



Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: April 25, 2022

Notes Prepared By: Phil Goff, Project Manager

Place: Virtual Meeting

Date: 4/26/2022

Project No.: WIN: 25979.00 / VHB: 55607.00

Project Name: MaineDOT RUAC Supporting Study – SLA Berlin Subdivision

Meeting Attendees:

MaineDOT Team	RUAC	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nate Howard, PM Nate Moulton Patrick Adams Tony Grande (VHB) Phil Goff (VHB) Tim Bryant (VHB) Mike McDonough (VHB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair Bill Shane Doug Beck Brian Harris Charles Hunter Chris Chop Christine Landes Diane Barnes Dick Woodbury Hope Cahan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremiah Bartlett Jonathan LaBonte Ralph Scalise Meghan Russo Scott LaFlamme Tony Donovan Angela King Nate Wildes

Agenda:

- > Introductions
- > Background/Goals of the Council
 - o LD 1133
 - o Rail Preservation Act
 - o Corridor location under review
 - o Corridor usage options to be considered
- > VHB Scope of Work
- > Outline/Agenda for future meetings
 - o Presentations
 - o Number of Council meetings
 - o Public meeting
 - o Capital/Operational parameters of the options



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- Other
- › Schedule next meeting
- › Public Comment

Introductions:

- › Bill Shane (Cumberland Town Manager): I've had a great experience with the railroads, and I'd love to see a mix of both rail and trail use along the corridor.
- › Christine Landes (New Gloucester Town Manager): I come with some history...I worked w Tony in the past
- › Tony Donovan (Portland): commercial real estate broker with interest in rail station sites especially. ME Rail Transit Coalition group working on a demonstration project for rail on the SL&A
- › Diane Barnes (Town Manager, No. Yarmouth): Hoping we can do something similar as the Sunrise Corridor
- › Hope Cahan (Town Council in Falmouth): lots of enthusiasm with locals
- › Doug Beck (Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, RTC Program manager)
- › Scott Laflamme (EcDev director in Yarmouth)
- › John LaBonte (City of Auburn transpo. advisor to Town Manager): Passenger rail project has been studied and a small rail to trail has been built in Auburn. Our EcDev strategy relies on some freight rail and intermodal services.
- › Dick Woodbury (Yarmouth, Casco Bay Trail Alliance)
- › Phil Goff (VHB)
- › Tony Grande (VHB)
- › Jeremiah Bartlett (Portland Public Works, Transportation Systems Engineer): Looking for as many transportation options as possible
- › Angela King (BCM)
- › Chris Chop (GPCOG Transportation Director)
- › Nate Moulton (Dir. of Freight and Passenger services at MaineDOT)
- › Mike McDonough (VHB Transit & Rail group)
- › Tim Bryant (VHB)
- › Nate Wildes (Exec. Dir. of Live and Work in Maine, representing the EcDev angle)
- › Brian Harris (GM from Maine Yacht Center in Portland); we use the rail line to transport boats from waterfront to inland location; interested in shared use of the corridor moving forward.
- › Charles Hunter (Assistant VP for Genesee & Wyoming, owner of SL&A RR)
- › Meghan Russo (Legislative Affairs Director, MaineDOT)



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Background/Goals of the Council:

- › Nate opened the meeting with a discussion of the project background and the goals for the RUAC for the Portland to Auburn corridor. Will open the meeting to public comment at the end.
 - LD 1133 established the RUAC process for review of rail and non-rail rec. use
 - Uses allowed in statute: rail use, trail use or bikeway
 - Rail corridor must be preserved for future rail use
 - Within 9 months of kick off, RUAC's findings and rec's are to be submitted to MaineDOT Commissioner. One public mtg required and then a report and possible minority report.
 - State RR Preservation Act: DOT may purchase rail lines if it is in the public interest. They may be leased or managed for future transportation use and are to be maintained.
 - For dismantling of state-owned track or other non-rail use. Legislative approval is required beyond the status quo of current rail use (ultimately to go through the Joint Standing Comm. on Transportation)
 - Our segment is mile post (MP) 1.74 to MP 25.97 (total Grand Trunk includes Portland to Island Pond VT (149.5 miles with 83miles in Maine); SL&A operates from Auburn to Montreal QC
 - Options for consideration: Rail Use, RWT, Trail until Rail (options include motorized vs non-motorized, and maintenance responsibility)
 - Key questions for If trail is considered...who would use it? What kind of users would use it? MaineDOT does not maintain the trails themselves but have an agreement with towns
 - Web site: www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/ruac/parac/index.shtml See "Contact us" box on left side
- › Bill: "Council" is the term to use, not Committee which refers to other committees some of us are part of.
- › Tony D: I request that we don't exclude any portion of the corridor. Will there be a vote of this Council to include the full-length MP 0.0 to 29.9? Without that, the outcome will be skewed. Why were those other sections excluded? We should have access to the lease to the narrow-gauge RR corridor in Portland for Council review as well.
- › Bill: (question to MaineDOT) MP 1.7 to 25.97...why?
- › Nate M: we wanted to start on the N side of the swing bridge since there already is a trail south of the bridge. We can go to downtown Portland if we need to however.
- › Bill: this issue may be included in the minority report if necessary.
- › Tony: let's open this up for a vote.
- › Jonathan: process question: are we going to operate under consensus decision, or Roberts Rule, etc?
- › Bill: if we can get a copy of the lease for the narrow-gauge RR, that would be helpful. Tony asks some good questions. I'm challenged to think about how the RWT would work given the narrow nature of the corridor.



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- › Jonathan: I believe the 2007 and 2010 acquisitions were from Bond language...it would be helpful to have access to that as well.

VHB Scope of Work:

After Phil's brief presentation, a number of questions were asked:

- › Jonathan: with your Scope of work, does the land use include the rail impact piece not just trail? What about Zoning?
 - Phil: the Powerpoint slide was a bit deceptive...it implied we would look at land use for only the trail options, but in reality it will be studied for rail use as well.
 - Nate: For the zoning piece, we'll need to review RKG's scope and get back to you
- › Chris: does the scope include public health benefits as well?
 - Nate M: this is a high level look....if we get too much into the weeds, we might get beyond the Legislative scope. For clean air or health benefits...the impact comes from both rail use and trail use so it might be hard to parse out. The number of users on rail and using the trail would have an impact. The Legislature did not intend for us to get into a very detailed level of bene's such as public health.
- › Tony D: I agree with Jonathan. We need to ID zoning and sites for train stations. Between Portland and Auburn, there are 6 sites for stations...that is critical to understand. We should highlight the climate and health impacts of the 3 options as well. How can we reduce the impacts and monetize those benefits?
- › Scott: I am concerned about mission creep...is our role to read and react to VHB's study and analysis?
- › Bill: Indeed, we don't want to go down any rabbit holes. From my POV, it will be helpful to have a structure to our monthly meetings. We need VHB to develop a graphic for what a cross section might look like in various places along the corridor. Impacts to neighbors is important too. Utility co-location is important to understand what is possible? Re: the agenda for future meetings...Nate, what will they look like?
- › Nate: with the Mnt Division Corridor study, we talked about potential rail operations and other models, like the Sunrise Trail. We need to understand: how do rail projects get funded, and how do trail projects get funded? Trails' impact to real estate value could be a good presentation topic for a future meeting.
- › Nate will provide VHB's Scope of Work to the Council
- › Nate M: VHB is providing technical data and reference points. The Legislation didn't mention a Benefit-Cost analysis and I don't think that is our mission...we want to hear from the Towns along the corridor and what they would like to have in their communities (and not just hear from advocates). Impact on abutters will be important but determining the clean air impacts with a "number" attached to it will be challenging.
- › Bill: our intent is to understand what kind of info the VHB team will provide



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- › Scott: Cost-Bene analysis is really needed IMO. Topics in future should include how the SL&A interacts with other rail lines.
- › Bill: Tony Donovan has a presentation that includes both rail use and trails. It would be good for all of us to see that presentation.
- › Bill: impacts to air and impacts on climate would be good to know and we are hoping to hear from Nate about some high-level analysis. The way the track is built along the stretch north of North Yarmouth is really narrow. Photos of the segments where the most significant challenges lie would be helpful to see.
- › Jonathan: should we expect any intervention from the Federal STB (Surface Transpo. Board)?
- › Nate M: perhaps since the SL&A has certain rights to appeal any discontinuation of rail use in the future.

Outline/Agenda for Future Meetings

- › Bill: any opposition to monthly meetings? (RUAC consensus is NO) Would the public meeting be anticipated as hybrid or virtual only?
- › Nate H: virtual is the easiest to host via Zoom, so that is anticipated
- › Nate H: Zoom recording link will be available very soon but the closed caption version isn't available yet
- › Bill: do we have suggestions for a GoPro video and drones?
 - Tony D: we have a drone video already and will make sure it is sent to VHB for review. A YouTube helicopter video of corridor is available too (link in chat: [MRTC SLR Short Video - YouTube](#))
- › Bill: Nate H, please send out some dates for the next meeting, consistent times would be best

Public Comments:

- › Shirley Storey-King from Cumberland Town Counsel: do any members of RUAC own land along the corridor? (No one does). I think it is a mistake to leave landowners out from the conversation.
 - Tony D: we have options to purchase land at some locations for future train stations
- › Bill S: the residential property owners' thoughts especially would be helpful.
- › Nate H: the statute required RUAC members to be from the Towns along the route.
- › Chat question: What is the timeframe? (Nate H: 9 months from today)
- › Kristine Keeney: for the cost estimates for the supporting infrastructure to upgrade the line for freight use along the Mnt Division line did not include costs for sidings. So, the costs estimate for things like sidings for freight and stations for stations, and trail heads for the trail options is really critical to make an apples to apples comparison. Also, it would be nice to know if there are any businesses along the route that would actually use the freight service. As a trail, this would be part of the Casco Bay Trail System and make lots of vital connections.



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Action Items:

- › Nate H will provide a copy of the lease with the narrow-gauge RR in Portland.
- › Nate H will confirm if RKG's Scope of Work included review of zoning along the corridor (which could impact sites for future rail stations)
- › VHB will develop cross section graphics to show how the trail could fit within the corridor at various locations (future Action Item)
- › Nate will provide VHB's Scope of Work to the Council
- › Nate to provide link to the RUAC meeting recording
- › Nate will send out date options for the next RUAC meeting
- › Tony D will send a copy of a drone video of the corridor to VHB