

**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Monday, May 8, 2023 10:12:15 AM

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

Date: Monday, 08-May-2023 10:05:16 EDT  
Name: IAMAW Local Lodge S6  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone: 207-443-5566  
Email: LS6communicator@gmail.com

Topic:

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Comments:

IAMAW Local Lodge S6 at the recommendation of our Womens Committee would like to voice our support for the development of the Merrymeeting Trail and the Capital-to-Coast Trail System as a whole. We would like to see an underutilized resource like the old railways developed into something that has real value for the community. A large portion of our membership live within 10 miles of the proposed Merrymeeting Trail. Gaining easy access to more of the natural resources that our beautiful state has to offer would be of great benefit to the entire community. A free-to-use biking and walking path removes barriers to healthy living by allowing more of our population to practice a healthy lifestyle safely. The added accessibility not only benefits those who enjoy the outdoors, but it benefits local businesses who would have their downtown areas connected to an attraction that extends over 26 miles. Connecting our communities through a long and well-maintained trail could set the foundation for a multitude of new business ventures and local events. These opportunities have the potential to positively impact our locales by contributing to an enriching environment for our current residents as well as attracting new residents. When we give the citizens of Maine reasons to invest in their communities, we also give them reasons to stay and raise their families. Investing in our towns and cities in creative and interesting ways encourages us to think creatively about the future of our great state.

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If required, please respond as soon as possible.

**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Thursday, May 11, 2023 9:38:20 AM

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

Date: Thursday, 11-May-2023 09:32:58 EDT  
Name: Mary Stanton  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone: 7818649966  
Email: marystanton781@gmail.com

Topic:

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Comments:

I would love a bike friendly trail connecting my town to surrounding towns, the roads are too narrow for me, a newer bike rider, to feel comfortable navigating.

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If required, please respond as soon as possible.

**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 23, 2023 3:22:38 PM

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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: Tuesday, 23-May-2023 15:10:55 EDT  
Name: Patricia Barber  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone: 3018326766  
Email: rugbyvet88@yahoo.com

Topic:

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Comments:

Lower Rd Public Comments: please find the following letter I wrote to the Legislature regarding concerns and potential improvements that could be made to the Rail Use Advisory Council process.

This letter addresses the Mountain Division RUAC specifically, but the same concerns and improvements are valid for all of the RUACs.

As I understand it, the formation of the RUACs were meant to aid the Transportation Committee in assessing the potential uses of the State-Owned Rail Corridors in response to a request by trail advocates as to the possibility of removing the rails to replace them with a bike/ped byway.

The first RUAC to be implemented was the Mountain Division. Execution of this initial process uncovered many deficiencies. Addressing and correcting the concerns brought forth would offer a solid framework for inclusive discussions among stakeholders and enhance the decision-making process going forward.

I would like to respectfully address certain points concerning the RUACs, and possible solutions that could be implemented.

1)The lack of train or transit expert members:

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) currently stands as the sole train and rail expert agency in our state. As per the RUAC process, they are not allowed voting status, but instead, serve as facilitators and moderators. While there are available state agencies whose work encompasses trails, there needs to be adequate representation of rail expertise. To address this deficiency, I propose expanding the member group to include transportation engineers, transit experts, and other individuals knowledgeable about rail. This addition should supplement the required citizen rail advocate, who plays a valuable role but may not possess the technical expertise of a state agency-level representative.

2)Overrepresentation of municipality members by trail groups:

To ensure unbiased representation among municipal members, a fair vetting process is necessary. Similar to the selection of jury members, we can introduce a mechanism where the independence and impartiality of municipal appointees can be challenged by any interested party. This process would allow both sides to scrutinize the potential biases of appointed members. Alternatively, we could explore the option of opening up the municipal member position to a bidding process, ensuring that all individuals in town have an equal opportunity to apply. This approach would bring any potential biases to the surface and promote transparency.

3)Expanding the mandate of analysis:

The current mandate for analysis is narrow and fails to encompass new technologies and alternative solutions. I

strongly believe that any analysis conducted should be comprehensive and forward-thinking. By broadening the mandate to include the exploration of new technologies and alternative trail workarounds, we can better evaluate the feasibility and potential benefits of different approaches to best uses of these rail corridors.

4)Vetting the analyst and bidding for the job:

To maintain impartiality and address potential conflicts of interest, it is essential to thoroughly vet the analysts involved in the rail corridor study. While MDOT consultants have expertise in the field, it would be beneficial to open the bidding process to include other qualified entities. By doing so, we can ensure a fair and unbiased selection process. Companies which have a proven track record and would be acceptable to both sides could be strong candidates for the job.

5)Clarifying rules and expectations of the Council:

To avoid confusion and promote a clear understanding of the Council's role, it is imperative to specify the rules and expectations more explicitly. This includes stating that consensus is not a requirement and that the Council's decision will be the one presented to the Legislature. By emphasizing the weight of their decision, members can deliberate more carefully and fully comprehend the importance of their role and final vote.

6)Addressing grievances and establishing a decision authority:

It is essential to establish a mechanism for addressing grievances and conflicts within the process. Currently, there is no authority empowered to judge the merits of complaints or make decisions in such situations. To rectify this, we should consider implementing a fair and impartial authority that can evaluate grievances and make informed decisions based on the facts presented. This approach would provide an avenue for resolving issues and ensuring a fair process for all stakeholders.

A vote for removal of railroad tracks is a controversial subject. Maine DOT recognized that possible controversy and devised a framework to address such issues. In the draft Maine State Rail Plan 2022 Task #6 Framework to Examine Proposed Alternative Uses of State Owned Rail Lines states in part "...to ensure that the potential implications are properly assessed and understood, and findings are developed in a consistent and objective manner...engagement with key stakeholders (rail corridor use advisory councils, economic development agencies, railroads, industry etc)...to identify concerns and issues. "

None of this post-RUAC outreach has been implemented after the Mountain Division vote. Execution of this RUAC decision is premature since vital steps above following that vote have not been accomplished.

In closing, the real-world implementation of this council during the inaugural Mountain Division RUAC identified many deficiencies. These deficiencies resulted in a serious trail bias in the final Mountain Division RUAC vote. Essential steps that needed to be followed after such a vote were also never carried out. As a result of these matters, I strongly feel that this RUAC vote should be reconsidered.

I thank you for your consideration in this matter

Respectfully,

Patty Barber

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If required, please respond as soon as possible.

**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Friday, May 26, 2023 3:28:36 PM

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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: Friday, 26-May-2023 15:21:42 EDT  
Name: Laurie Rothstein  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone:  
Email: [laurierothstein@gmail.com](mailto:laurierothstein@gmail.com)

Topic:

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Comments:

Speaking pro-Merrymeeting Trail: How can Maine NOT afford to convert this stretch of unused railbed to a multi-use trail? It's a no brainer. Great for people, great for the environment, great for the towns and small businesses...attract more people to the area who are looking for places where they can minimize reliance on cars. Do it! Please!

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**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 31, 2023 11:35:09 AM

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

Date: Wednesday, 31-May-2023 11:30:09 EDT  
Name: David Ashenden  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone: 2075466813  
Email: david.ashenden2@gmail.com

Topic:

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Comments:

These comments concern the railroad tracks between Brunswick, Augusta and Waterville known as the "Lower Road" formerly part of the Maine Central Railroad.

I wish to strongly state that the Maine Department of Transportation should not be urged to make a hasty decision to remove the rails under the pressure of various trail organizations desirous of using the right of way for trail purposes. The rails should be removed, if at all, only after serious considerations of all the issues involved and only then allow the conversion of the right of way to a trail. Once the rails are removed there is very little probability that they would ever be replaced even if there were the potential and need for rail service. I trust those charged with making this decision are aware of the broader importance of these tracks; they represent more than a local rail route for which as of this time there seems to be no use

The line passes through Augusta, the capital city of the state. There are various proposals, studies and considerations for the potential restoration of passenger service. Also the "lower road" is not a branch line but also has the potential as an alternative to the sole route through Auburn and Lewiston. Removal of the rails would probably preclude any possible restoration of rail service to Augusta.

Therefore I urge postponement of any decision to lift the rails at this time until a final and carefully considered judgement can be reached.

David D. Ashenden  
P.O. Box 114  
333 Oak Point Road  
Harrington, Maine 04643

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If required, please respond as soon as possible.

**From:** [Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov](mailto:Communications.MaineDOT@maine.gov)  
**To:** [Howard, Nathan](#)  
**Subject:** Lower Road Public Comments  
**Date:** Monday, May 1, 2023 3:49:45 PM

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

Date: Monday, 01-May-2023 15:35:42 EDT  
Name: Zach Dalrymple  
Organization(if applicable):  
Phone: 2077706674  
Email: zachary.d.dalrymple@gmail.com

Topic:

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Comments:

Hello,

I am Zac, a resident of Augusta. I wanted to show my support Merrymeeting trail that would connect the Kennebec Rail Trail all the way to Brunswick. I've lived in similar cities (Columbus, Georgia), which have revitalized their downtowns by emphasizing their waterways and recreational activities around them. I ran the 2023 Ironman Maine thousands of people turned up for that event, and it was a great insight into the potential.

Thanks for listening.

Best,  
Zachary Dalrymple

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If required, please respond as soon as possible.