

## TOWN OF FREEPORT RESOLUTION

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

- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay Trail network envisions an off-road bicycle and pedestrian trail network connecting Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Brunswick, Maine; and
- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay Trail Alliance vision is consistent with and complimentary to Freeport’s “Connect Freeport” vision; and
- WHEREAS,** the Connect Freeport vision and activities are consistent with and complimentary to Freeport’s Complete Street Committee Ordinance and Complete Street Policy; and
- 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; and
- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor is integral to the Connect Freeport vision to establish an off-road trail the connects Freeport to Portland; and
- WHEREAS,** an off-road connection between Freeport and Portland will impact Freeport’s economic development through bicycle tourism, regional recreational use, and commuting; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- WHEREAS,** a freight operator, Genesee and Wyoming, holds an operator easement, but is not currently operating freight service on the rail line; and
- WHEREAS,** the contract between MaineDOT and the Genesee and Wyoming freight company allows for the abandonment of the freight easement by November 2021; and

**WHEREAS,** abandonment of the freight easement will enable a decision-making process to be led by MaineDOT about the future best use of the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor; and

**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; and

**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; and

**WHEREAS,** it may be worthwhile for the Town of Freeport to express its interest in the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor to MaineDOT

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FREEPORT ASSEMBLED THIS \_\_\_\_<sup>th</sup> DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2021, THAT:**

The Freeport Town Council hereby petitions the Department of Transportation to

1. accept the abandonment of the above-referenced freight easement,
2. to the extent the Department is considering any extension or amendment to the above-referenced freight easement, provide a notice-and-comment procedure to ensure that all voices are considered before granting a benefit at no cost to a single company, and
3. create a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Committee to consider future use of the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor as a multi-use “trail-until-rail.”



## KEY ISSUES AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

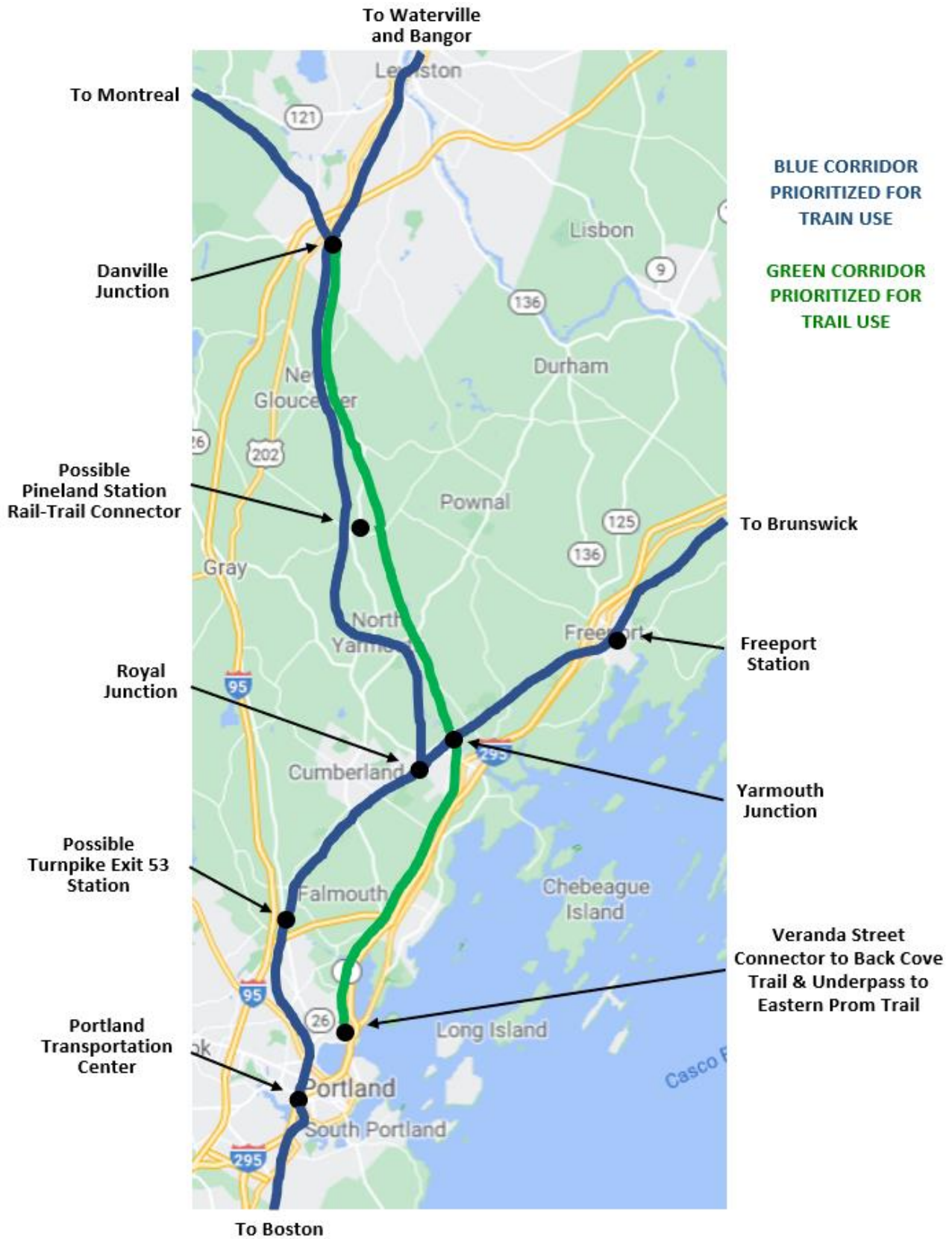
1. The Casco Bay Trail system would connect 13 municipalities between Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Brunswick. Additional projects extend this multi-use trail network west to Fryeburg, north to Augusta, east to Bath, and south to Kittery. See Map 1.
2. The network would be anchored by a multi-use trail on the St. Lawrence and Atlantic rail corridor between Portland and Auburn, passing through Yarmouth. This corridor is state-owned and unused by trains.
3. The SLA corridor south from Yarmouth would be a resource for bicycle commuting into Portland, as well as for other recreational use. The SLA corridor north from Yarmouth would connect many conservation lands in the Royal River watershed, as well trail systems through Pineland Farm and Bradbury Mountain State Park. See Map 2.
4. There is a second, still-active rail corridor between Portland and Lewiston-Auburn that could be used to extend future Amtrak, commuter train, and/or freight service from Boston, through Portland to Brunswick, Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor. See Map 3.
5. The legislature just enacted LD 1133, which creates a *Rail Corridor Advisory Council* process. This process is explicitly designed to evaluate alternative uses of corridors like the St. Lawrence and Atlantic. MaineDOT has already committed to using the process to evaluate prospective rail-trails between Brunswick and Augusta (the Merrymeeting Trail) and between Portland and Fryeburg (the Mountain Division Trail).
6. The trigger for MaineDOT to initiate a *Rail Corridor Advisory Council* is having the municipalities along the corridor request it. We would like to get the St. Lawrence and Atlantic corridor on MaineDOT's evaluation agenda at the same time or shortly after their evaluations of these other corridors.
7. There is an unused freight easement on the St. Lawrence and Atlantic corridor that expires at the end of October. MaineDOT has indicated that municipal interests along the corridor are a key input to their evaluation of whether to renew the easement.
8. Attached is a draft resolution for consideration by the Town Council, calling on MaineDOT to allow the easement to expire, and to create a *Rail Corridor Advisory Council* to evaluate the best future use of the St Lawrence and Atlantic corridor?







# MAP 3: COMPLEMENTARY PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICE BETWEEN PORTLAND AND LEWISTON-AUBURN



## TOWN OF YARMOUTH RESOLUTION

### Request to MaineDOT 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; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- WHEREAS,** a freight operator, Genesee and Wyoming, holds an operator easement, but is not currently operating freight service on the rail line; and
- WHEREAS,** the contract between MaineDOT and the Genesee and Wyoming freight company allows for the abandonment of the freight easement by November 2021; and
- WHEREAS,** abandonment of the freight easement will enable a decision-making process to be led by MaineDOT about the future best use of the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- WHEREAS,** it may be worthwhile for the Town of Yarmouth to express its interest in the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor to MaineDOT

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF YARMOUTH ASSEMBLED THIS \_\_\_\_<sup>th</sup> DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 2021, THAT:**

The Yarmouth Town Council hereby petitions the Department of Transportation to

1. accept the abandonment of the above-referenced freight easement,
2. to the extent the Department is considering any extension or amendment to the above-referenced freight easement, provide a notice-and-comment procedure to ensure that all voices are considered before granting a benefit at no cost to a single company, and
3. create a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Committee to consider future use of the Casco Bay and Royal River SLA Corridor as a multi-use “trail-until-rail.”



# Maine is looking for a few good ideas on how to use dormant rail corridors

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 [pressherald.com/2021/06/21/maine-is-looking-for-a-few-good-ideas-on-how-to-use-dormant-rail-corridors/](https://www.pressherald.com/2021/06/21/maine-is-looking-for-a-few-good-ideas-on-how-to-use-dormant-rail-corridors/)

Associated Press

June 21, 2021

AUGUSTA — Maine is going to investigate potential new uses for dormant rail corridors in the state.

Gov. Janet Mills recently signed into law a proposal that directs the Maine Department of Transportation to evaluate potential uses for the state-owned corridors. The department will eventually submit a report to the Maine Legislature.

Democratic Rep. Art Bell of Yarmouth proposed the bill.

He said Monday he is “hopeful that it will provide an opportunity to reimagine the way we interact with miles of dormant, state-owned rail corridors, lying fallow.”

Democrats in the state said the transportation department will create a transportation plan that will serve as a framework as it looks to create new opportunities for outdoor recreation in Maine. That plan will include potential uses for the rail corridors.

filed under:

railroads

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