

# Lewiston Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Council

## Summary and Recommendations

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### Executive Summary

After a 9 month review of potential rail and non-rail uses for the state-owned Lewiston Lower Road in the Town of Lisbon, 8 of 9 members of the Lewiston Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) voted to recommend the conversion of 2.57 miles of existing railroad track to an interim multiuse trail. Additionally, 1 member 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. No members of the Council abstained.

### Background

The Lewiston Lower Road RUAC was officially formed in September of 2023 by MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note upon petition from the Town of Lisbon. 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 9-member RUAC was composed of the following representatives:

*Table 1. Lewiston Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Council Members*

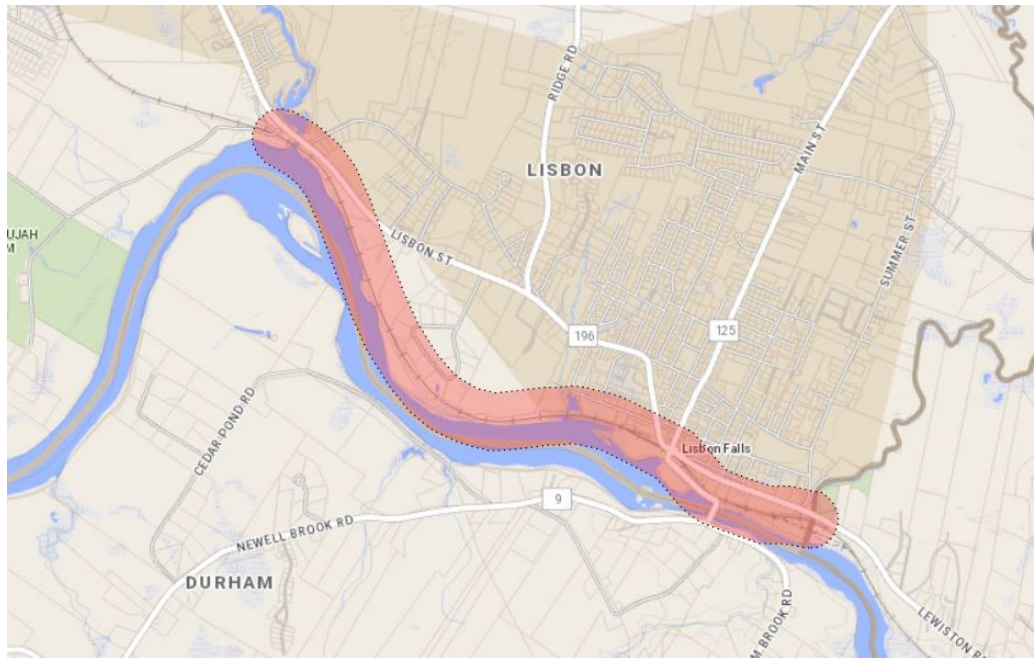
Douglas S. Beck, Outdoor Recreation Supervisor, DACF, Bureau of Parks & Lands	Jonathan LaBonte, President Lewiston and Auburn Railroad Company
Carolann Ouellette, Director, Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation	Don Fellows, Local Bicycle Advocate
Tony Cameron, CEO of Maine Tourism Association	Glenn Michalowski, Lisbon Town Manager
Ross H. Cunningham, Lisbon Director of Economic and Community Development	Larry Allen, Interim MPO Director/Transit Program Manager, Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC)
Alan Hahnel, LA Metro Chamber	

### Location

The study area consists of approximately 2.57 miles of a 9-mile section of the State-owned, former Maine Central Railroad corridor known as the Lewiston Lower Road rail corridor (Figure 1). The state-owned Lewiston Lower Road corridor limits extend from about 2500 linear feet south of the Sabattus River railroad in Lisbon to Pleasant Street north of the wye in Brunswick. The Sabattus River railroad bridge is located at the confluence of the Sabattus River and

Androscoggin River in the Town of Lisbon. The only portion of the corridor that will be assessed for trail usage is the section that extends from MP 36.72 Little River Bridge to MP 39.29 River Road as requested by the Town of Lisbon.

*Figure 1. Lewiston Lower Road Rail Corridor Study Area*



### **Rail Use Advisory Council Process**

The RUAC met 9 times from October 2023 to July 2024. The Council was Chaired by Ross Cunningham, Lisbon Director of Economic and Community Development. MaineDOT staff provided technical support and administration. The civil and transportation engineering firm, HNTB, provided engineering services and prepared the Feasibility study report.

The Council reviewed the approximately 2.57-mile-long section of the Lewiston Lower Road from Portland for potential rail and non-rail uses. At these meetings, HNTB 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 9 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 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 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.

### Summary of Lewiston Lower Road Rail Corridor Study: Cost Estimates

Potential uses for the corridor and their associated cost estimates were developed based on options for FRA class of track (Class 1 or Class 2) and trail surface (paved or stone dust). The costs range from \$1.7 million for Interim Trail with a stone dust surface to \$21.2 million for Rail with Trail option with Class 2 track and a paved trail surface.

A conceptual cost estimate summary of each option for use of the corridor is shown in Table 2.

*Table 2 Conceptual Cost Estimate Summary*

No.	Potential	Total Cost
Option 1: Rail Use		
1A	Rail (Class 1)	\$3,800,000
1B	Rail (Class 2)	\$4,200,000
Option 2: Interim Trail		
2A	Interim Trail (Paved)	\$2,000,000
2B	Interim Trail (Stone Dust)	\$1,700,000
Option 3: Rail with Trail		
3A	Rail (Class 1) with Trail (Paved)	\$20,800,000
3B	Rail (Class ) with Trail (Stone Dust)	\$20,600,000
3C	Rail (Class 2) with Trail (Paved)	\$21,200,000
3D	Rail (Class 2) with Trail (Stone Dust)	\$21,000,000

### Council Recommendations to the MaineDOT Commissioner

#### ***Recommendation 1: Interim Trail until Rail (8 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 eight(8) out of nine (9) 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 (1 members)***

The recommendation **Rail with Trail** (multi-use trail adjacent to the existing rail bed) was supported by one (1) of nine (9) 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 (9) 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, zero (0) members of the Council abstained from voting altogether.