



Town of North Yarmouth, Maine

RESOLUTION

Request to MDOT for the Creation of a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Council for the Casco Bay Trail

Whereas the Casco Bay Trail network includes in its vision a 26-mile, disused rail corridor (hereinafter “Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor”) from Portland to Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, North Yarmouth, Pownal, New Gloucester, and Auburn, currently known as the St Lawrence and Atlantic rail corridor, that was acquired by the State of Maine in 2007 and 2010;

Whereas the Casco Bay Trail Alliance, formed in 2019, created a vision, and is leading the effort, to convert the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor to a multi-purpose “trail-until-rail” to be included in an off-road multi-use trail network connecting Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Brunswick, Maine;

Whereas the Casco Bay Trail network is part of a broader Maine Trail Plan issued by the Maine Trails Coalition in 2020, which calls for the construction of multiple specific rail-trail projects over the next decade, each of which would connect with existing multi-use trail infrastructure;

Whereas long-distance multi-use trails are a key recommendation of a 2010 report “Improving Maine’s Quality of Place Through Integrated Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections” by the Maine Dept. of Transportation, State Planning Office, Dept. of Conservation, and Center for Disease Control and Prevention;

Whereas the Governor has recently signed into law LD 1133, allowing for the creation of Rail Corridor Advisory Councils to “facilitate discussion, gather information and provide advice to the commissioner regarding future use” of rail corridors owned by the State;

Whereas a freight operator, Genesee and Wyoming, holds an operator easement, but is not currently operating freight service on the rail line;

Whereas the freight operator is subject to a contract with the Maine Department of Transportation (“the 2018 Amended Discontinuance Agreement”), stating that, unless freight rail service is resumed by November 1, 2021, the operator “shall . . . seek authority from the [Surface Transportation Board] to abandon the Railroad Line. Maine DOT shall not object to the proposed abandonment;”

Whereas it is recognized that some part of the rail corridor is potentially also suitable for future passenger rail service, but that a 2019 study commissioned by the Maine Department of Transportation (“Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan”) recommended that any future passenger rail between Portland and Lewiston-Auburn should avoid the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA corridor south of Yarmouth;

Whereas the 2018 Town of North Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan reports survey findings that 96 percent of respondents ranked trail networks as very important or somewhat important for the Town to preserve and protect;

Whereas over 90 percent of respondents to the Comprehensive Plan survey ranked scenic views, Royal River Corridor/greenway, public access to open space, and Royal River access as very important or somewhat important;

Whereas there is an alternative corridor that could also be used to extend passenger train service between Portland and Lewiston-Auburn that is still actively used by trains, including Amtrak, thereby allowing both public purposes, trains and trails;

Whereas it could be a benefit for the Town of North Yarmouth to express its interest in the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor to MaineDOT

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipal Officers of North Yarmouth hereby petitions the Department of Transportation to:

1. Create a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Council to consider future use of the Casco Bay SLA Corridor as a multi-use trail
2. Enforce the 2018 Amended Discontinuance Agreement, or, in the alternative, provide a notice-and-comment procedure to consider public comment before amending or extending that agreement.

Approved: September 7, 2021

Brian Sites, Chairperson

James Moulton, Vice Chairperson

Austin Harrell

David Reed

Paul Hodgetts

Certification

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify:

That I am the duly appointed Town Clerk of the Town of North Yarmouth and acting; and

That the above-mentioned constitutes a Resolution of the Select Board of said Town, as duly adopted at a meeting of the Select Board thereof, held on the 7th day of September 2021.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed by name and affixed the seal of said Town of North Yarmouth, this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Debbie Allen Grover, Town Clerk
Town of North Yarmouth