



# Meeting Notes

**Meeting Date:** January 26, 2023

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

**Place:** Cumberland Town Hall

**Date:** 01/26/2023

**Project No.:** WIN: 25979.00 / VHB: 55607.00

**Project Name:** MaineDOT RUAC Supporting Study – SLA Berlin Subdivision

## RUAC Meeting Attendees (bold indicates attendance):

MaineDOT Team	RUAC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nate Howard</b>, (MaineDOT, PM)</li> <li>• <b>Nate Moulton</b>, (MaineDOT Director of Freight and Passenger Services)</li> <li>• <b>Dakota Hewlett</b> (MaineDOT Active Transportation Planner)</li> <li>• <b>Phil Goff</b> (VHB)</li> <li>• <b>Tim Bryant</b> (VHB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chair Bill Shane</b> (Cumberland Town Manager)</li> <li>• <b>Brian Harris</b> (ME Yacht)</li> <li>• <b>Jason Birkel</b> (General Manager, St. Lawrence &amp; Atlantic Railroad)</li> <li>• <b>Chris Chop</b> (GPCOG Transportation Director)</li> <li>• Christine Landes (New Gloucester Town Manager)</li> <li>• <b>Diane Barnes</b> (North Yarmouth Town Manager)</li> <li>• <b>Dick Woodbury</b> (CBTA)</li> <li>• Hope Cahan (Falmouth Town Councilor)</li> <li>• <b>Jeremiah Bartlett</b> (Portland Transportation Engineer)</li> <li>• <b>Jonathan LaBonte</b> (Transportation Analyst, Auburn Town Manager)</li> <li>• <b>Scott LaFlamme</b> (Yarmouth Economic Development Director)</li> <li>• <b>Tony Donovan</b> (Maine Rail Transit Coalition/MRTC)</li> <li>• <b>Angela King</b> (BCM Advocacy Director)</li> <li>• Nate Wildes (Exec. Director, Live and Work in Maine)</li> <li>• <b>Natalie Thomsen</b> (New Gloucester Town Planner)</li> <li>• Becky Taylor-Chase (Town of Pownal)</li> <li>• <b>Charles Hunter</b> (St Lawrence and Atlantic RR)</li> </ul>

## Agenda:

- > 1:00 pm: Introductions
- > 1:05 pm: Council Work Session
  - o Clarifying details for RUAC recommendations report
  - o Review summary of recommendations
- > 2:15 pm: Public Comment



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### General Discussion:

- › Discussion commenced about revising the RUAC recommendations report to include the following:
  - *The Majority Recommendation shall also include a section of proposed **Rail with Trail** from approximately MP 1.8 to 2.8 to accommodate existing rail use by the Maine Yacht Center.*
- › Diane: I agree with Dick's amendment related to changing the language to include reference to RWT on the segment in East Deering.
- › Bill: we know there are sections that work and some that don't work for RWT. Dick's revision seems significant enough but it seems intended only to get another vote from the Maine Yacht Club folks, so I tend to not favor it.
- › Dick: however you want to proceed is fine from my perspective.
- › Diane: if the Maine Yacht Club is the only one using the current rail line, then let's change the language.
- › Tony: there is not a detailed design at this stage so I don't think we should be picking apart bits and pieces of the alignment and making an overly detailed change to the recommendations.
- › Brian: For the record, there is no collusion from Dick to change our vote, from my perspective. I support this because we want to ensure that the recommendation includes a reference that the Yacht Center currently uses the line. The Commissioner needs to know that.
- › Jeremiah: Reopening the voting process on Zoom is far from my preference. We left in December thinking that process was over.
- › Tony: my suspicion is that the Commissioner already knows the corridor is in use in some sections. No need to change the recommendations at this stage.
- › Bill: Tony makes a good point that we don't want to pick and choose sections. Jonathan made motion to accept the current Council report as it is. Dick W has seconded the motion.
- › Tony: my memo is called "7 is not a majority" and that should be made clear that the majority voted to NOT tear up the tracks. Also, the memo forgot to mention the MRTC and that needs to be added. The report should not say that the swing bridge is beyond repair and that the cost would be \$26m. Why is light rail not referenced in the recommendation, since we made a presentation to the Council regarding use of the corridor for a light rail service. The economic impacts analysis should include benefits for both trail and rail uses. The economic report notes that the trail has a fiscal impact that is beneficial which is not always true. There are lots of studies that show that trains do increase the value of properties along the route, in some cases 100X. I move to change the report to remove use of the term "majority".
- › Dick: I agree that it shouldn't say majority.
- › Jonathan: with abstention votes, 7 could be considered a majority (7 out of 13).
- › Tony: it is critical for the Commissioner to know that it wasn't a majority.
- › Charles: I agree with Tony too.



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- › Phil: perhaps the word "majority" should be called the "plurality"?
- › Tony: my preference is for the report to simply state "7 out of 15" and "5 out of 15", rather than "minority" for the latter.
- › Bill: amendment vote to strike the work "majority" from the report: all voted yes, except Jonathan L (no abstentions).
- › Roll call to accept the report with the amendment as passed:
  - Brian: yes
  - Charles: no
  - Tony: no
  - Dick: yes
  - Angela: yes
  - Bill: yes
  - Amy or Hope: not in attendance
  - Scott: yes
  - Jeremiah: yes
  - Natalie: yes
  - Jonathan: yes
  - Diane: yes
  - Becky: not in attendance
  - Chris: yes
  - Vote: 10 to 2 with a few missing votes
- › Bill: one thing to say in conclusion: we had a lot of discussion and none of the abutters were able to participate which was unfortunate. At the public meeting, we had 65 speakers. I've made it clear to the Commissioner that the voice of the abutters is very important and was missing.
- › Brian: I wanted to say that I'm disappointed and concerned that the bit of language about Maine Yacht Center's access to the freight line was not included in the final report. This leaves me with much unease about the report and the process.
- › Bill: to make clear, some people were interested in keeping that language in but it didn't have the votes.
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### Public comments

- › Patricia Barber: I feel heartbroken that yet another RUAC ends with the MaineDOT promoting the removal of rail tracks. The trail bias is blatant from MaineDOT, VHB, HNTB, and others in both Councils. The bike and trail bias is totally obvious and no other voting RUAC member has an extensive knowledge of rail. I will keep fighting for the sake of rail users.
- › Jacob C: many in East Deering were very supportive of having an interim trail in our neighborhood.
- › Bruce Sleeper, legal counsel for TrainRiders Northeast. I am disappointed with what has happened here. I think there are substantial flaws in the economic analysis. This is the only line that could provide commuter rail service from Lewiston/Auburn to Portland. CSX will never allow it.
- › Paul Drinan: I hope the tracks can stay adjacent to the Maine Yacht Center at the very least. Also, note that typically abstentions do not count for votes. In my opinion, 7 is technically a majority.
- › Richard Rudolph: this reminds me of Reading MA when the community was up in arms about extending the Orange Line subway in the 80s. So, instead the line ends in the middle of nowhere. This has a negative impact on social equity. People in L/A should have access to Portland via transit. Housing is unaffordable. Buses are not viable currently and don't go into the downtowns.
- › Ken Capron: the reprocessing of the steel should be added to the cost of the interim trail option. This impacts the climate as well.

### From the Chat/Q&A

- › Sue Ellen, Casco Bay Trail Alliance: 7 is a majority of those present and voting.
- › Ken Capron (Skyway by MicroRail): Has anyone sought input from economic development along the rail - i.e. Presumpscot Street? Can the rail also be used for freight?

### Final Comments

- › Bill: any final comments for the record?
- › Tony: rail advocates have compromised on the Mountain Division effort but MDOT decided to fund the design of a trail. I had assumed that RWT would be a good compromise, but the trails supporters had no interest in compromise. This RUAC, like the others, has been stacked against rail and many of the Council members have limited to no knowledge of rail operations. I will keep working on this and will see you in the Legislature.
- › Angela: BCM is about active transportation and we work with many people who live without cars. Unlike some of the earlier characterizations, trail supporters are not just promoting them for recreational purposes.



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- › Bill: I want to thank Nate and Nate, and Phil for the good work. I didn't know much about rail initially, but I understand public process. The in-person meetings were really helpful. I encourage MDOT to do more in-person meetings for other RUACs. I have enjoyed the process though it was quite difficult. It was eye-opening for me to see how many people showed up to the public meeting especially.
- › Nate M: thanks for all Council members for your efforts and comments
- › Nate H: we will have everything up to date and posted on the web site. The report will go to the Commissioner from the RUAC/Bill not from me.

Meeting adjourned at 1:58 pm.