



Town of Bowdoinham

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Nicole Briand, Town Manager

Testimony of Nicole Briand, Town Manager of Town of Bowdoinham, Maine

In SUPPORT of LD 29

Resolve, to Require the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Council

March 4, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

On behalf of the Town of Bowdoinham, we ask for your support of LD 29 and allow the use of the long-dormant Lower Road rail corridor for the Merrymeeting Trail. The Town of Bowdoinham has consistently shown its support for the development of the Merrymeeting Trail:

- On February 11, 2025 - The Bowdoinham Select Board voted 5-0 in support of LD 29 and the implementation of the recommendations of the Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Council's majority report.
- On April 9, 2019, Bowdoinham's Select Board voted 5-0 to express its support for LD 1141 that instructed the MDOT to construct the Merrymeeting Trail from Topsham to Gardiner. While LD 1141 did not pass the legislature, LD 1133 did pass. LD 1133 created the rail corridor use advisory council process to review any non-rail use of rail corridor.
- On June 9, 2015, the Bowdoinham Select Board voted 3-0 to approve the Merrymeeting Trail Interlocal Agreement.
- At the Town Meeting on June 10, 2014, the Town of Bowdoinham voted to authorize the Select Board to enter into an interlocal agreement with the municipalities of Gardiner, Richmond, and Topsham to facilitate the planning, construction and maintenance of a regional multi-user trail known as the Merrymeeting Trail.
- Since 2009, the Bowdoinham Select Board, as well as other Town Committees have voted in support of several grant applications for the Merrymeeting Trail project.
- Furthermore, the Town of Bowdoinham, through Town Meeting approvals, has approved funding for the Merrymeeting Trail. The Merrymeeting Trail is an approved project cost listed in CMP/Riverfront Municipal Tax Increment Financing District and Development Program.

The Town of Bowdoinham strongly believes that the Merrymeeting Trail would be a benefit to the Town and have long-lasting, meaningful impacts on the future of the region. The Merrymeeting Trail would connect the Capital to the Coast, serving as an alternative transportation and recreation route that would create economic development opportunities and support community revitalization by bringing trail users into our village centers. The passage of this bill would mark a critical step forward in making the Merrymeeting Trail a reality, bringing economic, quality of life, health, and environmental benefits to the region.

On behalf of the Town of Bowdoinham, we hope you will support LD 29, allowing us the opportunity to move forward with the process to develop the Merrymeeting Trail.