

MAINE RAIL-TRAIL PLAN 2020-2030



A Vision for Regional Train and Trail Connectivity



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Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030

Vision

An active transportation network that preserves an inter-urban train corridor, while creating healthy and connected communities throughout the state of Maine through a biking, walking and running rail-trail system.

Rail-Trail Network

The Maine Rail-Trail Plan calls for the construction of thirteen specific rail-trail projects over the next decade, and at least five prospective projects for development over the following decade. Each of these projects connects with, extends, and regionalizes an existing multi-use trail infrastructure. Collectively, these eighteen projects would add roughly 250 miles of inter-connected off-road trails, transforming the Maine communities they serve.

Train Service

The Maine Rail-Trail Plan calls for the continuing preservation and maintenance of a separate and active rail corridor that can be used to extend future Amtrak, commuter train, and/or freight service from Boston through Maine's largest population centers in Biddeford-Saco, Portland, Brunswick, Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor; and with potential continuing service to Montreal and the VIA Rail Canada network.

Release 1

This is the first release of this document and necessarily has omissions that should be incorporated in the plan as its vision takes shape. It is a “living” document that we plan to refine over time in consultation with local communities, regional authorities, government agencies, and the many interest groups concerned with rails and trails throughout Maine.

Background and Motivations

The vision of the Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030 coincides with the profound societal changes we face in Maine and around the world: one being climate change, the other being unpredictable global health risks and epidemics. With the elevated importance of emission-free transportation alternatives, socially distanced outdoor recreation, and public health more generally, the need for trails, including long-distance interconnected regional trails, has heightened urgency. The need is reflected in the multi-fold increase in documented trail use in 2020, since the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic. Trail use satisfies a basic human need for physical and mental health and connection to the outdoors and key destinations like workplaces and basic services

The prospective economic impact of trail development in Maine is also profound and leveraged by Maine's well-established global reputation for outdoor recreation. The creation and marketing of a world-class, statewide, inter-connected, trail network, seamlessly connecting our cities, towns and communities, would be game-changing for Maine's economic future. Moreover, trails serve every corner and every region of our state, rural and urban, wilderness and settled, tourist destinations, commuting paths to employment hubs, and more.

The Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030 was developed by the [Maine Trails Coalition](#) (MTC), which draws together multiple Maine interest groups and citizens in a coordinated statewide effort to expand, connect, and maintain Maine's network of off-road trails. MTC's interests and participants span conservation, outdoor recreation, transportation, economic development, community enrichment, ecotourism, public health and fitness, climate and the environment, among others. A particular focus of MTC's work is on regional trail connectivity.

The [Maine Trails Coalition](#) established a rail-trail working group, because the repurposing of unused rail corridors as trails, or the addition of trails alongside rail corridors, are critical building-blocks to creating comprehensive cross-community connectivity.

Key Observations

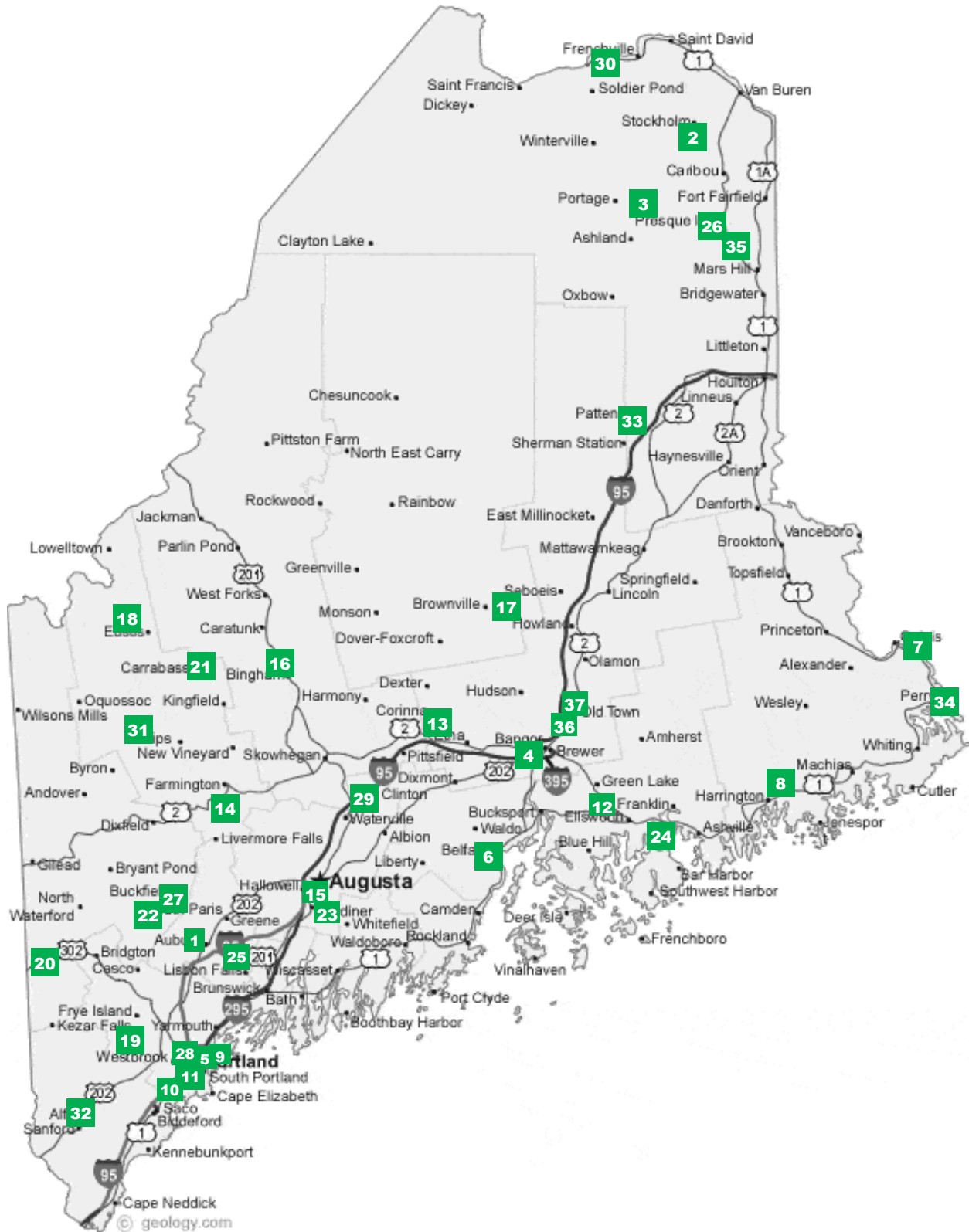
1. There are many more existing rail-trails in Maine than we realize.

Relying largely on published information from [Maine Trail Finder](#) and the [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#), we have identified 37 existing rail trails, totaling some 400 miles of off-road pathways that were at one time used by trains. Thus, the precedent for evaluating an unused rail corridor and prioritizing its modern-day use for a purpose other than trains is well-established. These existing rail-trails are listed in table 1, and their locations are illustrated in Map 1.

Table 1
Existing Maine Rail-Trails

1. [Auburn Riverwalk](#) (1.6 miles)
2. [Aroostook Valley Trail](#) (28.0 miles)
3. [Bangor and Aroostook Trail](#) (62.3 miles)
4. [Bangor Waterfront Trail](#) (1.0 mile)
5. [Bayside Trail](#) (1.0 mile)
6. [Belfast Rail Trail](#) (2.2 miles)
7. [Calais Waterfront Walkway](#) (1.5 miles)
8. [Down East Sunrise Trail](#) (87 miles)
9. [Eastern Promenade Trail](#) (2.1 miles)
10. [Eastern Trail](#) (22 miles)
11. [Eastern Trail/South Portland Greenbelt](#) (5.6 miles)
12. [Ellsworth Rail Trail](#) (1.3 miles)
13. [Four Seasons Adventure Trail](#) (29.8 miles)
14. [Farmington Whistle Stop Trail](#) (14.0 miles)
15. [Kennebec River Rail Trail](#) (6.5 miles)
16. [Kennebec Valley Trail](#), Bingham to Madison (14.5 miles)
17. [Lagrange-Medford Trail](#) (11.4 miles)
18. Longfellow Mountains Heritage Trail
19. [Mountain Division Trail](#), Windham to Gorham (5.7 miles)
20. [Mountain Division Trail](#), Fryeburg to NH (4.0 miles)
21. [Narrow Gauge Pathway](#), Carrabassett Valley (6.6 miles)
22. [Norway Branch Rail Trail](#) (0.6 mile)
23. [Old Narrow Gauge Volunteer Trail](#), Randolph (1.3 mile)
24. [Old Pond Railway Trail](#), Hancock (2.9 miles)
25. [Papermill Trail](#) (2.1 miles)
26. [Presque Isle Bicycle and Pedestrian Walkway](#) (2.0 miles)
27. [Riverside Trail](#), (2.0 miles)
28. [Riverton Rail Trail](#) (1.5 miles)
29. [Rotary Centennial Trail](#) (1.5 miles)
30. [Saint John Valley Heritage Trail](#) (17.0 miles)
31. Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad Trails
32. [Sanford-Springvale Rail Trail](#) (5.9 miles)
33. [Sherman to Patten Trail](#) (4.5 miles)
34. [Sipayik Trail](#), Perry (1.8 miles)
35. [Southern Bangor and Aroostook Trail](#) (38.8 miles)
36. [Stillwater River Trail](#), Orono (2.0 miles)
37. [University of Maine Bicycle Path](#), Orono (3.1 miles)

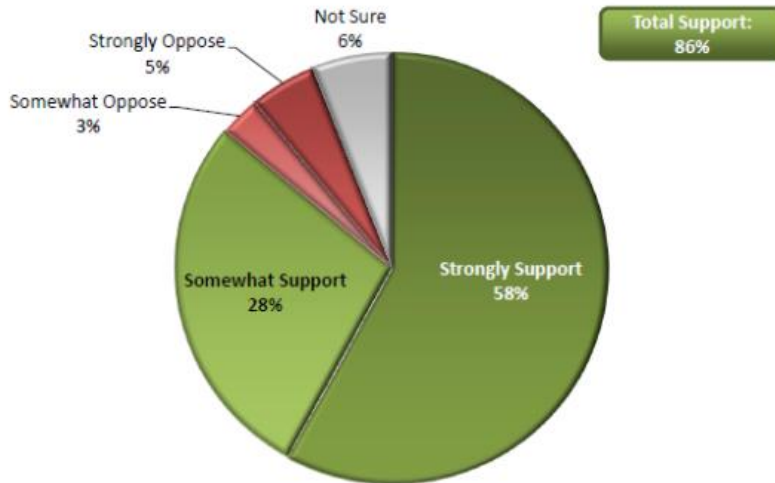
Map 1 Existing Maine Rail-Trails



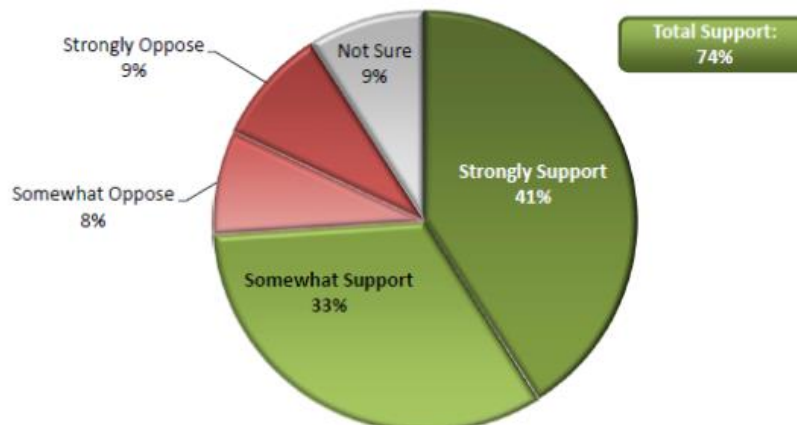
2. Public support for rail-trail projects is overwhelmingly positive.

In October of 2019, Critical Insights, a longstanding professional survey group in Portland, Maine, conducted its semi-annual Critical Insights of Maine survey of Maine registered voters. The survey sampled 600 randomly selected respondents and has a sampling error of +/- 3.9% at a 95% confidence level. Asked, “how would you feel about creating new recreation trails on the unused railroad tracks in Maine, if the trails could be converted back for railroad use whenever needed?” 86% of respondents said they supported converting unused railroad corridors to recreational trails. This high level of support was consistent across north (88%), south (85%), central (84%), and coastal (86%) regions; and among Democrats (87%), Republicans (83%), and Independents (88%). Asked, “would you support or oppose a state bond issue to build and expand outdoor recreation trails in Maine?” 74% of respondents said they supported a state bond issue to realize this vision.

Support for Converting Unused Railroad Tracks to Recreation Trails



Support for State Bond Issue to Build/Expand Recreation Trails



3. The most important inter-urban corridors do not require a choice between trains and trails. There are alternate routes that allow both.

A regional network of rail trails would not interfere with the existing Amtrak line from Boston to Brunswick, or an existing track split at Royal Junction in Yarmouth that extends to Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, Bangor, and Montreal. None of the proposed or prospective future rail-trail projects compromise this vision for expanded train service to Maine's largest population centers. Indeed, the Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030 explicitly calls for the continuing preservation and maintenance of this separate and active rail corridor that can be used to extend future Amtrak, commuter train, and/or freight service. The separate train and trail corridors are clearly laid out in Map 2 below.

4. With these projects, we are tangibly close to completing the entire East Coast Greenway in Maine.

The East Coast Greenway is a fully connected, 3,000-mile bike and walking path, safe from cars, that runs from the top of Maine to the bottom of Florida. Roughly 1,000 miles of the 3,000-mile vision have been constructed to date; the remaining 2,000 miles are in various stages of visioning, planning, and design at the local, regional, and state levels. It is an infrastructure resource that transforms the communities it serves; and across all communities, it has become the most visited "park" in America. With the rail-trail projects described here, we would have nearly completed the corridor from the New Hampshire border to Waterville, and from Bangor to Calais, or over 80% of Maine's ECG corridor located off-road and safe-from traffic.

A Vision for Regional Train and Trail Connectivity

The Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030 calls for the construction of thirteen specific rail-trail projects over the next decade, and at least five prospective projects for development over the following decade. These projects are listed in tables 2 and 3 and illustrated in Map 2. Each of these projects connects with, extends, and regionalizes an existing multi-use trail infrastructure. Collectively, these eighteen projects would add roughly 250 miles of inter-connected off-road trails, transforming the Maine communities they serve.

Table 2
Proposed Rail-Trail Projects

1. Brewer Rail Trail (2 miles)
2. [Casco Bay Trail](#), Portland to Yarmouth (9 miles)
3. [Casco Bay Trail](#) connector, Yarmouth to Lewiston-Auburn (17 miles)
4. [Down East Sunrise Trail](#) extension to Calais (12 miles)
5. [Eastern Trail](#), Saco-Biddeford Connector (3 miles)
6. [Eastern Trail](#), South Berwick to Kennebunk (18 miles)
7. Ellsworth Connector (1 mile)
8. Lewiston Lower Rail-Trail (13 miles)
9. [Merrymeeting Trail](#) (26 miles)
10. Mountain Division Trail, Portland Trans Ctr to Westbrook (5 miles)
11. Mountain Division Trail, Westbrook to Windham (5 miles)
12. Mountain Division Trail, Gorham/Standish to Fryeburg (31 miles)
13. Oakland to Embden Trail (32 miles)

Table 3
Exploratory Projects for Future Development

1. Down East Sunrise Trail Extension: Ellsworth to Brewer
2. East Coast Greenway, Coastal Route: Bath to Rockland
3. East Coast Greenway, Connector Trail: Bucksport to Brewer
4. East Coast Greenway, Connector Trail: Lisbon to Brunswick
5. Kennebec River Rail Trail Extension: Augusta to Waterville

The Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020 also calls for the continuing preservation and maintenance of a separate and active rail corridor that can be used to extend future Amtrak, commuter train, and/or freight service from Boston to Maine's largest population centers in Biddeford-Saco, Portland, Brunswick, Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor; and with potential continuing service to Montreal and the VIA Rail Canada network.

The proposed rail trail projects that are priorities for the coming decade, the exploratory projects for development over the following decade, and the rail conservation corridors are all shown in Map 2.

Map 2 Regional Train and Trail Corridors



Proposed Rail-Trail Projects

Thirteen rail-trail projects are actively being promoted by members of the MTC coalition. They are highlighted in blue in Map 2. All of them connect to existing greenway trails, thereby enhancing the cross-community regional trails network.

The 2-mile *Brewer Rail-Trail* would run through the city of Brewer to the Holden border on the southeast side and the Brewer Riverwalk on the northwest side. Future extensions could continue into Holden and eventually Ellsworth and the Down East Sunrise Trail. Together with the proposed 1-mile *Ellsworth Connector* and the 12-mile [Down East Sunrise Trail Extension](#) from Ayers Junction to Calais, these projects would complete the entire 132-mile northern gateway to the East Coast Greenway from the Canadian border in Calais.

The two [Casco Bay Trail](#) projects would create a continuous 26-mile greenway from Portland through Yarmouth to Lewiston-Auburn. At its southern end, it would connect to the Back Cove Trail, the Eastern Promenade Trail and the Portland Trails network. From Yarmouth, it would connect to the West Side Trail, the Beth Condon Pathway, and the planned LL Bean trail extension from the Freeport YMCA to Freeport Center. From Auburn, it would connect to the proposed 13-mile *Lewiston Lower Rail Trail*, the Lisbon Rail-Trail, and potentially on to Brunswick, where it connects to both the spine and coastal routes of the East Coast Greenway.

The two [Eastern Trail](#) projects would create a continuous 42-mile greenway trail from South Portland to South Berwick, very close to the New Hampshire border. This, too, would be a signature segment of the East Coast Greenway.

The [Merrymeeting Trail](#) is also an integral component of this regional network, connecting the Androscoggin River Bicycle and Pedestrian Path in Topsham-Brunswick at the south, and the Kennebec River Rail Trail at the north. It would create a 35-mile greenway from Brunswick to Augusta, completing a major part of the Capital-to-Coast Trail System, and a critical connector segment of the East Coast Greenway's spine and coastal routes.

The three *Mountain Division Trail* projects would create a 50-mile greenway from Portland to Sebago Lake and on to the New Hampshire border. It would integrate and connect the 9-miles of existing greenway in Windham, Gorham, Standish and Fryeburg.

The *Oakland-to-Embden Trail* would extend the existing Kennebec Valley Trail, creating a 47-mile pathway along the Kennebec River through Bingham, Solon, Embden, Madison, Norridgewock, and Oakland.

APPENDIX 1

CORRIDORS PROPOSED AS RAIL-TRAILS

**All corridor descriptions are preliminary.*

BREWER RAIL-TRAIL

DISTANCE: 2.1 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Calais Branch

LOCATION: Wilson Street to the Holden Town Line. The project area is through the municipalities of Brewer and up to Holden, although the Town of Holden is supportive of it continuing past Phases A & B and through Holden. This rail bed directly abuts a 196-space City-owned parking lot, Maple Street Park, the City's Public Safety building, an outdoor ice rink, and valuable wetland and wildlife habitats. Within a very short walk to the rail corridor is the Brewer High School, an indoor ice arena, Brewer Auditorium, Brewer Library, and the City's Riverwalk trail along the Penobscot River. The rail corridor also runs over I-395.

OWNERSHIP: The owner of this segment, Pan Am Systems, Inc., is willing to sell. The Brewer Land Trust contacted them in August 2015 and it was discussed that the State of Maine has first refusal on the rail corridor. Negotiations then began between Pan Am and MDOT and concluded in August 2016 with MDOT deciding not to pursue ownership. Pan Am has now offered the Brewer Land Trust to make them an offer for ownership. In 2019 & 2020, discussions have resumed amongst MaineDOT and the City of Brewer about the corridor. It has been determined that a third-party assessment is needed to gain a better understanding of the value of the rail corridor in question.

The Calais Branch railroad corridor extends easterly from the proposed Brewer Rail Trail into the Town of Holden and eventually connects with the very successful 85-mile rail trail Down East Sunrise Trail. This portion of this rail corridor through Brewer is owned by the State of Maine and is included in the lease between the Maine DOT and the Downeast Scenic Railroad for their use. With a right-of-way of 66 feet, it may be possible to construct a trail next to the rail bed as noted for Ellsworth in the lease.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: This portion of the corridor is not currently used by rail and is very overgrown with vegetation. Several years ago MaineDOT invested in a railroad bridge that has never had a train run over it. We do not know when it was last used, but it would have been for freight. Further down the Calais Branch, past the scope of this project, is the Downeast Scenic Railroad that runs on the corridor between Ellsworth Falls and Ellsworth.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The condition of the rail lines is very poor. Rails have been removed in some places, but the ties are still in place. Rails are still in place across Wilson Street; the road crossing at Parkway S has discontinued the tracks and there is sidewalk, curb, and roadway interrupting the tracks. At Green Point Rd the rails have been removed

and paved over. Train service could not easily be restored; in terms of restoration work it would need to include removing all overgrown vegetation, fixing washouts under the tracks, cutting into existing roads to restore the rails, and installing new signal equipment. The bridge over I-395 is in great shape, with MaineDOT having totally rehabbed or replaced it not that long ago, with no train ever running over it.

The condition of the berm varies from good to very poor condition. There is erosion with a washout of the rail bed near Acme Road. There is tree and vegetation incursion into the sides and middle of the berm, especially on the western end of the corridor. The berm is in better condition towards the eastern end of the corridor around Green Point Rd and the Holden town line. It appears that the majority of the berm is single track, but in the area of Green Point Rd there does appear to be some double track.

There does not appear to be any remaining signal equipment along the corridor; closer inspection is required to confirm.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The Downeast Scenic Railroad currently operates on a small section of track from Washington Junction to Ellsworth Falls in Ellsworth. The eastern project extent of the Brewer Rail Trail would be 21.2 miles (calculated via road) to the western extent of the Downeast Scenic Railroad operations. However, we believe that the Downeast Scenic Railroad does have a long-term lease (somewhere on the order of the next 12-15 years) on the entire state-owned section of the Calais Branch (which would abut the eastern extent of the project area), even though scenic passenger trains do not operate in that vicinity.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): If the corridor were used as a trail (either rail-to-trail, trail-until-rail, or rail-with-trail), it would be within .5 miles and connected by slow-speed neighborhood streets to the existing Brewer Riverwalk, which begins at Hardy Street on the southern end of that facility. Would be part of the East Coast Greenway from Calais, ME to Key West, FL.

COMMENTS: This potential rail trail could be used by many for both recreational purposes as well as a transportation connection to other locations, including Brewer High School, an indoor ice arena & outdoor ice rink, Brewer Auditorium, Brewer Library, and the City's Public Safety building. Brewer High School students currently use the roads to run, which is not nearly as safe as an off-road facility. This rail trail could create a loop using Dirigo Drive and Green Point Road from the school. Both the Brewer School Department and the City of Brewer would like to see this project constructed. This rail trail would also be a great addition to the East Coast Greenway, which is currently on-road through this portion of Brewer.

There is a large wetland owned by the State next to the rail bed on Green Point Road where a variety of animals can be seen on almost any given day creating a great location for birdwatchers. The Holden Land Trust and the Town of Holden are both supportive of this trail and would like to see it extend through Holden. In addition, HOP Trails (regional trail organization) and the Bangor Land Trust are also in favor.

A group of four University of Maine engineering students, calling themselves Marsh Island Student Engineering, chose the proposed Brewer Rail Trail for their Capstone project. During the fall semester of 2015, the students prepared a feasibility study. Then, during spring semester 2016, they prepared a trail design including structure repairs, safety improvements, cost estimates, and permitting list. Their cost estimate included materials for riprap, trail resurfacing, pedestrian safety features, and culverts and was estimated to be \$215,000 in 2016. This estimate was adjusted by the East Coast Greenway Alliance staff for 2019 and 2024 dollars at \$423,114 and \$594,052 respectively (but does not include permitting, design, contingency, and labor costs).

CONTACT: Linda Johns, City of Brewer Planner, ljohns@brewermaine.gov

CASCO BAY TRAIL

Portland to Yarmouth

DISTANCE: 9 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: St. Lawrence and Atlantic Line

LOCATION: Portland's East Deering neighborhood through Yarmouth village, traversing Falmouth and Cumberland, running parallel to route I-295.

OWNERSHIP: State of Maine.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: October 31, 2015 was the last freight service. Prior to termination, the sole rail customer was the B&M Baked Beans factory. There has never been passenger service on this corridor.

OBSERVED CONDITION: Maine DOT has maintained this corridor to some degree since its last use in 2015, and the rails may still be usable at slow speeds. Bridges are intact, except at the endpoint into downtown Portland. Berm is in good condition. There may be double track berms in some locations. Signal crossing equipment appears damaged or missing. Battery boxes may have been removed, but this needs confirmation. Yarmouth has been negotiating with MDOT for removal of the signals and arms at the Main Street Crossing

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): At the southern end, the swing bridge carrying the rail corridor into downtown Portland has been inoperable for years. At the northern end, the track extends to Auburn. The entire Portland-Auburn route is through communities that are also served by a separate rail line that remains active.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): Connected to Back Cove Trail, Eastern Promenade Trail and the Portland Trails network at southern end. Connected to Beth Condon Pathway, West Side Trail, Freeport YMCA, and Planned LL Bean Trail to Downtown Freeport at northern end. Would be part of the East Coast Greenway from Calais, ME to Key West, FL.

COMMENTS: Many commuters travel this route every day; and an active public transit alternative (METRO BREEZ) already serves these communities. The Greater Portland Council of Governments prepared a [Preliminary Feasibility Assessment](#) of a Rail with Trail in 2017. In 2018-2019, the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority conducted a two-part feasibility assessment of establishing passenger rail service between Portland and Lewiston-Auburn using either the currently active rail corridor between these cities or this corridor ([Transit Propensity Report](#), [Operating Plans and Corridor Assessment](#)).

CONTACT: The [Casco Bay Trail Alliance](#) is the regional group actively advocating for this rail-trail project. Sue Ellen Bordwell, sebordwell@gmail.com.

CASCO BAY TRAIL CONNECTOR

Yarmouth to Auburn

DISTANCE: 17 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: St. Lawrence and Atlantic Line

LOCATION: The segment of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic line runs from Yarmouth through North Yarmouth, Pownal, New Gloucester and into Auburn, ending at Danville Junction. Much of the corridor runs alongside Royal River or Chandler Brook.

OWNERSHIP: State of Maine.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: There is no active rail service.

OBSERVED CONDITION: Maine DOT has maintained this corridor to some degree since its last use in 2015, and the rails may still be usable at slow speeds.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The southeast end of the segment continues through Yarmouth and into Portland, but the bridge to downtown Portland would presumably need total replacement, and no facility exists for connecting service beyond Portland. The northwest end of the segment is at Danville Junction in Auburn, and the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic line continues from there to Bethel and on into New Hampshire and Canada. Importantly, the entire Portland-Auburn route is through communities that are also served by a separate rail line that remains active, and that also runs to Danville Junction.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): The southeastern end of the segment connects to the Beth Condon Pathway and West Side Trail and, once constructed, both the south-bound and north-bound destinations of the East Coast Greenway. The northwestern end in Auburn has no existing continuation path, but a natural greenway opportunity exists using the 300-foot right-of-way along route 202 into downtown Auburn and Lewiston, and the riverside greenways there.

COMMENTS: In 2018-2019, the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority conducted a two-part feasibility assessment of establishing passenger rail service between Portland

and Lewiston-Auburn using either the currently active rail corridor between these cities or this corridor ([Transit Propensity Report](#), [Operating Plans and Corridor Assessment](#)).

CONTACT: The [Casco Bay Trail Alliance](#) is the regional group actively advocating for this rail-trail project. Sue Ellen Bordwell, sebordwell@gmail.com and Jonathan Labonte, Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Company, jlabonte08@gmail.com.

DOWN EAST SUNRISE TRAIL EXTENSION

Ayers Junction to Calais

DISTANCE: 12.2 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Calais Branch

LOCATION: From the beginning of the Downeast Sunrise Trail at Ayers Junction in Pembroke to Baring Street/Route 1 in Calais. The rail line runs through Pembroke, Charlotte, Baileyville, and Calais. This project is envisioned to be a trail until rail on the Calais Branch from where the Downeast Sunrise Trail begins now at Ayers Junction to Route 1 in Calais, getting users to within close proximity of downtown Calais and the existing Calais Waterfront Walkway.

Several studies have been done to look at the feasibility of completing this extension to Calais, and while there are some challenges and route options, it has been concluded that it is feasible and desirable to finish the trail to Calais to provide an off-road connection to the existing 90+ miles of Downeast Sunrise Trail for local residents, visitors, and users of the East Coast Greenway.

OWNERSHIP: MaineDOT owns this section of the Calais Branch. The rail corridor does pass through the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, which poses some challenges, however there are existing gravel roads within the Wildlife Refuge, currently used by the East Coast Greenway route that could be utilized if permitting is a challenge for the rail bed itself.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: There is currently no rail service on this corridor.

OBSERVED CONDITION: Rails are still in place within the project area, and might be in decent shape, but the rail bed is overgrown with vegetation. The condition of the berm looks like it may be in decent condition, but a further inspection is required. There does appear to be a battery box where the rail corridor crosses Route 1, but there is no equipment at the crossing of Ayers Junction Road.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): Once the corridor continues on the northern side of Route 1 in Calais, my understanding is the corridor is in private control with some freight running beginning at St. Croix Junction (.3 miles from where the rail trail would end) and into Canada around the area of Poorhouse Lane in Calais.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): This project would extend the currently 90+ mile Downeast Sunrise Trail into Calais. Would be part of the East Coast Greenway from Calais, ME to Key West, FL.

COMMENTS: The corridor would likely be mainly used for recreation at this time, however, once the trail is connected to downtown Calais, it would increase its transportation utility. It is extremely unlikely that rail service would return to this corridor given the fact that the overwhelming majority of the corridor is an existing rail trail. In addition there is no known interest in freight or passenger rail to be run on this corridor, besides from Eastport, which is highly unlikely given that no rail corridor (right of way) from Eastport exists headed west that could connect to the Calais Branch corridor. There is existing bus service from Bangor to Calais that goes through this area.

Among the existing studies and related documents relating to the Calais Branch and Downeast Sunrise Trail are: (1) [Trail Management Plan and Proposal Calais Branch Corridor](#), (2) [Routing Study for Trail Connections between Calais and Ayers Junction](#), (3) [Report on an Economic Development Strategy for Washington County](#), and (4) [Downeast Sunrise Trail Economic Impact Assessment](#).

CONTACT: The [Down East Sunrise Trail Coalition](#) is the regional group advocating for this corridor expansion, including the submission of a legislative bill in 2019. State Senator Marianne Moore, Marianne.Moore@legislature.maine.gov.

EASTERN TRAIL

Saco-Biddeford Connector

DISTANCE: 2.6 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Various (reference name is "Saco-Biddeford Spur").

LOCATION: The Spur runs, from north to south, from an endpoint in the Saco Industrial Park, crosses Rte. 112, Rte. 5, and the Saco River, into Biddeford. It continues southwest across lower Main Street, then South Street, and at a point just east of Westmore Avenue it connects(?) with the Boston and Maine Springfield Terminal line. Find this segment on Map 3 of the Maine Atlas and Gazetteer. The Spur line can be viewed on City of Saco tax maps 40, 41, 51, 53, 69, 70, 71, 72.

OWNERSHIP: Pan Am owns a portion. Unitil has easement within a portion of the RR ROW for its natural gas pipeline. City of Saco owns a portion, probably within the Saco Industrial Park.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: In Saco, it is used for freight a few times per week – in Biddeford the Amtrak Downeaster runs adjacent to it. Use has been limited to freight trains.

OBSERVED CONDITION: Currently still in operation – bridge over Saco River – conditions unknown, though it does support rail traffic a few times a week, as noted above. Structural assessment of existing trestle would be necessary to determine whether it would support a potential rail-trail. No bridges have been removed. Rails still connected, end to end. No track has been removed. Road crossings are not paved over. Rail service is active. The corridor is single track. The berm supports active use by trains. There is standing water to southerly side of tracks near Saco River in Saco; there is a functioning granite culvert beneath the tracks nearby. There is no functioning signal crossing equipment. Train traffic is infrequent; personnel manually get out and stop traffic at crossings.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The northerly end of the Spur line terminates just off Industrial Park Road, Saco. The southerly end of the Spur line ends where it connects with the Boston and Maine Springfield Terminal line.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): It could connect with the Eastern Trail along the easterly boundary of the Thornton Academy campus in Saco at the north end, and with Southern Maine Health Care at the south end. This would end the need for the interim, on-street section of the ET that currently exists. Would be part of the East Coast Greenway from Calais, ME to Key West, FL.

COMMENTS: The Saco-Biddeford Spur is relatively short. The cities of Saco and Biddeford are exploring the potential for a spur trail from the Eastern Trail into the two downtowns. Completion of the Eastern Trail segment between Thornton Academy and Southern Maine Health Care would facilitate the design and completion of the contemplated spur trail. Biddeford-Saco-OOB are served by the BSOOB Transit District, featuring local and regional bus lines. The 2001 Eastern Trail Feasibility Study notes the existence of the Spur and of the RR trestle, and in fact would incorporate the two into the Eastern Trail if it can be accomplished given ownership issues.

CONTACT: The [Eastern Trail Alliance](#) is the regional group actively advocating for this connector project. Jon Kachmar, jon.kachmar@eastertrail.org; City of Saco; City of Biddeford.

EASTERN TRAIL

South Berwick to Kennebunk

DISTANCE: 18 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Formerly the old Eastern Railroad line aka Boston & Maine Eastern line, 1842-1945 (<https://www.eastertrail.org/history-of-the-eastern-trail/>)

LOCATION: This segment runs through Kennebunk, Wells, North Berwick & South Berwick. The corridor ranges from 3-10 miles from the Maine Turnpike, running roughly parallel. The corridor crosses Routes 35, 99, 109, and 9.

OWNERSHIP: The corridor is owned and operated by Unitil as a natural gas pipeline.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: The rail was decommissioned in 1945, sold to Portland Gas & Light in 1965, and turned over to Unital in 2008.

OBSERVED CONDITION: All track has been removed. No rail-related equipment remains.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): No connecting rail lines at endpoints. The corridor is isolated from active service lines.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): This would extend the current off-road Eastern Trail and connect in the north to Kennebunk, at Alewife Road/Rte. 35, ending in South Berwick at Rte. 91/York Woods Road. There is opportunity for connections to other points/local trails along the corridor.

COMMENTS: The former Eastern Rail line is proposed as the off-road route of the Eastern Trail. There is reason to believe that commuter traffic via bicycle between South Berwick-North Berwick-Wells-Kennebunk would use the completed Eastern Trail. A study of trail feasibility has been completed. See <https://www.easterntail.org/eastern-trail-engineering-feasibility-study-final-report/>.

CONTACT: The [Eastern Trail Alliance](#) is the regional group actively advocating for this connector project. Jon Kachmar, jon.kachmar@easterntail.org

ELLSWORTH CONNECTOR

Ellsworth Rail Trail and Down East Sunrise Trail Connector

DISTANCE: 0.7 Mile

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Calais Branch

LOCATION: From the beginning of the Downeast Sunrise Trail in Ellsworth (intersection of High Street & Beals Ave) to Birch Avenue. Entirely located in the City of Ellsworth. It is envisioned to be a rail with trail along the active Downeast Scenic Railroad. A feasibility study is being conducted now, but the trail also may run on Spring Street, a city owned road that is redundant and in poor condition, with the road being closed to vehicle traffic. This is a short but critical gap section between two existing trails, and would provide users off-road biking and walking access to the 90+ mile Downeast Sunrise Trail directly from more residential neighborhoods in Ellsworth.

OWNERSHIP: MaineDOT owns this section of the Calais Branch with the Downeast Scenic Railroad having a lease on it to run excursion trains. The City of Ellsworth owns Spring Street that may be part of the trail project if feasible.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: The Downeast Scenic Railroad runs excursion trains currently within the project area, although the Downeast Sunrise Trail and the Ellsworth Rail Trail are both currently rail with trail projects that they would connect to.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The condition of the rail line and bridges is good with trains currently operating on them. There is assumed room within the ROW based on the other trails mentioned above that are already rail with trail facilities. The condition of the berm is good with trains currently operating on the corridor. The condition of the equipment is good with trains currently operating on the corridor.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The Downeast Scenic Railroad currently operates on a small section of track from Washington Junction to Ellsworth Falls in Ellsworth. The rail corridor does not connect to any other active rail corridors.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): This project would fill a key gap between the existing Downeast Sunrise Trail and Ellsworth Rail Trail. Would be part of the East Coast Greenway from Calais, ME to Key West, FL. The trail will be used for transportation and recreational purposes. The existing Ellsworth Rail Trail passes by Ellsworth High School and runs behind several businesses and abuts the business district along High Street. This project would also provide users access to the back of Cadillac Mountain Sports, which currently sells bicycles. It would also cross Main Street in Ellsworth, providing people direct access to the services and businesses there as well.

The project would also directly abut Maine Community Foundation, providing their employees access to biking and walking for commuting purposes. The East Coast Greenway Alliance has engaged with several of their employees who were extremely supportive of this project. The City of Ellsworth is also very supportive of this project and with support from the current MaineDOT Commissioner, Bruce VanNote, they successful received a grant to begin a feasibility process for the project at the end of 2019, with the study taking place in 2020.

COMMENTS: Use of this corridor for passenger or freight service appears to be unlikely at this time. The Downeast Scenic Railroad did renew their lease in the last few years, so it's unlikely that the current excursion service will be discontinued, but that is unknown as circumstances could always change. However, since this is envisioned to be a rail with trail project, the current operation of the train should not be a major hurdle for this project.

CONTACT: David Cole, Ellsworth City Manager, dcole@ellsworthmaine.gov and Janna Richards, Ellsworth Economic Development Director, jrichards@ellsworthmaine.gov.

LEWISTON LOWER RAIL TRAIL

Lewiston to Lisbon Falls

DISTANCE: 13 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Lewiston Lower Rail

LOCATION: Cedar Street in Lewiston Maine south for approximately 13 miles to Main Street in Lisbon Falls. Follows along the Androscoggin River and State Route 196.

OWNERSHIP: PanAm Railways

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: The line is inactive, but not abandoned. It once served as a major carrier for the textile mills of Lisbon and Lewiston. There are no active mills along the corridor. The southern end of the corridor (at Main Street Lisbon Falls) transitions to a state-owned rail line from Lisbon Falls through Topsham to Brunswick.

OBSERVED CONDITION: Two locations have bridges removed along the corridor; Locust Street, Lewiston and behind the former Promenade Mall, Lewiston. Rail and ties remain along most of the corridor, but have been filled in with soil, vegetation, and trees. Over the course of its 10.5 miles the corridor intersects with fifteen (15) roadways (14 public, 1 private). Three of these crossings are above grade and the remainder are at grade. Each crossing poses slightly different design needs, but in general each crossing is readily adaptable to serve as a safe, recreational intersection. The LARR has a detailed assessment of each crossing. The rail is primarily single track, but there are several locations of dual, parallel track or rail sidings. There are sections of the corridor with notable erosion that has deteriorated the railbed. All equipment appears to have been removed along the corridor.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The Lewiston Lower historically “dead-ended” in the Lewiston Mill District to the north. To the south, the Lewiston Lower (Pan-Am Owned) connects to a state of Maine owned lined in Lisbon which continues on to the Pan-Am mainline in Brunswick.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): The northern terminus of this corridor has potential to connect to the Lewiston and Auburn Riverwalk system to the west, with a street crossing, and to the south would connect with the Lisbon Paper Mill and Riverside Trails that link village centers, schools and town parks.

COMMENTS: The corridor has been assessed for potential phasing of key connecting points. For example, the corridor passes adjacent to the Exit 80 Park and Ride Lot, providing the potential for a park and bike from Exit 80 to downtown Lewiston’s business/mill district. Small business parks exist adjacent to the corridor and could provide connectivity for employees/customers to safely travel between businesses that otherwise require a vehicle and state highway for movement. Previous business surveys were done by the town of Lisbon to determine business interests in shipment via rail along this corridor, and preference remained for trucking given the easy access by rail/intermodal in both Auburn and Brunswick (to the north and south, respectively). The rail to trail vision has been in place for nearly 25 years from the first Androscoggin Greenway plan. That planning was set aside when the state had a vision of taking the line from PanAm to introduce freight and a new connection to the LARR corridor. Those plans were scrapped (more history can be provided if needed). The LARR commissioned an assessment of the corridor for trail conversion with support from rail owner Pan-Am, with the consideration of a trail license being the mechanism of establishing a trail with PanAm retaining ownership of the corridor. A lot of additional detail about this corridor is available from an engineering assessment commissioned through Sebago.

CONTACT: Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Company. Jonathan LaBonte,
jlabonte08@gmail.com.

MERRYMEETING TRAIL

Topsham to Gardiner

DISTANCE: 26 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Lower Road Rail Line

LOCATION: The Merrymeeting Trail would connect the communities of Topsham, Bowdoinham, Richmond and Gardiner. Segments of this trail would run through downtown areas and with large stretches along the Cathance and Kennebec rivers. The Kennebec River is one of 18 rivers deemed by the Maine legislature as having “outstanding river stretches”.

OWNERSHIP: State of Maine.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: The corridor is not currently used as an active rail line. The line was completed in 1852 with peak usage in the 1920's. The last train through-train between Brunswick and Augusta occurred in 1986. Before formal abandonment by Guilford Transportation this railroad corridor was acquired by the State of Maine in 1991 and is currently managed by Maine Department of Transportation. Currently, service along the entire line from Brunswick to Waterville is not possible as it is blocked in two locations, Augusta and Richmond. Shorter portions of the corridor were leased to short line operators until 2015 and no entities have leased usage rights since 2015.

OBSERVED CONDITION: A section of rail was covered with pavement in Augusta to create a parking area. The railroad tracks were covered in downtown Hallowell between Central and Winthrop streets to create a temporary parking area when construction on downtown roads took place in 2018 and 2019. An overpass on Route 24 in Richmond, a short distance north of the town center, was removed by MDOT in 2017 at the request of the town. The single-track bridge over the Cathance River represents the most difficult segment due to height and steepness of the slopes, span of the bridge, and environmental constraints at the bottom. The largest bridge of concern crosses the Androscoggin River between Brunswick and Topsham. Although this bridge is not part of any trail planning efforts, it would be essential for train travel to be able to resume on the Augusta Lower Road Rail line. The 2011 Feasibility Study by VHB stated, “the challenging sections are measured in miles and the simple sections are relatively short by comparison. The study team observed that even though there are obstacles to building a trail, the facility would provide tremendous benefits.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): What is known as the Lower Road extending from Portland through Brunswick and Augusta to Waterville was constructed by two different railroad companies and consolidated in 1870 into the Maine Central Railroad network. As noted, extended connectivity is prevented by facility deterioration or removal, or by alternative

infrastructure uses in Augusta, Hallowell, Richmond, and between Brunswick and Topsham.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): The Kennebec River Rail Trail is a completed trail that runs adjacent to an existing rail line from Gardiner to Augusta. The Merrymeeting Trail would connect to the Kennebec River Rail Trail in Gardiner. On the southern end of the Merrymeeting Trail, a brief on-road connection through Topsham would connect the trail to the existing Androscoggin River Bicycle and Pedestrian Path in Brunswick. Ultimately, this segment could extend through Bath by connecting to the proposed and partially complete Androscoggin-to-the-Kennebec Path. The proposed Merrymeeting Trail would be instrumental in completing the larger Capital to Coast trail project vision, connecting Bath to Augusta.

COMMENTS: A [project feasibility study](#) was completed in 2011, and a vision document for the larger [Capital to Coast](#) trail was completed in 2016.

CONTACT: The [Merrymeeting Trailblazers](#) are the regional group actively advocating for this rail-trail project, including the submission of legislation in 2019. Jeremy Cluchey, jcluchey@gmail.com; Nicole Briand, nbriand@bowdoinham.com; Tom Reeves, tom.reeves@twc.com; Frank O'Hara, frankomaine@gmail.com; Carrie Kinne, ckinne@kennebecestuary.org; Maeve McGowan, mmcgowan@kennebecestuary.org.

MOUNTAIN DIVISION TRAIL

Portland Transportation Center to Westbrook

DISTANCE: 4 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Mountain Division Rail Line

LOCATION: From the Portland Transportation Center, this corridor travels west along the Fore River, through Fore River Sanctuary, across the turnpike into Westbrook through downtown Westbrook, over the Presumpscot River ending at East Bridge Street in Westbrook.

OWNERSHIP: PanAm

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: This section of the rail line is owned by PanAm and used by two companies: SAPPI occasionally and Dead River Company more regularly. The track appears to be used about once a day for transporting propane gas from the depot on Terminal Road. Some of the corridor is double track and the trains use the track on the north side. The track on the south side is inactive.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The condition is usable for freight on the north side track. The existing trestle at the Westbrook end of the segment is degraded and unusable for trains. A separate catwalk has been built and is currently used by pedestrians between the River

Walk and Bridge St. The condition of the berm is good-fair throughout; there appear to be no serious issues of erosion, vegetation incursion, standing water, etc.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The eastern end of this segment is at the Portland Transportation Center, the Maine hub for Amtrak service to Boston. Going west, the active and currently usable corridor ends in downtown Westbrook at the Presumpscot River.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): The eastern end of the corridor connects to the Fore River Parkway Trail into downtown Portland and the broader Portland Trails network.

COMMENTS: There are numerous opportunities for connectivity to multi-modal transportation including walking, cycling, Metro, Amtrak and Concord Trailways bus service. The corridor currently contains numerous “paths of desire” to parks and neighborhoods. Both ends of the corridor have access to Metro.

MDT History: In 1994, Guilford Transportation announced that it was abandoning rail service on the Mountain Division Rail Line in Maine. Concerned that the rail right of way would be lost, the Mountain Division Alliance was formed with a vision for a rail-trail connecting the nine communities along the rail corridor. MaineDOT purchased the 40 miles from Windham to Fryeburg in 1997 and the 5 miles from Westbrook to Windham in 2007. The Windham to Standish rail-trail segment opened in 2003; and the 4-mile Fryeburg segment opened in 2011-2012.

CONTACT for this section: The Mountain Division Alliance is the regional group advocating for this segment. Paul Drinan, pdrinan@gmail.com, and Rachele Curran Apse, rachele@prlt.org.

MOUNTAIN DIVISION TRAIL

Westbrook to Windham

DISTANCE: 5 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Mountain Division Rail Line

LOCATION: The corridor follows the Presumpscot River from East Bridge Street in Westbrook (just North of downtown) to the existing 5-mile rail-trail that begins at route 202 in South Windham.

OWNERSHIP: State of Maine.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: Passenger service was suspended in 1958. Freight service stopped in 1983. There has been talk occasionally of bringing back rail service, but the cost is very high to rebuild the rail line. In a report a few years ago, the state indicated that no money would be spent on rehabbing the line unless a legitimate business would sign a long-term lease. So far, there have been no takers.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The rail does exist for 3.5 miles of this 5 miles section. There is a 1.5 mile section located in Windham where the rail has been removed. The bridges are still in place but would need updating. There is some erosion in the berm where the rails are undercut. The corridor is single track.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): There has been no active rail connectivity on this segment for over 40 years.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): There is an adjacent 5-mile section of rail-trail already constructed from Standish through Gorham into Windham, mostly along the Presumpscot River. Together with the other proposed Mountain Division Trail projects, the vision is a continuous 50-mile trail from Portland, and the regional trails network around Portland to the New Hampshire border in Fryeburg.

CONTACT: The Mountain Division Alliance is the regional group advocating for this segment. Dave Kinsman, dskinsman@gmail.com, and Rachelle Curran Apse, rachelle@prlt.org.

MOUNTAIN DIVISION TRAIL

Standish to Fryeburg

DISTANCE: 31 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Mountain Division Rail Line

LOCATION: This segment begins at the southern tip of Sebago Lake in Standish, and then follows the Saco River and Route 113 in the western part of the state. This segment passes through , Standish, Steep Falls, Baldwin, West Baldwin, Hiram and Fryeburg.

OWNERSHIP: State of Maine.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: Passenger service was suspended in 1958. Freight service stopped in 1983. There has been talk occasionally of bringing back rail service, but the cost is very high to rebuild the rail line. In a report a few years ago, the state indicated that no money would be spent on rehabbing the line unless a legitimate business would sign a long term lease. So far, there have been no takers.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The rail infrastructure appears to be in poor condition. The rail does exist. At this point, most ties would have to be replaced and the rails are not up to date for current freight cars. We believe the bridges are still in place. There is some erosion in the berm where the rails are undercut. The corridor is single track in most locations. There is little or no remaining equipment for train use.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): The corridor continues through New Hampshire, and eventually connects to the line used by Conway Scenic Railroad in North Conway. The line directly across the New Hampshire border is not being used; and there is an effort to repurpose it

as a rail-trail. The rail line segments ends in Standish where the rail becomes a rail-trail for five miles through part of Standish, Gorham and part of Windham.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): This segment would connect the two completed Mountain Division trail segments -- the 5-mile greenway from Standish through Gorham into Windham, and the 4-mile section through Fryeburg to the New Hampshire border. Together with the other proposed Mountain Division Trail projects, the vision is a continuous 50-mile trail from Portland, and the regional trails network around Portland to the New Hampshire border in Fryeburg.

CONTACT: The Mountain Division Alliance is the regional group advocating for this segment. Dave Kinsman, dskinsman@gmail.com, and Rachele Curran Apse, rachele@prlt.org.

OAKLAND TO EMBDEN TRAIL

Oakland to Embden

DISTANCE: 32 Miles

RAILROAD CORRIDOR: Madison Branch

LOCATION: This corridor begins in Oakland and passes through Fairfield, Norridgewock, Madison, Anson and Embden.

OWNERSHIP: The State of Maine recently purchased this rail corridor from Pan Am with the explicit purpose of converting it to a multi-use trail.

STATUS OF RAIL SERVICE: None. The corridor is already in the process of being converted to a multi-use trail.

OBSERVED CONDITION: The state has agreed to remove the tracks, and to convert the corridor to a multi-use trail. There are also several bridges that will need to be repaired.

CONNECTIVITY (RAIL): N/A.

CONNECTIVITY (TRAIL): At its northwestern end, the trail connects to the 15-mile Kennebec Valley Trail, which follows the Kennebec River through Embden and Solon and into Bingham.