

From: [Moulton, Nathan](#)
To: [Howard, Nathan](#)
Subject: FW: SUPPORTOF PASSENGER RAIL
Date: Wednesday, December 28, 2022 3:48:24 PM

Please put this in the Lower Rd. comments when you start putting those together.

From: Kimberly Lindlof <Kimberly@midmainechamber.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2022 11:26 AM
To: Moulton, Nathan <Nathan.Moulton@maine.gov>
Cc: ironmike928@aol.com; jtsutton@roadrunner.com
Subject: SUPPORTOF PASSENGER RAIL

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Moulton,

I understand that you are taking testimony on Rail vs. Trail between Gardiner and Topsham. I would like to add Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce's (MMCC) position to that discussion.

Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce is in support of extending passenger rail through Waterville and up to Bangor. The greater Waterville area has a robust education, healthcare and arts presence: 4 colleges – Unity, KVCC, Thomas and Colby; Northern Light Inland, Maine Eye Care, and MaineGeneral plus all of the nursing home and affiliate specialty offices; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville Opera House, Railroad Square Cinemas, Ticonic Gallery, Colby's new modern art downtown gallery, and PechaKucha. MMCC feels that all would be enhanced by the connectivity that passenger rail would bring to our region.

Our 2023 White Papers advocate as follow, *“support of passenger and freight railroad systems from Portland to Bangor via the Lewiston line.”* This position is supplied to all of our region's elected officials, and posted annual on our Web site. This is a position that we've been advocating for years.

The greater Waterville area has a robust trails system, which we wholeheartedly support, so MMCC understands the delicate balance

between these two endeavors. It does not believe that one has to be at the expense of the other, however. Once those rail lines are removed, however, it's very difficult to turn back. MMCC supports the expansion of passenger rail while looking for alternative paths for a trail system for the Topsham/Gardiner extension.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and Happy New Year.

Make it a great day,

Kim

Kimberly N. Lindlof

President & CEO, Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce

Executive Director, Central Maine Growth Council

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From: Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov
To: [Howard, Nathan](#)
Subject: Lower Road Public Comments
Date: Saturday, December 31, 2022 1:00:32 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The following message was submitted from your MaineDOT website contact form .

Date: Saturday, 31-Dec-2022 12:52:28 EST
Name: Richard Rudolph
Organization(if applicable):
Phone: 207-776-4961
Email: rrudolph1022@gmail.com

Topic:

Comments:

Comments regarding the "Lower Road" Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) which met for the first time on November 30 from 10:30 - 12 Noon. This is one of three RUACs which have been established to determine what should be done regarding the three state owned rail lines which were purchased in the late 1980's /early 1990's. During the 130th Legislative session MEDOT submitted a bill, LD1133, to the Maine legislature which was passed authorizing the Commissioner of Transportation to convene rail corridor use advisory councils to advise and make recommendations each time one or more governmental entities representing communities along a state-owned rail corridor request a review of non-rail recreational use or non-recreational transportation use of that rail corridor. While this bill was being considered and voted on last year, the state legislature modified a bill which called on the state to fund a feasibility study for restoring passenger rail service to Bangor either through Pan Am's "Back Road" from Lewiston /Auburn or the state owned "Lower Road" from Brunswick to Augusta and then on the former PanAm's rail line to Waterville and Bangor. The modified bill that was passed, however, provided \$150,000 in state funds and \$50,000 from the major cities in Central Maine to conduct a propensity study which examines where people travel to work, shop and seek medical care.

The RUACs which MeDOT has established appear to be stacked decks for only one person on each of the committees represent passenger rail interests. Even worse, the "Lower Road" RUAC has no representatives from either Waterville or Bangor which have provided funds for the Propensity Study. Although the law doesn't require representation from these communities, they should have a seat at the table especially regarding decisions about the use of the "Lower Road" rail corridor.

To make matters worse, the same consulting firm VHB which MeDOT hired to conduct the "Propensity Study" is also serving as the consultant for each of the RUACS. Already questions have been raised by Bruce Sleeper, TrainRiders Northeast legal council and MRG members regarding the data that has been presented to justify converting rail lines into a trail. In Appendix B to the draft study for the St. Lawrence Rail Line which is owned by the state, but not in active use, the VHB consultants assumed that 23% of the users would be non-local and would spend an average of \$118 for food, lodging and equipment during the day they use the trail resulting in spending of \$3.5 million to \$5.3 million annually. For train riders, the calculation is based only on what rail passengers might spend on the train resulting in spending of \$114,000 to \$130,000 annually. Undoubtedly, some of these riders may be visitors who will also spend money on hotel accommodations and at area restaurants. Questions have also been raised regarding the economic impact on housing as a result of passenger rail service. VHB estimated at most 256 new housing units would be built near the proposed rail stations in Auburn, Pineland and in Yarmouth. This is clearly a low ball estimate. Since the startup of the Downeaster Service more than 850 new housing units have been built near railroad stations.

It should also be pointed out that once these state rail owned lines are converted to hiking / bicycle paths it's unlikely they will ever be converted back for rail use. Although thousands of miles of rail line have been rail banked throughout the United States, less than 100 miles have ever been reconverted to rail use. Reconversion would be very expensive once rail and ballast are removed, and the outcry from trail users and NIMBY's would

make reconversion politically impossible.

In closing, we need all hands on deck to help save the “Lower Road” from being converted into a hiking/bicycle path. The next meeting of the “Lower Road” RUAC will be held on Wednesday, January 25 from 10:30 - 12:00. You can listen in since it will be held as a zoom meeting. The last 15 minutes are set aside for public comment. We will send out the zoom info needed to attend closer to the meeting date. You can also send written comments via email to Nathan.Howard@maine.gov. He is the Director of Rail Transportation at MEDOT, Office of Freight and Passenger Rail. You can also leave a message for him at (207) 624-3042.
Richard Rudolph, Ph.D., Chairman, Rail Users’ Network; MRG Director

If required, please respond as soon as possible.

From: Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov
To: [Howard, Nathan](#)
Subject: Lower Road Public Comments
Date: Monday, December 12, 2022 12:34:52 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The following message was submitted from your MaineDOT website contact form .

Date: Monday, 12-Dec-2022 12:29:45 EST
Name: HOWARD BETTS
Organization(if applicable):
Phone: 2075122930
Email: hbetts@maineswitching.com

Topic:

Comments:

As a citizen of the state of Maine. I feel that we have already demonstrated that a trail beside the rail works very well for this corridor. As shown by the section between Gardiner and Augusta. If there is a push to extend the trail, then it should be with the characteristics as the current section. This preserves the rail for future use either for passenger, freight or both.

If required, please respond as soon as possible.

From: Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov
To: [Howard, Nathan](#)
Subject: Lower Road Public Comments
Date: Wednesday, November 30, 2022 12:26:38 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The following message was submitted from your MaineDOT website contact form .

Date: Wednesday, 30-Nov-2022 12:20:54 EST
Name: Patricia Barber
Organization(if applicable):
Phone: 207-625-4755
Email: rugbyvet88@yahoo.com

Topic:

Comments:

To the RUAC :

It makes most sense that return of train service to the Lower Road would be best served as commuter rail/light rail, instead of an Amtrak extension.

I hope VHB explores that option in their return of rail study. If they feel light rail would not be feasible, we need to see the reasons why it would not be.

If required, please respond as soon as possible.