



Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: July 26, 2023

Notes Prepared By: Phil Goff, Project Manager

Place: Virtual Meeting

Date: 07/26/2023

Project No.: WIN: 24759.00 / VHB: 55647.00

Project Name: MaineDOT RUAC Supporting Study – Lower Road Rail Corridor

RUAC Meeting Attendees (*bold indicates attendance*):

MaineDOT Team	RUAC	Guests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nate Howard, (MaineDOT, PM) • Nate Moulton, (MaineDOT Dir. of Freight and Passenger Services) • Dakota Hewlett, MaineDOT Active Transportation Program Manager • Phil Goff (VHB) • Tim Bryant (VHB) • Mike McDonough (VHB) • Eric Halvorsen (RKG) • Larry Cranor (RKG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Mathew Eddy (Executive Director, Midcoast Council of Governments) • Doug Beck, ME Bureau of Parks and Lands • Nicole Briand, Town Manager, Bowdoinham • Tony Cameron, CEO, Maine Tourism Assoc. • Jeremy Cluchey, Chair of Merrymeeting Board of Supervisors (Bowdoinham) • Doug Ebert, Chair of Select Board, Town of Farmingdale • Tom Farrell, Director of Parks and Rec., Town of Brunswick • Gay Grant, Gardiner, chair of Trail Committee • Gary Lamb, Hallowell City Manager • Keith Luke, EcDev Director, City of Augusta • Matt Nixon, Select Board, Town of Topsham • Carolann Ouellette, Director, Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation • Bruce Sleeper, ME Rail Users Network and on board of MRTC • Larissa Loon, Richmond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • na

Agenda:

- > Summary of Public Comments (VHB)
- > Discussion of Draft Recommendation from the RUAC
- > Other business
- > Public Comment Period (15 min.)



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Summary of Public Comments

Phil Goff provided a high-level overview of the comments received and whether they favored interim trail, rail with trail, or restoration of rail service.

- › Matt E: Any reactions?
- › Bruce: I intend to vote RWT but the numbers are not surprising to me. The pro-rail community has not been as organized as trail groups. Remember, however, that this is a policy decision, not a popularity contest. Comments are important but we need to keep in mind the economic consequences and what are our options for transportation in the future.
- › Matt N: everyone should keep in mind that the comments received amounts to <1% of the population along the corridor. I represent a town of 10,000 (Topsham) and my guess is that roughly 60 are following along.
- › Jeremy: the intent is to get input from the community along the corridor and I've been impressed with the level of outreach and engagement. This is part of a broader process to get people involved statewide.

Council Discussion Re: Majority and Minority Council Recommendation

- › Matt E: we have a draft majority report but Bruce is not able to draft a minority report until next week.
- › Nate H: we could have one more Council meeting in late August if needed
- › Matt E: Gay will take us through the draft Majority report
- › Gay: What we tried to do with the Draft Majority report was to include description of both sides, and to walk people through the draft report, including trail surface. This is for the Commissioner but we anticipate that Legislators will read it too. I was hoping to get comments already but we can wait until more folks are able to review it. The memo is intended to provide a summary of the report for busy Legislators who can't read the full report.
- › Matt E: let's go around the table and get comments...
- › Matt N: I have a few text-related concerns: how is "rural" defined in this case as in some contexts the entire route would be considered rural.
 - Gay: I was thinking that our rec's would be broad and let the Comm. determine with the thought that the low population density is where snowmobile use would be allowed
 - Jeremy: maybe just take out the term "rural" entirely?
- › Matt N: use of the word "consider" can be tricky...we should add some guiderails that are less vague than some of the language that is used. Also, we talk about multi-use a lot but I'm not sure if motorized use would really be allowed. We should use the word "some" communities rather than "all" communities related to multi-use.
 - Jeremy: I don't see anything in the last paragraph that misrepresents Topsham's desires.



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- Matt E: let's make sure our Majority report is inclusive enough so multi-use is truly considered
- › Matt E: I think we should meet again in August to work through the details and review the minority report.
- › Bruce: the great trail views referenced in the Majority report are also the case for a future rail line too. Ditto for the reference to the economic benefits...they are similar for rail too, so it doesn't distinguish the two options much to reference that.
- › Jeremy: one procedural question re: the next meeting...we should ensure that for those who can't make it are able to register their votes.
- › Bruce: are we able to make a vote in a context that is not a public meeting.
- › Nate H: anyone who can't make the final meeting would need to have a representative to cast the formal vote.
- › Jeremy: perhaps we should have a vote today since we have a solid quorum? I worry that we would have fewer attendees at an August meeting.
- › Matt N: if there is a vote today, I would abstain since we don't have a final version of either Majority or Minority reports
- › Matt E: ideally, we would have a formal vote when seeing both reports at the same time.
- › Keith: I don't want to do a preliminary vote until everything formalized...I don't want to get a month of emails pushing me to change my vote at the final meeting in August.
- › Tony: I think everyone should have the opportunity to review both reports before we have a formal vote.
- › Matt E: well said Tony...we will convene on Wed Aug 23 to make the final vote. Anyone who can't make it should send a representative to cast a vote.
- › Matt N: some of the links on MaineDOT's site are broken.
- › Matt E: VHB will finalize the report in the next two weeks.
- › Bruce: can Nate H send me the final Scope of Work for VHB? (Nate: sure)
- › Bruce: I will try to have the minority report done in one week...two at the most.

Public Comments:

- › None

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 am