



TOWN OF FALMOUTH RESOLUTION

Request to the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) to Create a Rail Corridor Use Advisory Council for the proposed Casco Bay Trail

- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay Trail refers to a 10-mile, disused rail corridor (hereinafter “Casco Bay SLA Corridor”) from Portland to Falmouth, Cumberland, and Yarmouth, currently known as the St Lawrence and Atlantic (SLA) 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 SLA Corridor to a multi-purpose “trail-until-rail” to be included in an off-road bicycle and pedestrian trail network connecting Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Brunswick, Maine; and
- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay Trail 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,** the 2016 Falmouth Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan listed the long-term goal of “investigat[ing] the feasibility of creating a rail-with-trail to Portland through a regional public-private partnership effort for pedestrians and bicyclists;” and
- WHEREAS,** the possibility of a trail alongside the existing rail was explored in a 2017 GPCOG/PACTS study “Rail with Trail: Preliminary Feasibility Assessment of Building an Active Transportation Corridor from Portland to Yarmouth;” and
- WHEREAS,** the 2017 study provided preliminary information about the technical feasibility of adding a trail along the Casco Bay SLA Corridor and assessed the level of community support for such a project; and

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- WHEREAS,** the focus of the study was to add a future trail to the existing rail right-of-way so as to preserve the potential for future restoration of freight and/or passenger rail service to the currently inactive rail corridor; and
- WHEREAS,** the study included a well-attended regional public meeting that indicated a high level of community support for adding a trail to the rail corridor, but also some concerns; and
- WHEREAS,** the 2017 report recommended that a more detailed feasibility study be developed; and
- 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,** the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic rail right-of-way was originally purchased by the Maine Department of Transportation for rail purposes; and
- WHEREAS,** a freight operator holds an freight railroad easement, but has discontinued freight service on the rail line, and
- 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,” which, once granted, would terminate the freight railroad easement over the Railroad Line, and
- WHEREAS,** the Casco Bay SLA Corridor has been studied for possible conversion to passenger rail, but, according to a 2019 study commissioned by the Maine Department of Transportation (“Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan – Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments”), converting the Casco Bay SLA Corridor to passenger rail would require transit through the East End with a new “Ocean Gateway Station,”
- WHEREAS,** the Lewiston Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan – Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments made a recommendation to “eliminate options that require an Ocean Gateway Station; and”
- WHEREAS,** the June 2021 Legislative Document 991, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation To Conduct an Economic Evaluation Study for Commuter and Passenger Train Service between Portland and the Lewiston and Auburn Area,” lists two options to be further studied, neither of which includes the Casco Bay SLA corridor south of Yarmouth, implying that the Casco Bay SLA corridor is currently no longer being studied for future passenger rail use; and

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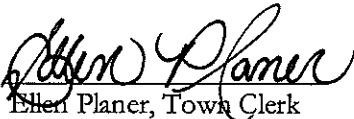
WHEREAS, it may be worthwhile for the Town of Falmouth to express its interest to explore the future use of the Casco Bay SLA Corridor as a multi-use trail to MaineDOT

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FALMOUTH ASSEMBLED THIS 26TH DAY OF JULY, 2021, THAT:

The Falmouth Town Council 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-until-rail,” and
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.

Attest:


Ellen Planer, Town Clerk

Date:

