

MERRYMEETING TRAIL
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2009 AT 2:00 P.M.
BOWDOINHAM - COOMBS MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Present:

Bowdoinham – Nicole Briand- Town Planner, Tony Cox- Community & Economic Development Director, and Lynn Sandford- Biking, Walking, Paddling Committee
Topsham – Rod Melanson- Town Planner, Rich Roener-Director of Planning, Victor Langelo- Resident, and Steve Chandler- Resident
Richmond – Darryl Sterling- Community & Economic Development Director, and Steve Musica, Resident & Richmond Representative
Gardiner – Tom Reeves- Conservation Committee
Other - Katrina Van Dusen- Regional Planner for MCB&P, Carrie Kinne- Kennebec Estuary Land Trust, and Dave Wood- East Coast Greenway

I. Updates

1. Meeting with Dan Stewart, MDOT

Rod, Darryl, Nicole, Katrina, and Carrie met with Dan Stewart and Duane Scott of MDOT about our trail project. To get funding from MDOT for trail construction we need to prove the transportation values of the project. Currently, MDOT has three long distance trails that they are working with because of transportation values:

1. A 45 mile trail project from Fryeburg to Portland the MDOT has been funding in sections (approx. 5 miles).
2. The Eastern Trail.
3. The East Coast Greenway.

We discussed the Rail-with-Trail and Rail-to-Trail with Dan.

- He said that MDOT supports Rail-with-Trail projects. Construction of the trail would have to meet MDOT's requirements. We asked about the areas with a second rail. He said assume we have to meet the setback from both, but we could talk further with MDOT about specific sections.
- He said this section of the rail would not be available for a rail-to-trail, as it is an active track. We asked if an economic study showing the economic viability of the track compared to the trail would change MDOT's mind and he said no. He said MDOT would not allow this rail to be taken up and they would not go to the legislature to ask for it to be taken up.

Dan offered to create an aerial photo of the rail corridor for us.

2. Conversation with Burnham Martin, NPS

Nicole called Burnham to ask about studies that have been done for other projects that we could look at in deciding what information we would want included and out of a study. Burnham said that he would not recommend performing a formal study. Most trail projects don't perform a formal study unless they have to for a specific reason,

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such as an engineering study or a study requested by a municipality. Burnham said that typically the municipalities use the general benefit information that is out there and a cost-benefit study is not needed.

Burnham suggested that our next step should be to pick our corridor. The sooner we pick the corridor the sooner we can move forward. He also suggested the previously establishment corridors are easier to work with...it would be easier to deal with the construction costs of doing a rail-with-trail, then creating a new corridor.

3. Other

Katrina may have an intern for the summer who could do some feasibility work.

II. Preliminary Planning

1. Pick Trail Corridor

The group went through the Work Plan and discussed the positives/negatives of each of the trail option and added some positives/negatives to the options. After discussing the options the group agreed that the Rail-with-Trail would be the best option to pursue. There may be some areas where the trail would have to meander away from the rail due to natural constraints, but a preliminary engineering study would help to guide those decisions.

2. Next Steps for Corridor Planning

The group is in favor of the Rail-with-Trail option, but we will look at the aerial and GIS data at our March 16th meeting and Nicole will put together a table of the negatives and positives of each corridor for the meeting.

Rod will continue to review the rail corridor using GIS data to identify possible trouble areas.

We need to find funding or volunteers for a preliminary engineering study for a Rail-with-Trail.

3. Identify Funding Sources/Ideas

We need to find funding for a preliminary engineering study for a Rail-with-Trail. This study would identify trouble areas and give us preliminary construction costs. Becoming part of the East Coast Greenway could help us obtain funding from MDOT.

4. Organizational Structure

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We need to work on this as part of our preliminary planning, as the municipalities will need to have the organization structure in place before they will move forward with funding for construction. We need to look into our options. Dave Wood will try to schedule a meeting with John Andrews in April or May to discuss how they formed & operate the Eastern Trail Management District.

III. National Park Service's River, Trails & Conservation Assistance Grant

This program could help us this forming the organizational structure, creating the maintenance plan, general project organization, gaining public support, and finding funding sources.

IV. Other

1. Marketing – We should produce some marketing materials and do some press releases. Darryl volunteered to take the lead on producing some marketing materials for us.
2. Maintenance Plan – We need to keep this on our radar, as this is something that we will need to complete before our municipalities will move forward with funding for construction.

V. Next meeting

1. Monday, March 16th at 6:30pm at Topsham Town Hall.

VI. Adjourn