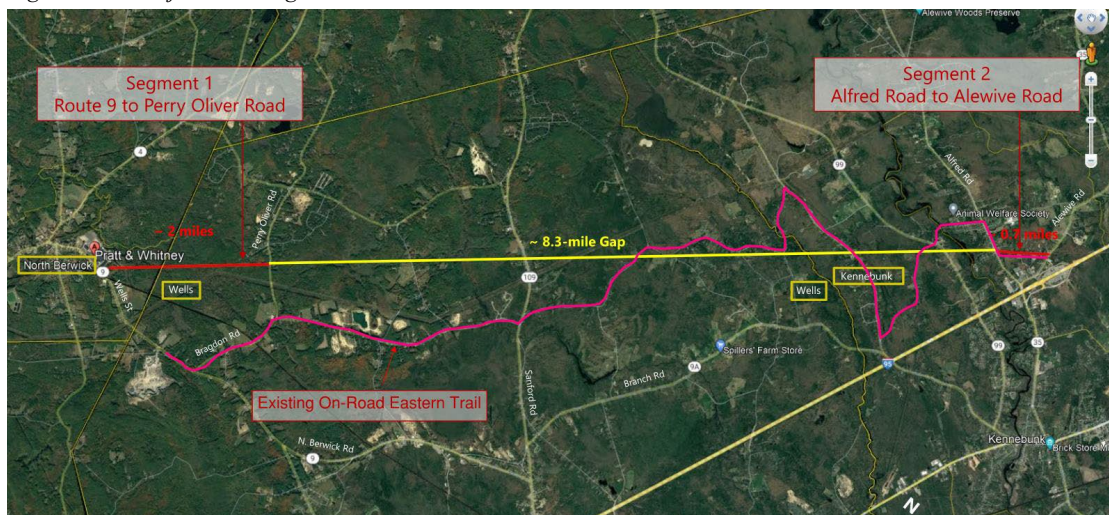
These trail sections will enhance residents’ non-motorized mobility and increase access to local businesses, schools, and residential areas. The Project will continue to realize the Eastern Trail Alliance’s vision, which began in the mid 1980’s, to extend the off-road sections of the Eastern Trail in Southern Maine. The trail will be enjoyed by thousands of users who will bike, walk, hike, snowshoe, and cross-country ski, and it will provide significant social, economic, and environmental benefits just as the existing off-road segments of the Eastern Trail do today. The Project will extend a non-motorized transportation corridor linking neighborhoods, businesses, and commercial uses.

### 1.1 Statement of Work

#### *Technical and Engineering Aspects of the Project*

As illustrated in Figure 1-22, the Project area includes the two outer segments of a much larger proposed Eastern Trail corridor between Route 9 in North Berwick and Route 35 (Alewife Road) in Kennebunk. The first segment is approximately 2 miles ending on the south side at Perry Oliver Road in Wells. The second segment is approximately 0.7 miles starting at Alfred Road in Kennebunk. The Eastern Trail has a co-location agreement with Unitil to allow the proposed segments of trail through the Unitil/Granite State Gas corridor.

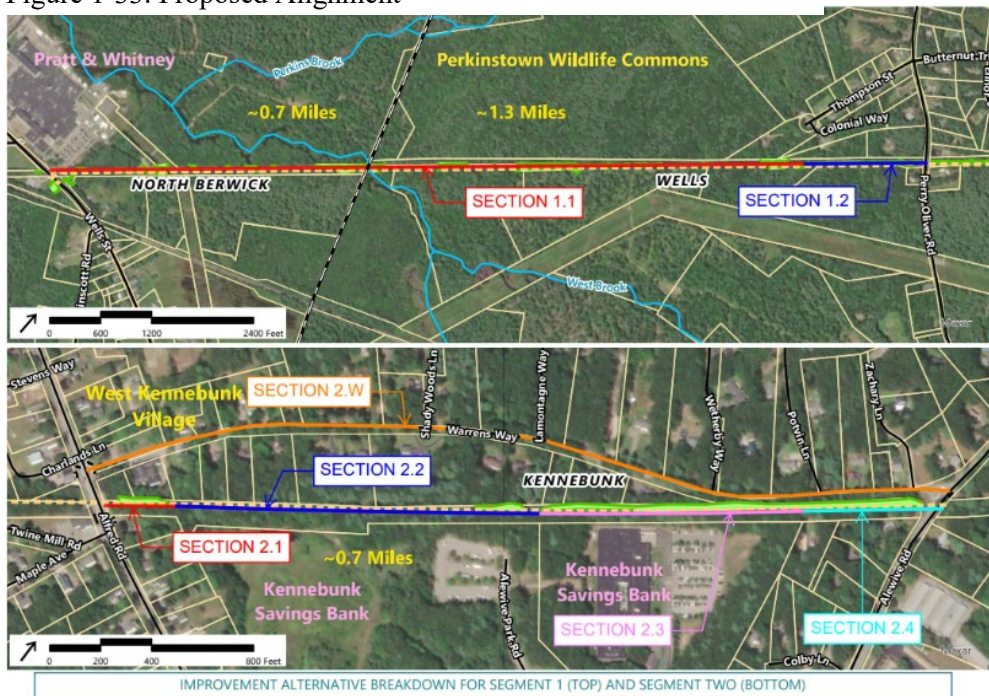
Figure 1-22. Project Area Segments 1 & 2



As part of the Eastern Trail Connectivity Feasibility Study, a recommended alternative for each of the sections was identified. The following is a segment-by-segment summary of the proposed design.

| Segment 1 (Route 9 in North Berwick to Perry Oliver Road in Wells) |   |
|--|---|
| Section 1.1  | The trail follows the historic railroad alignment utilizing the existing ballast as a trail base and removing the existing railroad timber ties.  |
| Section 1.2  | The trail will be constructed along the eastern embankment to avoid challenges with wetlands and Unutil gas infrastructure.   |
| Segment 2 (Alfred Road to Alewife Road in Kennebunk)               |   |
| Section 2.1  | The trail will be constructed along the eastern embankment to avoid challenges with wetlands and Unutil gas infrastructure.   |
| Section 2.2  | The trail construction will remain along the eastern embankment to avoid large elevation changes, Unutil gas infrastructure, and create connectivity opportunities to the Kennebunk Savings Bank parcel.  |
| Section 2.3  | The trail will be constructed on top of the eastern embankment and partially within the Kennebunk Savings Bank parcel to avoid Unutil gas infrastructure, wetlands, and create connectivity opportunities to the Kennebunk Savings Bank parcel. |
| Section 2.4  | The trail will cross the Unutil corridor from Kennebunk Savings Bank via a prefabricated bridge to Warrens Way and connect to a new sidepath before tying into the existing Eastern Trail off-road facility at Alewife Road.                    |

Figure 1-33. Proposed Alignment



### Current Design Status

An Eastern Trail Connectivity Feasibility Study was completed for the Project in May of 2022. The study looked at alternatives to extend the first and last segments of the larger 11-mile



corridor based on their independent utility. The study identified a recommended alternative for each section of the study corridor that satisfies the Eastern Trail's purpose and need to provide a safe corridor for trail users; identify the possible right-of-way, environmental, and utility impacts; evaluate the constructability; and compare the estimated construction costs to the other considered alternatives.

Engineering Design funding for the entire 11-mile Eastern Trail corridor between North Berwick and Kennebunk has been secured through a \$700,000 Economic Development Initiative/Community Project Funding HUD grant and all three segments of the 11-mile corridor are expected to be designed simultaneously. The \$700,000 Economic Development Initiative/Community Project Funding HUD grant, as well as \$210,000 of a non-federal match, will fund the engineering design for the 11 miles of new multi-use trail. A bid package will be developed and advertised using a competitive bid process, with the resulting product being a full engineering design document that will provide an opportunity to move into the Project construction phase. The process will include both virtual and in-person public engagement and input to ensure the trail provides benefits to all people. The anticipated start date for the engineering design work is July 5, 2023, with construction funds committed and under contract by May 31, 2027, and a contract end date of July 18, 2029, for the trail engineering design.

#### *Transportation Challenges to be Addressed*

*Separated Active Transportation Facilities*- Currently the Eastern Trail in the Project location is serviced by an on-road route connecting to the off-road trail starting at the northern end of Project Segment 2, at the intersection of Alewife Road in Kennebunk. This means that cyclists and pedestrians that are traveling south on the Eastern Trail have a discontinued trail and must then travel on-road. The on-road routes are not as safe as a dedicated off-road bicycle/pedestrian accommodation, with some sections lacking shoulders, sidewalks, or any other dedicated active transportation facilities. This reduces the viability and attractiveness of active transportation in communities along this section of the Eastern Trail. This Project will address this challenge and continue to accomplish the vision of the Eastern Trail to eventually provide off-road multi-use trails for the majority of the corridor.

*Signage and lighting* - Crosswalks and pedestrian signs are present along on-road portions of the existing trail. Street lighting will be addressed and installed throughout the Project area where required.

#### 1.2 Project Location

The Project is located in the towns of North Berwick, Wells, and Kennebunk, Maine which are all located in York County. York County is the southernmost County of Maine which borders New Hampshire. York County has a population of approximately 214,591 people or 213.9 people per square mile. The median household income in York County is \$73,856, and around 8.3% of the county's population is in poverty.<sup>2</sup> North Berwick is located to the west of Wells while Kennebunk is located to the north. Both Kennebunk and Wells run along the East Coast of Southern Maine and have access to the Atlantic Ocean. Due to the proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, tourism is an important part of these towns' economies. In the Eastern Trail Economic Impact Report, trail visitors

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/yorkcountymaine/PST045222>

spend on average a \$118 per day.<sup>3</sup> Improving trail conditions will help support the economic importance of tourism in Project area. Wells, Kennebunk, and North Berwick are a part of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC). SMPDC is a nonpartisan council that helps implement transportation planning, environmental sustainability, resource management, smart growth, and land use in through the member municipalities.

The population of Wells in 2020 was approximately 11,850 with a median household income of \$75,224. The largest industry in Wells is service (46%).<sup>4</sup> The smallest of the three towns, North Berwick's population in 2020 was approximately 5,077. North Berwick has a median household of \$81,325. Of the employed population in North Berwick, 42% work in the service industry.<sup>5</sup> Kennebunk is the largest of the three towns with a population of approximately 12,008 in 2020. The median household income is \$83,564 and 48% of the towns employed population works in the service industry.<sup>6</sup> Figures 1-4 and 1-5 (larger versions are attached in Appendix A) show the various businesses and neighborhoods that surround the two proposed trail segments. Particularly on the North Berwick side of Segment 1, the town's commercial district directly abuts the start of the trail. Large businesses, such as Pratt and Whitney, will now have direct access to the Eastern Trail. Segment 2 connects businesses in West Kennebunk to the existing off-road Eastern Trail.

Figure 1-44. Segment 1 Surrounding Area

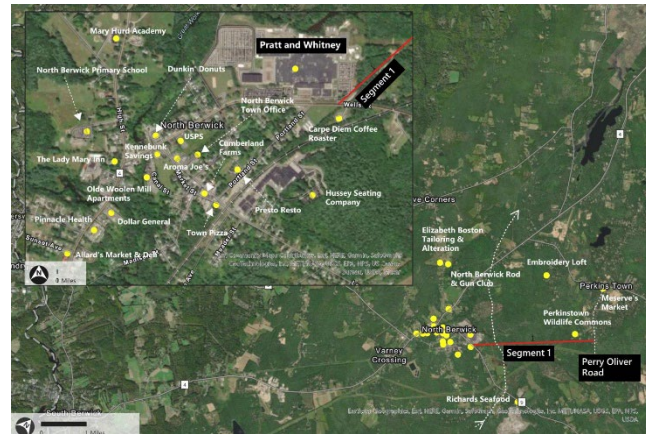
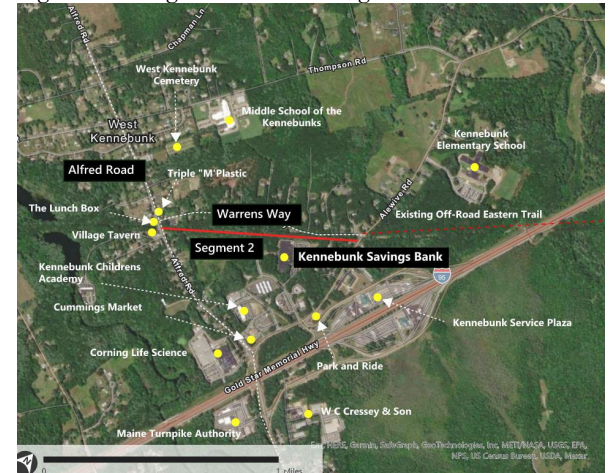


Figure 1-55. Segment 2 Surrounding Area



- The Project is located in York County, Maine
- GPS coordinates – Latitude: 43.31547, Longitude: -70.71436
- The Project is in Maine's 1st Congressional District, represented by Chellie Pingree (D-ME). The state is represented by U.S Senators Susan Collins and Angus King.
- Rural Project: The project is not located in a *Census-Designated Urbanized Area*
- The Project is not in an *Area of Persistent Poverty*.
- The Project is not located in a *Historically Disadvantaged Community*.
- It is not located in an *Opportunity Zone* or *Empowerment Zone*. *Promise Zone* and *Choice Neighborhoods*.

<sup>3</sup> SPMDC, Economic Impact of Eastern Trail, 2021

<sup>4</sup> [Community Profile Wells2021.pdf \(smpdc.org\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Community Profile NorthBerwick2021.pdf \(smpdc.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Community Profile Kennebunk2021.pdf \(smpdc.org\)](#)