



**GARDINER CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**



| | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|--------------|
| Meeting Date | 01/20/2021 | Department | City Council |
| Agenda Item | 4.c Update from Merrymeeting Trail (MMT) Board/Richard Heath and Tom Reeves | | |
| Est. Cost | n/a | | |

Background Information

This agenda item is an opportunity for the Gardiner representation of the Merrymeeting Trail Board, Richard Heath and Tom Reeves, to update the City Council regarding the current status of MMT.

| | |
|---|-----|
| Requested Action | n/a |
| City Manager and/or Finance Review | n/a |
| Council Vote/ Action Taken | |
| Departmental Follow-Up | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| City Clerk Use Only | 1 st Reading _____ | Advertised _____ | EFFECTIVE DATE _____ |
| | 2 nd Reading _____ | Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days | |
| | Final to Dept _____ | Updated Book _____ | Online _____ |

Christine Landes

From: Contact form at Gardiner ME <cmsmailer@civicplus.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 7, 2021 1:27 PM
To: Christine Landes
Subject: [Gardiner ME] Merry Meeting Trail Status (Sent by Richard H Heath, richardheath1955@gmail.com)

Hello clandes,

Richard H Heath (richardheath1955@gmail.com) has sent you a message via your contact form (<https://www.gardinermaine.com/user/25/contact>) at Gardiner ME.

If you don't want to receive such e-mails, you can change your settings at <https://www.gardinermaine.com/user/25/edit>.

Message:

Ms. Landes,
Tom Reeves and I are Gardiner representatives on the Merrymeeting Trail (MMT) Board. We would like an opportunity to update the city council on the current status of MMT Board discussions with the Maine Department of Transportation; and to inform new councilors about the trail. Would it be possible to be included on the agenda of the next available city council meeting. Our presentation will be brief.
Thank you
Richard Heath

Merrymeeting Trail Update

Gardiner City Council

January 20, 2021

ABOUT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors was created in 2015 by the towns of Gardiner, Richmond, Bowdoinham, and Topsham, which entered into an Interlocal Agreement (attached) pursuant to the Maine Interlocal Cooperation Act in 2015. This governmental entity is charged with helping to facilitate the planning and creation of the Merrymeeting Trail. Two people represent each town on the Board of Supervisors, reporting back regularly to the municipal governments of the four towns. The Gardiner representatives are Richard Heath and Tom Reeves.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Merrymeeting Trail is a 26-mile trail that would connect the towns of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardner via the unused Lower Road rail corridor. This project has been of great interest to the towns along this route for over a decade, and the citizens and municipal leaders of each town have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to the vision of the Merrymeeting Trail. This began in 2008 when Gardiner, Richmond, Bowdoinham, and Topsham created the Merrymeeting Trail Committee (now the Merrymeeting Trailblazers) to explore the trail's creation. That group met regularly and ultimately partnered with the Midcoast Council of Governments to commission a feasibility study for the project.

In 2011, the consulting firm VHB delivered the study, with additional engineering work provided by Wright Pierce (as requested by Maine DOT). Among other things, the VHB feasibility study recommended the Department of Transportation consider designating the Merrymeeting Trail a "Trail of Statewide Significance" based on its length, its connection of population centers, and the fact that it serves multiple communities. In 2014, Maine DOT awarded the Merrymeeting Trail this designation. An interim route -- primarily for bicyclists, running along Route 24 and several side roads -- was also approved by Maine DOT in 2014. The Department approved signage for the interim route, which was erected by the four towns between 2015 and 2017.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Ongoing conversations with lawmakers and MDOT have led to legislative efforts in recent years intended to move the Merrymeeting Trail project forward. Most recently, MDOT included \$25,000 in its 2020 work plan to support a "public advisory process" for the trail (attached). In October, the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors sent a letter to MDOT encouraging them to initiate that process and offer our support to help facilitate it however we can (attached).

ATTACHMENTS

- MDOT Work Plan excerpt listing Merrymeeting Trail public advisory process
- Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors letter to MDOT supporting the initiation of this process
- Merrymeeting Trailblazers Fact Sheet on the trail
- Merrymeeting Trail timeline of accomplishments
- Original interlocal agreement establishing the Board of Supervisors

MERRYMEETING TRAIL BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

WHEREAS, the municipalities of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardiner signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2008 to support the planning of a regional trail system to connect the Androscoggin River Pedestrian Bike Path in Topsham, the Village Center in Bowdoinham, the Village Center in Richmond, and the Kennebec River Rail Trail in Gardiner and gave support to the municipal staffs, residents, municipal committees, and other interested parties to work together towards achieving the vision of a regional trail system; and

WHEREAS, since the signing of the 2008 Memorandum of Agreement the Merrymeeting Trail Committee has worked on developing a feasibility study which was completed in June, 2011; and

WHEREAS, to better coordinate the development of the Merrymeeting Trail the municipalities of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardiner desire to enter into this Interlocal Agreement ("Agreement") pursuant to the Maine Interlocal Cooperation Act, 30-A M.R.S. § 2201-2208 (as amended) to create the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors.

NOW THEREFORE, the municipalities of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardiner agree as follows:

ARTICLE 1- PURPOSE

The purpose of this Agreement is to facilitate the planning, construction, and maintenance of a regional multi-use trail, which will accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users, connecting the Androscoggin River Pedestrian Bike Path in Topsham, the Village Center in Bowdoinham, the Village Center in Richmond, and the Kennebec River Rail Trail in Gardiner to be known as the Merrymeeting Trail and the development of related facilities and trails.

ARTICLE 2 – ADMINISTRATION

A. Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors

A board is hereby created and is designated as the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, which shall be the joint board created pursuant to 30-A M.R.S. § 2203(3)(A) for administration of the undertaking contemplated in this Agreement.

The Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors (hereafter the "Board") shall consist of two voting members from each municipality which elects to join this Agreement. The municipal officers of each municipality shall appoint their respective board members. It is recommended that one board member from each municipality be a municipal officer or official. Board members shall serve at the pleasure of their respective appointing authority.

B. Meetings of the Board

Board members shall provide a means for electing a Chair and such other officers as deemed necessary, and what constitutes a quorum.

The Board may elect to adopt by-laws for the operation and administration of the Board.

All meetings shall be governed by the provisions of the Maine Freedom of Access Act (1 M.R.S. § 401 et.seq, as may be amended).

ARTICLE 3 – POWERS OF THE BOARD

The Board shall have all the duties and powers to accomplish the following:

- 1) Communicate and evaluate municipal needs and issues.
- 2) Update the municipalities on the trail status.
- 3) Make recommendations to the municipalities.
- 4) Conduct planning for the trail system.
- 5) Create and implement policy for the trail system.
- 6) Develop and adopt rules for the use of Merrymeeting Trail and related trails.
- 7) Develop an annual budget including requests for municipal funding as well as funding from other sources.
- 8) Facilitate and/or assist or oversee in the construction of the trail system.
- 9) Maintain, manage and operate the trail system.
- 10) Invoice municipalities for expenses incurred and previously approved by them.
- 11) Authorize expenditures consistent with its budget.
- 12) Negotiate and enter into contracts to fulfill the purposes of this Interlocal Agreement.

- 13) Coordinate in-kind services.
- 14) Pursue other funding opportunities (grants, donations, etc).
- 15) Hold meetings as deemed necessary.
- 16) Work with and coordinate services with the Kennebec River Rail Trail Board of Supervisors and other governmental entities which oversee trails which relate to the trail system.
- 17) Work with the National Park Service and other federal agencies and departments; state agencies and departments (such as the Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Department of Transportation); regional planning entities; and other local governments to fulfill the objectives of this Interlocal Agreement.
- 18) Work with East Coast Greenway, land trusts, trail and conservation organizations, and other nonprofit organizations to fulfill the objectives of this Interlocal Agreement.
- 19) Work with interested private individuals and organizations to fulfill the objectives of this Interlocal Agreement.
- 20) Carry out any other responsibilities to fulfill the objectives of this Interlocal Agreement.

ARTICLE 4 – TRAIL LOCATION

The trail will be located along the Maine Department of Transportation's railroad right of way from Topsham to Gardiner or, where there are more optimal alternatives, on routes other than the railroad right of way. Each municipality shall give final approval to the specific location of any section of the trail system which lies within their municipal jurisdiction and each municipality may delegate this authority to the Board.

ARTICLE 5 – AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED FOR MUNICIPAL FUNDING

If municipal funds are proposed to be expended by the Board, the Board shall prepare and present the proposed annual budget to each municipality using the process required by said municipalities in order to be considered in each municipality's budget process for the next fiscal year.

ARTICLE 6 – PROPERTY

All real property and improvements acquired or developed pursuant to this Interlocal Agreement shall be held by the municipality in which it is located.

ARTICLE 7 – NEW MUNICIPAL MEMBERS

Municipalities may be admitted under this Agreement as new members by a simple majority vote of the Board and upon approval by the appropriate municipal authority of candidate members (e.g. by the municipal officers or, where required, town meeting of such municipality).

ARTICLE 8 – AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

The Board may propose and shall approve by a majority vote (where each municipality is represented) of all members present amendments to this Agreement. Any proposed amendments shall also require an affirmative vote by the appropriate municipal authority of the member municipalities (e.g., by the municipal officers or, where required by the town meeting of such member municipality).

This Agreement shall continue in force for a period of 20 years from the effective date of this Agreement. This Agreement may be renewed, superseded or terminated by the collective affirmative votes by the appropriate municipal authority of all member municipalities.

The Board shall take all necessary and proper steps to conclude affairs of the Board upon termination of this Agreement.

ARTICLE 9 – WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERS

A member municipality may withdraw from this Agreement subject to each of the following conditions:

1. Withdrawal shall be authorized by the appropriate municipal authority of the withdrawing member municipality.
2. The withdrawing member municipality shall give written notice of its intent to withdraw at least ninety (90) days prior to the commencement of the Board's budgetary year.
3. At or prior to the time of withdrawing, the withdrawing member municipality shall pay the entire amount of its outstanding obligations incurred pursuant to this Agreement.
4. And if required, with written consent from Maine Department of Transportation.

ARTICLE 10 – FILING OF AGREEMENT

This Agreement shall take effect upon the filing of executed copies of this Agreement with the clerks of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond and Gardiner and the Secretary of State, which shall be filed after adoption by the appropriate municipal authorizes of said municipalities.

ARTICLE 11 –CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned duly elected and authorized officials, hereby approve this Agreement creating the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors on the terms and conditions stated in this Agreement.

TOWN OF TOPSHAM

By Donald Russell
Its: Chair Selectmen
Duly Authorized

Date June 4 2015

By D M Dewless D
Its: Vice Chair
Duly Authorized

Date 6/4/15

By Quinn Lewis
Its: Deputy
Duly Authorized

Date 6-4-2015

By W M Young
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date 6-4-2015

By Marie Billant
Its: Selectmen
Duly Authorized

Date 6-4-15

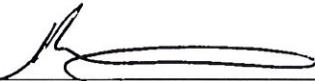
By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date _____

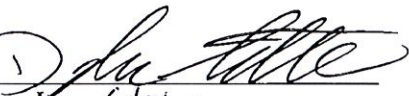
By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date _____

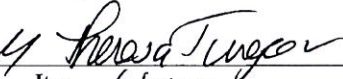
TOWN OF BOWDOINHAM

By  _____
Its: Selkman
Duly Authorized

Date 6/9/15

By  _____
Its: Selkman
Duly Authorized

Date 6/9/15

By  _____
Its: Selkman
Duly Authorized

Date 6/9/15

By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

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Date _____

By _____
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Duly Authorized

Date _____

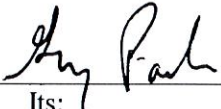
By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date _____


RICHMOND

By 
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

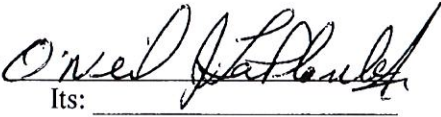
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By 
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date 6/24/15

By 
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

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By 
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date 6/24/15

By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date _____

By _____
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Duly Authorized

Date _____

By _____
Its: _____
Duly Authorized

Date _____

CITY OF GARDINER

By [Signature]
Its: Mayor
Duly Authorized

Date 6/3/15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6/3/15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6-3-15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6/3/15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6-3-15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6/3/15

By [Signature]
Its: Councilor
Duly Authorized

Date 6.3.15

This Interlocal Agreement was filed with the Secretary of State on this ___ day of _____, 2015, between the Town of Topsham, Town of Bowdoinham, Town of Richmond, and City of Gardiner.

Bowdoinham

This report shows the 2020-2022 Work Plan entries for Bowdoinham. The costs listed are the total cost of these projects – some of which may extend into neighboring towns. It also shows a listing of maintenance work specifically recorded to Bowdoinham in 2019, as well as any 2019 Local Road Assistance payments. Activities that are managed on a larger scale, such as snow & ice control, and maintenance work done by contract are not listed. The maintenance accomplishments may also extend into neighboring towns but are listed in the first town where the work was reported. Finally, any capital projects that were completed in 2019 are also listed.

Planned Capital and Maintenance Work 2020-2022

Work Plan Year: 2020

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham, Gardiner, Richmond, Topsham

Asset(s): Lower Road Branch Railroad

Description: Public advisory process for future use of the rail corridor between Topsham and Gardiner.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 024759.00 | Feasibility Studies Railroad - General | | \$25,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2020

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham

Asset(s): White Road

Description: Ditching on the White Road in Bowdoinham and Richmond. Beginning at the intersection of White Road and Route 24 and extending north 4.92 miles to Route 197 in Richmond.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|----------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| WR 39930 | | HCP 4 | \$28,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2020

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham

Asset(s): Route 138

Description: Header repairs on bridges (No.6313, No.6311, No.1552) which carry Route 138 over Interstate 295. Various locations along Route 138.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|----------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| WR 39833 | | HCP 1, 4 | \$20,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2020

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham

Asset(s): Route 125

Description: Beginning at Route 138 and extending southeast 0.66 of a mile to Route 24.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 024051.00 | Light Capital Paving | HCP 3 | \$27,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2020

Municipalities(s): Bowdoin, Bowdoinham

Asset(s): Route 125

Description: Beginning at the Lisbon town line and extending east 5.94 miles.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 024051.00 | Light Capital Paving | HCP 3 | \$242,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2021

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham, Richmond

Asset(s): White Road

Description: Beginning at Route 24 and extending north 4.59 miles.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 024503.00 | Light Capital Paving | HCP 4 | \$184,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2021/22

Municipalities(s): Bowdoinham

Asset(s): Route 24

Description: Brooklyn Bridge (No.5190) over Cathance River. Located 0.12 of a mile south of Spring Street.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 023168.00 | Bridge Painting Highway-Bridges | HCP 3 | \$500,000 |

Work Plan Year: 2021/22

Municipalities(s): Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Richmond

Asset(s): Route 201

Description: Beginning at Route 125 and extending north 8.23 miles to the Gardiner town line.

| ID | Scope of Work | Highway Corridor Priority | Estimated Funding |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 024343.00 | Safety Improvements Rural Highways | HCP 3 | \$75,000 |

Local Road Assistance – Fiscal Year – 2020

\$36,276

Maintenance Accomplishments – 2019

Activities managed on a larger scale, such as snow & ice control, and work done by contract are not listed. *The maintenance accomplishments may extend into neighboring towns, but are listed in the first town where the work was reported.*

| | |
|----------|---|
| 121.60 | Shoulder Miles of Mowing |
| 3.00 | Underwater Inspection(s) Performed |
| 95.00 | Linear Feet of Guardrail Installed |
| 314.00 | Linear Feet of Guardrail or Fence Maintained |
| 2.00 | Linear Feet of Bridge Rail Repaired or Replaced |
| 14.00 | Trees Removed |
| 698.00 | Ton(s) of Shim Applied |
| 25.00 | Linear Feet of Bridge Joints Repaired or Replaced |
| 2.00 | Bridge(s) Sealed |
| 1.00 | Sq Feet of Retaining Wall Repairs |
| 892.00 | Sq Feet of Pavement Legend Applied |
| 8.00 | Drainage Structures Thawed |
| 10.00 | Miles of Striping Applied |
| 3.00 | Emergency Event Responses |
| 1,105.00 | Linear Feet of Shoulder Rebuilt |
| 21.00 | Drainage Structures Installed or Replaced |
| 11.00 | Bridge(s) Washed |
| 16.00 | Ton(s) of Patch Applied |
| 4.00 | Major Sign(s) Installed or Maintained |
| 3,475.00 | Linear Feet of Backhoe Ditching |
| 20.10 | Shoulder Miles of Litter and Debris Removal |
| 6.70 | Shoulder Miles of Sweeping |
| 1,800.00 | Linear Feet of Brush Removed |



October 19, 2020

Dear Commissioner Van Note,

On behalf of the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, I am writing to request that the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) begin the "Public advisory process for future use of the rail corridor between Topsham and Gardiner," as described in Project ID 024759.00 in the MDOT Work Plan.

Thank you. Please feel welcome to call on the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors with any questions or for any assistance we may be able to provide throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Cluchey, Bowdoinham
Chair, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors

cc: Tom Reeves, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Gardiner
Richard Heath, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Gardiner
Darryl Sterling, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Richmond
O'Neill LaPlante, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Richmond
Victor Langelo, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Topsham
Matthew Nixon, Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors, Topsham
Nicole Briand, Interim Town Manager and Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors,
Bowdoinham
Derek Scrapchansky, Town Manager, Topsham
Adam Garland, Town Manager, Richmond
Christine Landes, City Manager, Gardiner

Merrymeeting Trail Accomplishments

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group supporting the Merrymeeting Trail Initiative starts meeting regularly to plan and support the trail. Regular meetings continue to be held through 2018. • A Memorandum of Agreement supporting planning a regional trail system that connects the Androscoggin River Pedestrian Bike Path in Topsham, the Village Center in Bowdoinham, the Village Center in Richmond, and the Kennebec River Rail trail in Gardiner is signed by representatives from the four towns along the trail: Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardiner. • A work plan for the Merrymeeting Trail Initiative is developed, and trail corridor planning begins. • Trail supporters meet with Maine DOT to discuss trail planning and funding. |
| 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$20,000 Regional Challenge Grant is received from the State Planning Office to support the development of a corridor study of the proposed route for the Merrymeeting Trail. • A \$20,000 planning grant is received from MaineDOT. • The four municipalities and Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail each contribute \$1,000 to support the trail. • The Merrymeeting Trail Initiative is granted assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, receiving staff assistance with project organization, planning a municipal organization, organizing public outreach, creating a maintenance plan, and raising funds. |
| 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$13,500 grant is received from the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund for additional trail planning and project development. • The Merrymeeting Trail logo is developed. • The Merrymeeting Trail website is developed. • The Merrymeeting Trail Initiative is granted assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. |
| 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feasibility study for the proposed Merrymeeting Trail is completed by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB). • A 1 mile section of Merrymeeting Trail in the Village of Richmond is awarded a Maine Department of Transportation Quality Community Program grant, pending funding from the state. • The Merrymeeting Trail Initiative is granted assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. |
| 2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Merrymeeting Trail Initiative is granted assistance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. |
| 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A planning study for the proposed Merrymeeting Trail is completed by Wright-Pierce. It develops a comprehensive plan for implementing the Merrymeeting Trail by identifying trail segments and estimating costs. • A \$43,430 grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation is received for the Capital to Coast Trail System, supporting Community Engagement and Trail Development. • The Capital to Coast Exploratory bike ride is held from Bath to Gardiner, exploring the on-road interim route of Merrymeeting Trail. |
| 2014 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Capital to Coast Trail, of which Merrymeeting Trail is one important piece, is declared a 'Trail of Statewide Significance,' joining Maine's Eastern Trail, Mountain Division Trail, and Downeast Sunrise Trail in this designation. • Maine DOT approves the interim on-road route of Merrymeeting Trail. • A trail brochure showing the proposed route of the trail and the interim on-road route, as well as a number of trail amenities, is developed. Design was completed by the Center for Community GIS. • A \$69,400 grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation is received for the Capital to Coast Trail System, supporting Community Connection and Trail Development. • The Capital to Coast Exploration bike ride from Gardiner to Bath is held, exploring the on-road interim route of Merrymeeting Trail. |
| 2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Interlocal Agreement forming a Board of Supervisors to oversee development, management, and |

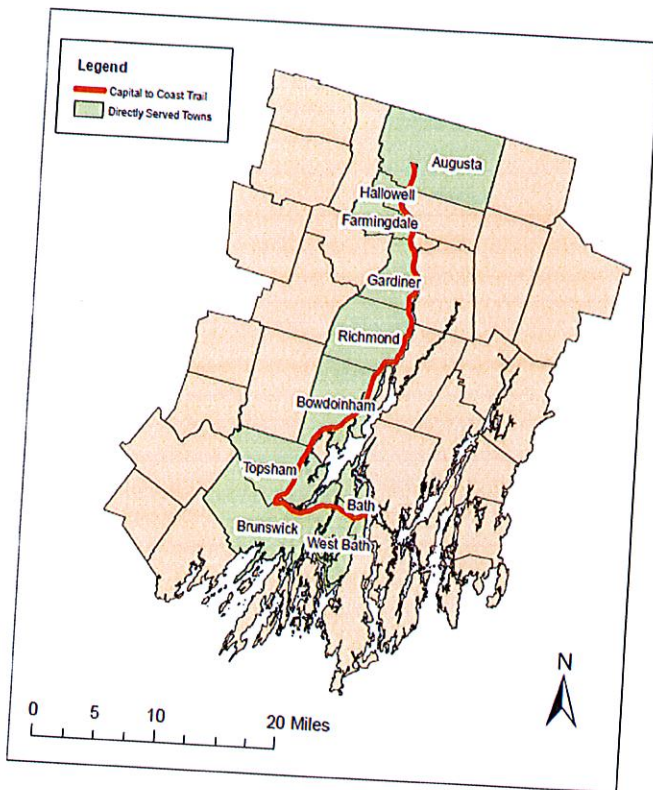
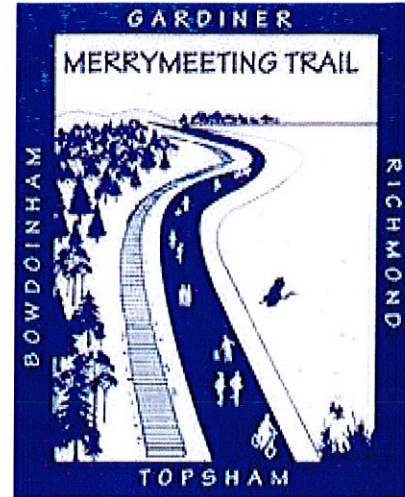
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|-------------|--|
| | <p>maintenance of the trail is approved by all four trail communities. It is approved by votes of the Bowdoinham Selectboard, the Richmond Selectboard, the Gardiner City Council, and by the town of Topsham at a town meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group of local citizens, nonprofits, and town staff who have been working to support the trail formalize into a supporting friends group for the trail – the Merrymeeting Trailblazers. This group is focused on trail planning, advocacy, and fundraising, providing support for the trail and the newly created Board of Supervisors. • On-road bike route signs for the interim trail route are put up in Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, and Gardiner. • Pre-engineering is completed for the 1 mile section of Merrymeeting Trail in the Village of Richmond. • Planning and construction of the 1 mile section of trail in Richmond has the required match and is under review for inclusion on the DOT work plan. • A \$20,000 grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation is received for the Capital to Coast Trail System, supporting Engaging Stakeholders Around An Active Recreation Corridor. • Capital to Coast bike ride from Bath to Gardiner is held, exploring the on-road interim route of Merrymeeting Trail and ending at Richmond Days events. |
| 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each trail community nominates two representatives to serve on the Board of Supervisors. • The Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors develops and approves bylaws for the board. • A Communications Report for the Capital to Coast Trail System is completed by Planning Decisions, focusing on communications that could help to support Merrymeeting Trail. The report includes Creating a Message, Communications Structure, Estimated Economic Impacts, and Notes on the reuse of rail tracks for trail. • Bowdoinham widens 2.2 miles of Pork Point Road, adding space for bike lanes along the road, to provide a route for bicyclists and pedestrians. • Topsham completes a 0.6 mile multi-use trail segment in an area that previously had only a busy, unsafe section of road for bikers and pedestrians. • Topsham constructs a 0.3 mile section of trail called the Town Landing Trail along their waterfront, providing public access to a new section of shoreline along the Androscoggin River. • The Explore Merrymeeting Bay Bike Rides are held, introducing bike riders to the Merrymeeting Trail project and traveling through Richmond, Bowdoinham, and Topsham during Bowdoinham’s Open Farm Day. • A \$20,000 grant from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation is received for the Capital to Coast Trail System, supporting Growing Friends and Trails. • Merrymeeting Trailblazers meet with staff from Maine DOT to discuss opportunities for trail progress. |
| 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Explore Merrymeeting Bay Bike Tour is held, introducing bike riders to the Merrymeeting Trail project and traveling through Richmond, Bowdoinham, and Topsham during Bowdoinham’s Open Farm Day. |
| 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LD 1141 (Resolve, directing the department of transportation to construct the Merrymeeting Trail from Topsham to Gardiner) is introduced |
| 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LD 1141 is referred to Committee on transportation • LD 1141 is carried over into 2020 session in order to give stakeholder groups an opportunity to raise funds • A meeting is arranged with DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note |
| 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An item is added to the MDOT Work Plan that includes \$25,000 for a public advisory process on the Merrymeeting Trail. |

Merrymeeting Trail Fact Sheet

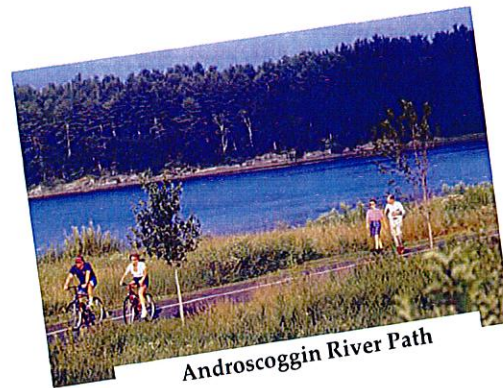
November 2020

What is the Merrymeeting Trail?

The Merrymeeting Trail is a proposed 25-mile walking and biking trail connecting Gardiner to Town of Topsham – and through adjacent trails, connecting Augusta to Brunswick and Bath. The Trail would be built on top of the existing railroad bed; if a feasible rail use came up in the future, the bed could be reclaimed for the rail use.



The Trail would link the very popular Kennebec River Rail Trail (Augusta-Hallowell-Farmingdale-Gardiner) through Richmond and Bowdoinham to Topsham. Ultimately, it will connect to the equally popular Androscoggin River Trail (Brunswick, West Bath, Bath). *This route has been designated a "trail of statewide significance" by the Maine Department of Transportation because of its unique qualities and assets.* In all, over 80,000 people live in the communities served by the proposed Trail.



What would be the benefits?

**70%
OF MAINE**

**RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE
IN OUTDOOR RECREATION
EACH YEAR**

Communities across Maine recognize that outdoor recreation supports health, contributes to a high quality of life and—perhaps most importantly—attracts and sustains employers and families. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, ensuring those communities thrive economically and socially.



1. *It will grow Maine's Outdoor Recreation industry.* A March 14, 2019 report on Maine Public Radio stated that “Rural Maine could be making \$5.6 billion in rural tourist dollars by 2030, if visitor experiences are improved. That’s according to a pair of studies conducted by global consulting firm FutureIQ. The studies found that a growing middle class in Asia, coupled with the popularity of nature-based travel and other factors, could significantly boost rural tourism over 12 years.” This trail is a leading example of the kind of investment the report is talking about.

2. *It will strengthen the downtowns and village centers of Augusta, Hallowell, Gardiner, Richmond, Bowdoinham, Topsham, Brunswick, and Bath* – by increasing foot and bicycle traffic from residents, commuters, and tourists.



3. *It will support better health in our communities.* Obesity rates among middle and high school students are high in Kennebec County. Exercise creates better health.
4. *It will showcase the Merrymeeting Bay.* Formed at the confluence of six rivers, Merrymeeting is the largest freshwater tidal bay in the northeast. It has a world-renowned natural habitat, and is a popular place for sailing, kayaking, swimming, walking, bird watching, fishing and duck hunting. Much of its shore lacks public access. The trail will provide a way for people to experience this hidden jewel.
5. *It will protect the rail corridor.* Unused rail infrastructure deteriorates over time. This section of rail has been largely unused for 30 years. Freezing and thaws, rain and wind, and vandalism, contribute to the erosion of railroad beds, the loosening of bolts, the rotting of ties, the rusting of steel. By covering the rails with stone dust (or removing them for replacement later as needed), by maintaining the bridges and trestles, the Trail will preserve the basic rail infrastructure.

What would be the cost?

Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. estimated the cost of a stone dust trail over the tracks to be \$7.7 million in 2011. The Merrymeeting Trail can be paid for through incorporation into the regular Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) two-year work plan, which would be covered in part by federal matching funds.

In the case of the 87-mile Downeast Sunrise Trail in Washington County, MDOT chose to sell the rails and ties, which reduced the net cost to zero. How to handle the rails and ties in this case would be a decision for MDOT's rail experts.

How will it affect potential future rail use in the corridor?

MDOT retains the right to reclaim the 87-mile Downeast Sunrise Trail at any time to resume railroad use. Similarly, MDOT allows the cities of Augusta and Hallowell to cover up the tracks and use the space for parking, with the right to reclaim the tracks for railroad use in the future. A similar arrangement would be put in place for the proposed Merrymeeting Trail.

Maine has owned this corridor for thirty years. For the first ten years, an occasional single freight car or excursion train used the tracks. For the last 20 years, there has been virtually no use. There is no short-term prospect for using the corridor for rail use in the coming decade.

The potential for future freight use is low. MDOT's Rail Plan (2014) and Integrated Freight Strategy (2017) identify six Maine railroad corridors as priorities for investment and expanded use; this corridor is not among them. The businesses which once supported the line, that sell high-volume low-cost goods, either no longer operate (Edwards Mill) or have moved away to the interstate (Pine State).

The potential for passenger rail is also low. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority has identified Rockland and Lewiston as their next locations for expansion. When Augusta's turn for analysis comes up, the challenge will be the length of the ride. Using the Brunswick-Portland AMTRAK speed as a bellwether, an Augusta –Portland ride through Brunswick would take over an hour and a half. That's 20+ minutes longer than the existing Concord bus service (price \$16), and 30+ minutes longer than a car. Passenger rail service remains an important strategy, but where it makes most sense for Augusta is probably be along the I-95 or I-295 median strip, where high-speed service could be possible.

Regardless of these judgments, the corridor will remain available for train service when and if the occasion arises. On the other side of the coin, leaving this valuable corridor unused for another several decades would be wasting an important economic asset for the Kennebec Valley.

The Merrymeeting Trailblazers

For the past ten years, a group of municipal and recreational interests have been meeting and planning this project. They have received funding and grants from the state and federal government, and from four area municipalities. The Trail has been endorsed by all the groups listed below.

Organizations and Groups Supporting the Merrymeeting Trail

- Access Health – A Local Community Health Coalition
- Bicycle Coalition of Maine
- Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust
- Cathance River Education Alliance
- East Coast Greenway Alliance
- Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail
- Gardiner Main Street
- City of Gardiner Conservation Committee
- Greater Topsham Trail Alliance
- Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
- Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
- Kennebec River Rail Trail Board of Supervisors (Augusta, Hallowell, Farmingdale, & Gardiner)
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
- Maine Downtown Center
- Merrymeeting Arts Center
- Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors (Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond, & Gardiner)
- Merrymeeting Trailblazers
- Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club
- Mid Coast Hospital
- Midcoast Economic Development District
- Midcoast Public Health Council
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance
- Residents & Staff of Gardiner, Richmond, Bowdoinham, and Topsham
- Topsham Conservation Commission

Organizations That Have Provided Grants or Other Financial Support for the Trail

- City of Gardiner
- Elmina B. Sewall Foundation
- Friends of Kennebec River Rail Trail
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Maine Municipal Planning Assistance Program
- Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund
- Topsham Development Incorporated
- Town of Bowdoinham
- Town of Richmond

For more information see:

<http://merrymeetingtrail.org/>