

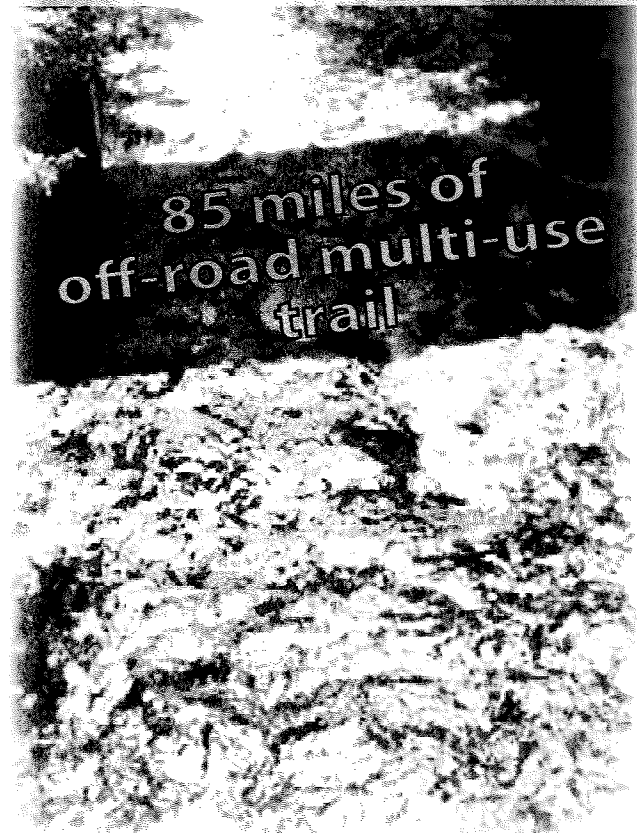
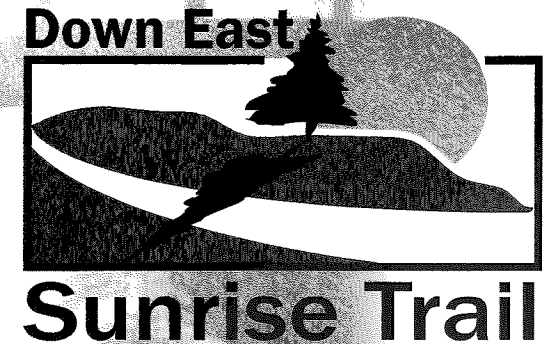
An 85 Mile, Multi-Use Trail
Connecting Communities
in Down East Maine

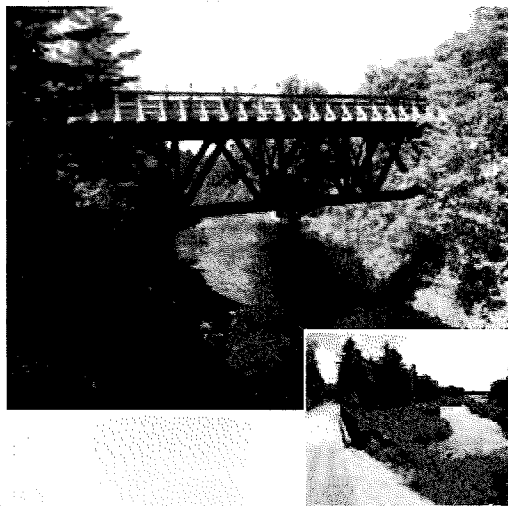
The Down East Sunrise Trail (DEST) is an interagency project of the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and the Maine Department of Conservation. The trail project has rehabilitated 85 miles of the Calais Branch rail corridor for possible future rail use while at the same time providing a wide, compact gravel-based trail for immediate use. The DEST is managed for the use of snowmobiles, ATV-ers, pedestrians, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, and equestrians.



The Sunrise Trail Coalition (STC) is the supporting nonprofit membership organization which acts as the management committee working with the Trail Manager, Charlie Corliss. For information about the STC, membership forms, and the latest activity updates and photos of the trail, visit the web site: www.sunrisetrail.org
For information about DEST visit: www.maine.gov/doc/parks
For information about on-road bicycle tours visit: www.exploremaine.org
For snowmobile information: www.mesnow.com
For ATV information: www.atvmaine.org

Support the DEST
Join the Sunrise Trail Coalition!
www.sunrisetrail.org





The scenic rail corridor runs along the entire Downeast coastal area, connects multiple scenic conservation areas, intersects Downeast salmon rivers, and is very near two state scenic byways.

The multi-use trail brings economic and recreational benefits to the Washington and Hancock County areas similar to other trails in Central and Northern Maine. Just some of the economic benefits include people visiting area attractions, staying at local hotels, and visiting local restaurants.

Directions to Parking Areas

Washington Junction Parking Lot, Hancock - From Ellsworth: take Main Street east from junction with US 1A, US 1, and Route 3. Go 2.5 miles. Turn left on Railroad Street. From the east travelling on US 1: Two miles west of Route 182 junction turn right on the road that directs you to the Ellsworth Hospital. Travel 2 miles. Turn right on Railroad Street.

Franklin/Route 182 Trailhead: Parking where the Down East Sunrise Trail intersects Route 182 in the center of Franklin.

Route 183/Tunk Lake Road Trailhead: Turn north off US 1 in Sullivan on the Tunk Lake Road/Route 183. Travel 4 miles. Park where the trail intersects Route 183.



Cherryfield Parking at Matthews Grocery or at North Street Cafe: North Street Cafe is at 109 North Street in Cherryfield. From US 1 take Route 193 north for about 1 mile. Turn left on North Street at Matthews Grocery (Parking available). Coming east on Route 182 turn left at North Street just after crossing the Trail.

Columbia Falls/Tibbets Road: Turn north from US 1 on the Tibbets Road. Park where the Trail crosses Tibbets Road less than a block from US 1.

Machias (US 1): Parking at green boxcar and Station 98, just west of the causeway (dike). Also, parking is allowed on the causeway (no trailers).

East Machias (US 1): Turn east off US 1 on to Willow Street. Large parking lot to the left behind Archibold's One-Stop Gas Station, next to Downeast Salmon Federation (DSF) Aquatic Research Center.

East Machias (Route 191): Seven miles north of intersection of US 1 and Route 191 in a gravel lot on the west side of Route 191 where the Trail intersects roadway.

Dennysville (Route 86): On Route 86, 1 mile west of the intersection of US 1 and Route 86 in Dennysville, turn north on Milwaukee Road. Go 100 feet to gravel parking lot on right where Trail intersects roadway.

Ayers Junction (Route 214): On Route 214, 4 miles northwest of intersection of US 1 and Route 214 in Pembroke. The gravel parking lot is on the left at intersection of the tracks and the roadway.

LEGEND

- Parking area
- Historic Site
- Unique Natural Area
- NP- National Park
- NWR- National Wildlife Refuge
- MASC- Audubon Society of Maine
- WMA- Wildlife Management Area
- TNC- The Nature Conservancy
- SP- State Park
- PRL- Public Reserve Land
- MCHT- Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Designated Scenic Byway
(State, All American or National)

Ayers Junction to Calais
Rail system stays in place

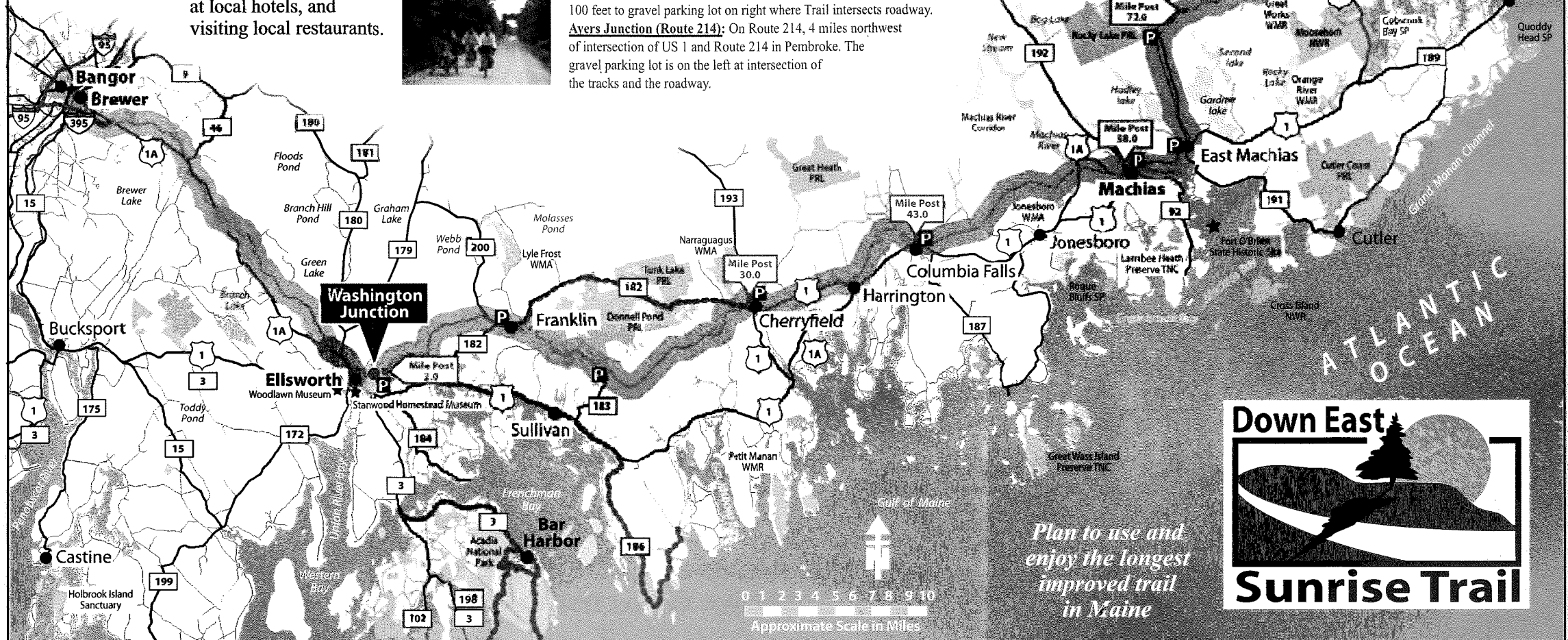
Down East Sunrise Trail
Washington Jct. to Ayers Junction

Ellsworth Jct. to Washington Jct.
Proposed Rail with Trail

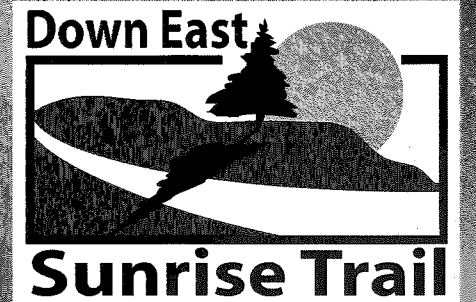
Planned Green Lake to Ellsworth
Excursion Rail

Ellsworth to Ellsworth Falls
Excursion Rail in Operation

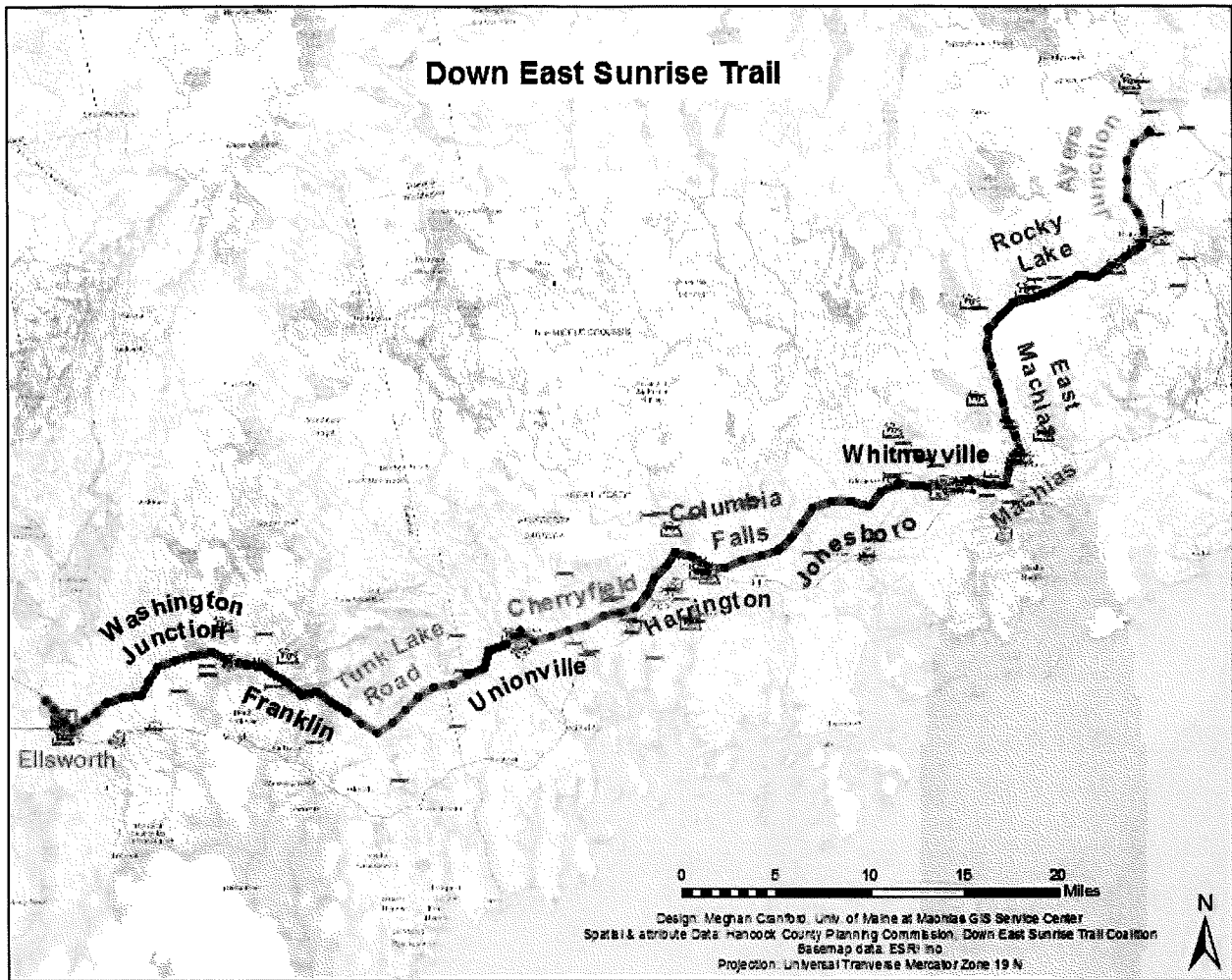
Brewer to Green Lake
Rail system stays in place



Plan to use and
enjoy the longest
improved trail
in Maine



Down East Sunrise Trail



132nd Legislature
**Senate of
Maine**
Senate District 6

Senator Marianne Moore
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LD 956 - Resolve, To Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Advisory Council Regarding the Calais Branch Rail Line

Good morning, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. As you know, my name is Marianne Moore. I proudly represent Senate District 6 which includes all of Washington County and 16 Communities in Eastern Hancock County as well.

I'm here to introduce LD 956 - *Resolve, To Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Advisory Council Regarding the Calais Branch Rail Line.*

When I was elected seven years ago, I vowed to continue the efforts by my predecessors to finish the Down East Sunrise Trail thus the submittal of multiple bills through the years. Ultimately, I supported the corridor council process in hopes of making this dream come true.



Permit me to give you a little background/history about the Calais Branch Railroad:

The Calais Branch Railroad corridor is 127 miles long and connects Brewer to Calais in Downeast Maine. The Railroad began in 1898. For decades trains loaded with freight and visitors rumbled to Calais and Eastport. They made the return journey loaded with fish and timber. One of the most famous users of the railway line was former President Franklin Roosevelt. The Roosevelts would use the train to carry them to Eastport where they would catch a boat to visit the family's summer retreat on Campobello Island. In 1921, the railroad was used to shuttle President Roosevelt back to New York City when he was stricken with polio. Fast forward to 1984, the corridor fell silent as the train service that had lasted more than 80 years ceased. It was acquired by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) in 1987 from Maine Central Railroad for the purposes of rail preservation

The business potential to support rail freight service has been analyzed and determined to be insufficient at this time, with no improvement projected for the foreseeable future. Unless major changes occur in national and international freight distribution patterns, the significant capital necessary to reactivate the Calais Branch Railroad for freight transportation is unlikely to yield a positive return on those investments. The condition of the existing tracks, ties and rail-bed has deteriorated significantly.

On July 15, 2005, Governor Baldacci charged the Maine DOT with developing a Trail Management and Maintenance Plan for an interim multi-use trail on the Calais Branch Rail Corridor between Ellsworth and Ayers Junction. To assist the Department in developing the plan, Maine DOT formed the Calais Branch Trail Management Committee whose membership included:

- Maine Department of Conservation (MDOC),
- law enforcement representatives,
- the National Park Service,
- the municipalities in Hancock and Washington counties,
- regional planning and economic development agencies, and
- local citizen trail groups.

The Plan was the result of a cooperative effort between the Maine DOT, Maine DOC, the advisory group and local interests advocating for the creation of a multi-use trail within the corridor, while protecting the corridor and its important infrastructure to meet future rail needs.

The Plan recommended the Bureau of Parks and Lands of Maine DOC be the long-term manager of this multi-use trail, due to its extensive experience in constructing and managing other multi-use trails throughout Maine. Maine DOT and the Bureau entered into an agreement to oversee the corridor rehabilitation, subsequent trail construction, and long-term management and maintenance of the trail, while preserving the conditions along the corridor so that railroad use could be revived if market conditions changed.

The Sunrise Trail Coalition, organized more than a decade earlier, was enlisted to provide public support for the trail manager and to represent the various interests of the multiple groups that use the trail.

Construction entailed removal of the substandard rails, repair of washouts, placement of decking over bridges, rehabilitation of the corridor, and construction of a 12-foot wide, compact gravel base.

Total cost was estimated to be \$3.9 million, financed by the sale of the rails, ties and other hardware.

Construction began in the Spring of 2008 along the easterly 49 miles of the trail from Machias to Ayers Junction. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held January 31, 2009, at Ayers Junction for the opening of these 49 miles to winter activities. Construction began in the spring of 2009 for the remaining 36 miles from Machias to Washington Junction. It was completed in the fall of 2010. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at Washington Junction in September 2010.

The final 2.2-mile segment from Washington Junction to High Street Trail head in Ellsworth was completed in the Fall 2016 and officially opened on December 2 at a ribbon-cutting ceremony hosted by the Sunrise Trail Coalition and the City of Ellsworth.

In reviewing the very thorough Plan, reference is made to an additional 12-mile section, Ayers Junction to Calais, to complete the multi-purpose trail along the Calais Branch Corridor thus the purpose of my initial bill.

The Plan actually states: "Retain in its present state to support future freight rail access from Eastport through Ayers Junction to Calais connecting to the New Brunswick Southern Railroad. This section also goes through the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, which currently does not allow motorized uses, except for snowmobiles. The Management Plan Committee recommends that an effort be made to provide a trail connection, including on and off road, from Ayers Junction to Calais." We feel it's time to start the planning process!

In community discussions, concerns were shared regarding any removal of the freight rail access to Eastport. Should the plan recommend its removal, the Plan included a Rail Corridor Preservation Strategy: "Maine DOT's priority is to preserve and protect the corridor for future rail use. If conditions develop that enables the return of rail, then the corridor can be readily upgraded to accept new rail. At that time, every effort will be made to relocate the trail, and to minimize the time the trail is not available for use."

The Plan goes on to say: "The question has come up and has been extensively evaluated concerning whether or not to remove the rail and ties from the rail corridor or cover over them in anticipation of saving costs at the time of reintroduction of rail. The MDOT's Rail Division, as well as the Multimodal Project Development program (which handles freight, passenger rail, and trails) has been very involved in the development of this plan. They have determined that removing the rail and ties will not affect the future rail viability of the corridor. In fact, the increased attention that the corridor will receive as a result of the institution of this proposed management plan will help preserve the integrity of the rail bed by having increased annual maintenance, repairs to washouts, grading that sheds water off the rail-bed to reduce erosion, and numerous other maintenance activities. It is their observation that:

Removing the existing rail and ties will make it more efficient to restore rail service in the future.

1. The existing rail is substandard and will need to be replaced.
2. The existing ties are deteriorated and will further deteriorate as time goes by.
3. Ballast that meets modern standards will have to be placed on the rail-bed when rail is restored.
4. Removing the existing ties and rail will make it more efficient in the future to install new ballast, ties and rail.”

Completing the trail will also promote economic development in much needed areas! In January 2017, the Hancock County Planning Commission released their Down East Sunrise Trail Impact Assessment. This study was implemented with generous support from the Sunrise Trail Coalition, Davis Conservation Foundation, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands and Maine Department of Transportation.

The report combined several streams of data to assess the economic impacts of the Sunrise Trail between 2013 and 2015. Direct, indirect and induced economic impacts have been significant and positive.

- A trail-count camera identified more than 6,000 trips by individuals as users crossed the checkpoint at the western gateway in Washington Junction in the town of Hancock during 9 months in 2014 and 2015.
- Camera counts provide a very detailed map of time of travel, mode, date, day of week, season, weather conditions, persons per vehicle and more.
- Two-hundred ten respondents to a user survey at trail intercepts and online indicated spending an average of \$31.04 per day on food, \$84.49 per day on lodging as well as major purchases of equipment such as snowmobiles, ATVs and bicycles.
- Total direct economic impacts of the trail are estimated to be approximately \$236,000 over the ten month study period (excluding November and December). Indirect and induced impacts may match the direct benefits, doubling the overall impact.
- Overall satisfaction with the Down East Sunrise Trail is high, but bicyclists were more likely to be critical of trail surface conditions.
- Users provided a wealth of comments about their experiences and attitudes about the trail.

Their study concluded: “The Down East Sunrise Trail has produced measurable and significant economic benefits for Downeast Maine ranging from approximately \$236,000 to \$1,000,000 for a 10-month period in 2014-2015. Even at the low end of this range, the measured benefits appear noteworthy. In addition to these economic benefits, there have been a variety of important recreation, health, quality of life and community benefits. Rider satisfaction is high but will only be sustained if there is ongoing attention to trail maintenance, security and

cleanliness. Community satisfaction, particularly the business community, will require additional systematic research.”

I will also add, completion of the Down East Sunrise Trail will create the single longest stretch of off-road trail along the East Coast Greenway in Maine. (The East Coast Greenway is envisioned as an off-road urban trail connecting Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida.)

You may recall in the 130th Legislature, LD1133 was signed into law amending the Transportation Laws to create Rail Corridor Use Advisory Councils to “review and make recommendations on the likelihood, benefits and costs of potential uses of the rail corridor, including, but not limited to rail use, trail use or bikeways.” (23 MRSA §75. Rail corridor use advisory councils)

Fast forward to early summer 2022 when the request was filed by the City of Calais to form the RUAC for the Calais Branch from Ayers Junction in Pembroke to the end of the state-owned line near Route 1 in Calais. Letters of support from the towns of Dennysville, Pembroke, Charlotte, and Baring Plantation were included in the packet. The Calais Branch Rail Corridor Study was actually completed and published in October 2024. I’ve attached a copy of the Council’s Summary and Recommendations. A complete copy of the Feasibility Study can be found at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8e7d6b87226f43f8a37dc1f5fd18247a>

As you can see on page 3, 10 of the voting members approved “Recommendation 1: Interim Trail until Rail: “The Rail Use Advisory Council recommends **Interim Trail until Rail** (multi-use trail using the existing rail bed). This alternative includes removal of the existing tracks and ties and developing a multi-use trail on the former track bed. This non-rail use recommendation by the Council for the rail corridor is considered interim in nature, because all such rail corridors must be preserved for future rail use as provided in the State Rail Preservation Act.”

I know the planning of this final leg of the trail has taken a lot of time and energy. I appreciate the Rail Use Advisory Council’s hard work in the production of the Study. I know it will not be completed overnight, but I feel it’s time to start the building process. Our vision would be for all the stakeholders to come together to make it happen and complete the Down East Sunrise Trail!

I will add the Department will be testifying neither for nor against the bill due to the fact the RUAC’s Report was received after the Commissioner had to submit his Omnibus Bill addressing the other RUAC Recommendations. I submitted this bill on their advice to move the work of the RUAC forward on a timely basis!

Thank you! I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this project that is near and dear to my heart! ☺

Calais Branch Rail Use Advisory Council

Summary and Recommendations

Executive Summary

After an 8-month review of potential rail and non-rail uses for the state-owned Calais Branch in the Towns of Calais, Baring Plantation, Charlotte and Pembroke, 10 of 11 members of the Calais Branch Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) voted to recommend the conversion of 12.26 miles of existing railroad track to an interim multiuse trail. Additionally, 0 members of the RUAC voted to recommend the Trail with Rail option and no members voted for the Rail Use-only option. All the recommendations are included in this report. One member of the Council abstained due to a potential conflict of interest.

Background

The Calais Branch RUAC was officially formed in March of 2024 by MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note upon petition from the Towns of Calais, Baring Plantation, Charlotte and Pembroke. The purpose of the RUAC process, established in 23 MRSA Section 7107 of the State Railroad Preservation Act, is to facilitate discussion, gather information, and provide advice to the commissioner regarding the future use of a rail corridor identified in the petition. These recommendations include the benefits and costs of potential uses of the rail corridor, including rail and trail use, with the understanding that any non-rail use of the corridor is considered interim in nature.

The 11-member RUAC was composed of the following representatives:

Joe Higgins, Supervisor Off Road Recreational Vehicle Program, DACF, Bureau of Parks & Lands	Peter Knowles, Charlotte
Jeff McCabe, Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation	Mark Hornbrook, Baring Plantation
Tony Cameron, CEO of Maine Tourism Association	Alvion Kimball, Sunrise Trail Coalition
Mark Carr, Calais	Nate Moulton, MaineDOT
Colin Brown, Pembroke	John Magera, Manager, Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge
Tanya Rucosky, Sunrise County Economic Council	

Location

The study area consists of approximately 12.26 miles of the State-owned, former Maine Central Railroad corridor known as the Calais Branch Railroad (Figure 1) from the Route 214 intersection at Ayers Junction (MP 254.29) in Pembroke to Route 1 in Calais (MP 266.55).

Rail Use Advisory Council Process

The RUAC met 8 times from March 2024 to November 2024. The Council was Chaired by Mark Carr representing the City of Calais. MaineDOT staff provided technical support and administration. The civil and transportation engineering firm, VHB, provided engineering services and prepared the feasibility study report.

The Council reviewed the rail corridor for potential rail and non-rail uses. At these meetings, VHB presented the feasibility study for future rail, rail with trail, interim trail use options and an assessment of economic benefits. The Council also heard presentations on various rail and trail related topics from guest speakers, Council members and MaineDOT staff.

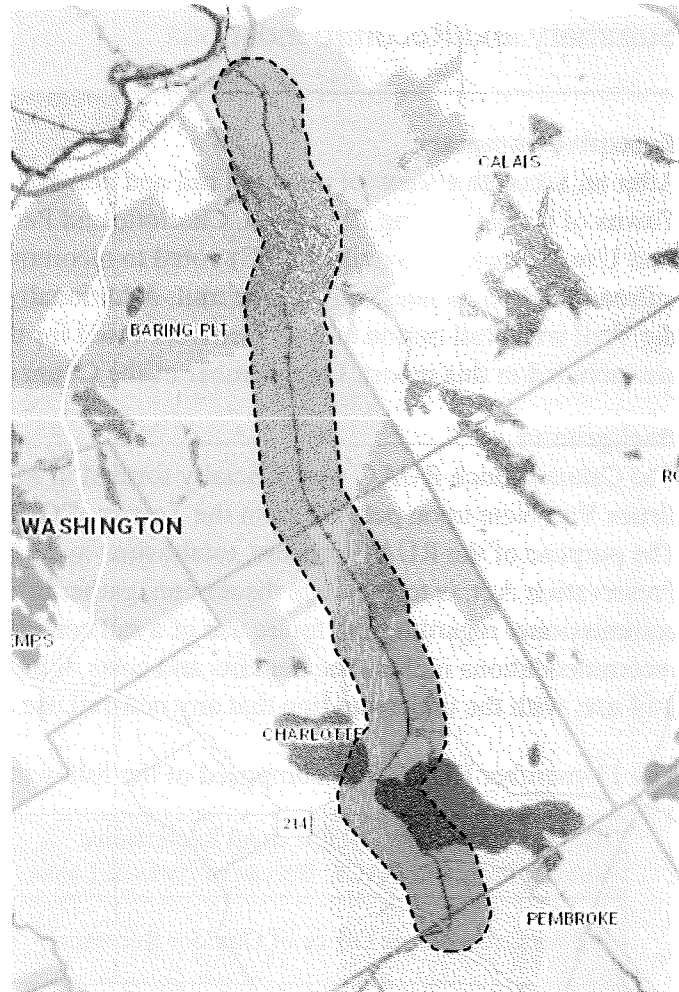
Over the course of 8 months, the Council considered three primary uses of the railroad corridor:

- 1. Rail Use.** This alternative includes the restoration of rail service and continuation of MaineDOT's current patrol and maintenance activities along the existing track corridor to ensure the existing rails remains intact and viable for possible reestablishment of rail service in the future as required by the State Rail Preservation Act.
- 2. Interim Trail** (multi-use trail using the existing rail bed). This alternative includes removal of the existing tracks and ties and developing a multi-use trail on the former track bed.

The conversion of the state-owned railroad to a trail is considered an interim non-rail use under the Rail Preservation Act requiring legislative approval.
- 3. Rail with Trail** (multi-use trail adjacent to the existing rail bed). This alternative maintains the existing tracks and ties in current condition and establishes an adjacent and parallel multi-use trail with either a gravel/stone dust or paved surface.

Public engagement was an important part of the RUAC process. Comments were solicited through a variety of channels, including eight virtual RUAC meetings, two public meetings (both virtual and in-person) and MaineDOT's website comment portal.

Figure 1. Calais Branch Corridor Study Area



The council received comments from 38 individuals between March to October 2024. Approximately 84% of the public comments indicated support for a trail. The interim trail option was supported by 30 of the 38 commentors. A detailed assessment of the public comments can be found in Chapter 6 of Calais Branch Rail Corridor Study.

Summary of Calais Branch Corridor Study: Cost Estimates

Potential uses for the corridor and their associated cost estimates were developed based on FRA class 1 track standards and trail surface (paved or gravel/stone dust). The costs range from \$13.9 million for Interim Trail (2A) with a stone dust surface to \$72.7 million for the paved Rail with Trail (3B) option.

A conceptual cost estimate summary of each option for use of the corridor is shown below.

Alternative	Segment	Cost Estimate
0: Maintain/Preserve Existing Corridor		
MaineDOT Patrol & Repairs	MP 254.29 to 266.55	<i>No additional cost beyond current maintenance</i>
1: Restore Rail Service on Existing Corridor		
Freight Rail Service (Class 1)	MP 254.29 to 266.55	\$51,500,000
Annual Maintenance Costs: \$976,000		
2: Interim Trail		
2A: Gravel/Stone Dust Trail	MP 254.29 to 266.55	\$13,900,000
Annual Maintenance Costs: \$45,000 - \$70,000		
2B: Paved Trail	MP 254.29 to 266.55	\$18,100,000
Annual Maintenance Costs: \$39,000 - \$64,000		
3: Rail with Trail (RWT)		
3A: Gravel/Stone Dust Trail	MP 254.29 to 266.55	\$70,600,000
Annual Maintenance Costs: \$45,000 - \$70,000		
3B: Paved Trail	MP 254.29 to 266.55	\$72,700,000
Annual Maintenance Costs: \$39,000 - \$64,000		

Council Recommendations to the MaineDOT Commissioner

Recommendation 1: Interim Trail until Rail (10 members)

The Rail Use Advisory Council recommends ***Interim Trail until Rail*** (multi-use trail using the existing rail bed). This alternative includes removal of the existing tracks and ties and developing a multi-use trail on the former track bed. The recommendation was made by ten (10) out of the eleven (11) Council members.

This non-rail use recommendation by the Council for the rail corridor is considered interim in nature, because all such rail corridors must be preserved for future rail use as provided in the State Rail Preservation Act.

Recommendation 2: Rail with Trail (0 members)

The recommendation **Rail with Trail** (multi-use trail adjacent to the existing rail bed) was supported by zero (0) of the eleven (11) Council members. This alternative maintains the existing tracks and ties in

current condition and establishes an adjacent and parallel multi-use trail with either a gravel/stone dust or paved surface

Recommendation 3: Rail Use (0 members)

The recommendation **Rail Use** was supported by zero (0) of nine (11) Council members. This alternative provides for possible restoration of rail service in the future with potential rehabilitation of the existing railroad infrastructure to support reestablishment of rail operations.

Finally, one (1) member of the Council abstained from voting altogether.