

# Ellsworth Shared Use Path



*Main St./Railroad Grade Crossing, (Looking East)*  
RAIL WITH TRAIL  
*Rendering by ICON Architecture*

## **A Section of The Down East Trail and The East Coast Greenway**

# Downeast Trail

## Ellsworth Falls to Ellsworth

**NOTE:** *John Balicki wrote this document in 1999-2000, while working for MDOT. It is an application for MDOT Enhancement funding based on a study by Rizzo Associates of Boston. Rizzo Associates has since changed its name to Tetra Tech Rizzo.*

*This document was scanned, updated (notes/footnotes and graphics added) and formatted by the Ellsworth Planning Department 4/24/07.*

**1. Project Scope:** This project would inaugurate the western end of the Downeast [Sunrise] Trail<sup>1</sup> in Ellsworth and provide a north/south link through Ellsworth for bicyclists and walkers parallel to Rt. 1A and Rt. 1 (High St., Oak St., and State St.)

The project would begin at the Ellsworth Falls area where the Calais Branch rail, Rt. 1A, and Routes 179 and 180 all intersect. A paved shared use path that would be a rail with trail of 10 to 12' width would head south from here past Ellsworth High School through a residential neighborhood east of downtown Ellsworth, across Main St. and ending at a point to be determined near High St. and Washington St.<sup>2</sup>

This two-mile route would make use of a three-block section of Spring St. as part of the route. Eventually two blocks of Spring St. that are quite narrow will be closed to motorized traffic. They will remain open at the request of the City of Ellsworth until MDOT improves intersection flow through High St. and Main St., which is scheduled for the next two years.

The project would end at a point to be determined near L.L. Bean in Ellsworth where parking access and crossing of Rt. 1 to Washington St. could be achieved.<sup>3</sup> See aerial photo location map as well as photos of existing conditions and rendering of proposed trail.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.hpcme.org/transportation/sunrise> for more information on the Down East Sunrise Trail.

<sup>2</sup> This termination point could be the proposed STAR Center. For more information on the Strategic Passenger and Recreation Center see <http://www.hpcme.org/landuse/ellsworth/STAR/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> This termination point could be the proposed STAR Center. For more information on the Strategic Passenger and Recreation Center see <http://www.hpcme.org/landuse/ellsworth/STAR/index.htm>.

**2. Cost Estimate:** Rizzo Assoc. in their Downeast Trail Feasibility Study (see [[http://www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/downeast\\_trail/downeast\\_summary.htm](http://www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/downeast_trail/downeast_summary.htm)]<sup>4</sup>) for full details) estimated a construction cost of \$465,704 for segment three from Ellsworth Falls to Ellsworth. Adding an additional amount to begin off Mill Road and end at Beals Ave. brings the cost to \$520,000.

<b>Construction</b>	<b>\$520,000</b>
<b>Engineering (10%)</b>	<b>\$52,000</b>
<b>Contingency (15%)</b>	<b><u>\$78,000</u></b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$650,000</b>

**3 & 4. Community Importance and Network:** Ellsworth currently has no shared use path for either bicycling or walking transportation or recreation. Bicycling and walking transportation in Ellsworth is impeded by the presence of extremely high volume arterials bisecting the city with poor accommodations for walkers and bicyclists.

This segment of path would connect the residential neighborhood of Ellsworth with Ellsworth High School. It will only be a few blocks from Maine Coast Memorial Hospital and the southern end will be near the location of many motels for visitors. It will cross Main Street only a few blocks from the downtown business district of Ellsworth.

This trail will also be a beginning of the Downeast Trail - an over 70-mile corridor from Ellsworth to Calais. Construction of this section is expected to create momentum to complete the 33-mile stretch from Ellsworth to Cherryfield.

**5. Community Support:** The City of Ellsworth welcomes construction of this path. Minutes of the March 21 Public Meeting in Ellsworth are enclosed.

**6. Maintenance:** The City of Ellsworth has agreed to assume maintenance for this project. Maintenance for a paved trail is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$2,000 per year.

**7. Right of Way:** All right of way for the shared use path is on right of way owned by MDOT for the Calais Branch Railroad. Use of Spring St. for the shared use path will be at the City of Ellsworth's permission.

**8. Local Match:** 20% local match will come from State Bond funds allocated for trail construction.

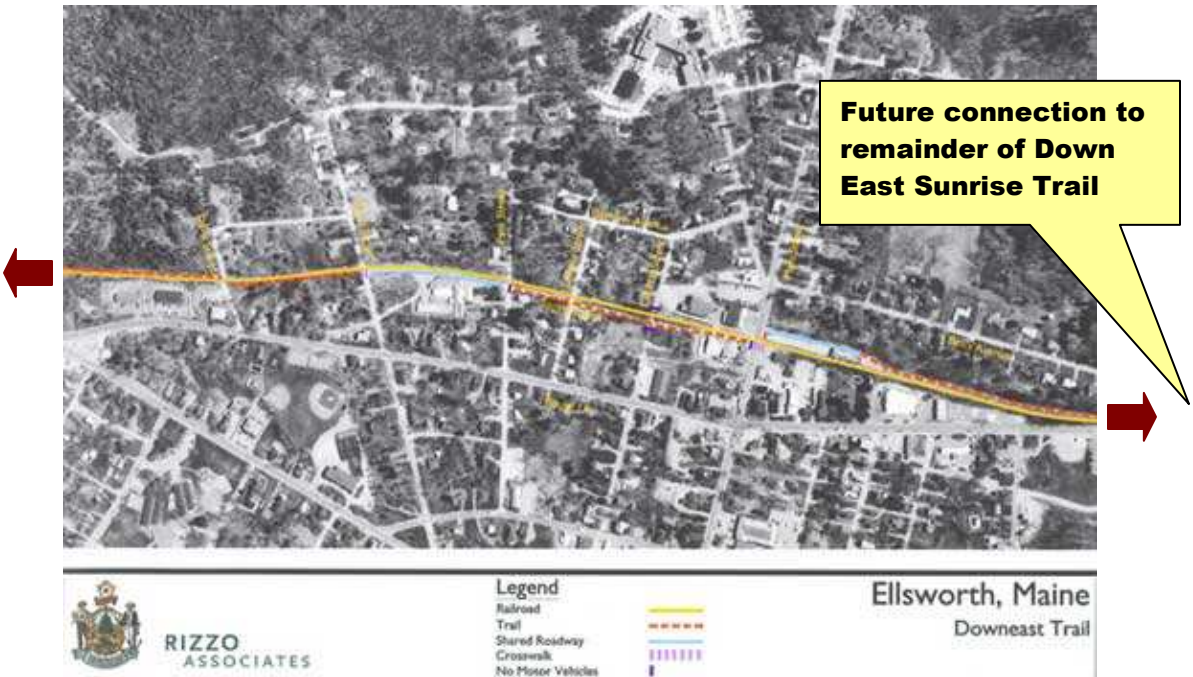
**9. Anticipated Project Construction:** Because funding still exists for Calais Branch trail engineering, preliminary engineering could begin as soon as February, 2001 which would insure readiness for construction in the spring/summer of 2002.

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<sup>4</sup> The former website by Rizzo Associates is no longer available.



“The project would begin at the Ellsworth Falls area where the Calais Branch rail, Rt. 1A, and Routes 179 and 180 all intersect.”



**Maine Department of Transportation**  
Meeting Notes  
**Downeast Trail Feasibility Study Public Meeting**  
*Ellsworth City Hall, Ellsworth*

Date: Tuesday, March 21, 2000, 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Attendees: see attached

### **Downeast Trail Feasibility Study Update**

John Balicki, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator for the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT), began the meeting with a brief review of the goals of the feasibility study, the status of the study, and an update of the state's policy regarding restoration of rail.

- Rizzo Associates, Inc. of Boston was hired last summer to conduct an engineering feasibility study.
- The goal of the feasibility study was to develop recommendations for trail and roadway segments based on sound engineering judgment.
- This public meeting is a chance for the public to learn about the project and give comments on the location, type, and uses proposed for the individual trail and route segments.
- The feasibility study is the first step in the process and no firm decisions have been made. During the design process the public will have many opportunities to review and comment on specific design details.
- The state has committed to restoring rail service in many corridors across the state, including freight service on the Calais Branch Railroad. Therefore, the trail will be developed as a "rail-with-trail" in which the trail and the rail will share the transportation corridor. MDOT has done extensive research and analysis in developing standards and guidelines for rails with trails. The recommended distance the trail should be from the rail is 15 feet, and this design criterion is being implemented on the Kennebec River Rail-Trail between Augusta and Gardiner. That trail is expected to be under construction this year.
- Meetings have been held throughout the corridor, starting with an initial scoping meeting last July and public meetings in Brewer, Ellsworth, Machias, and Calais in August.

- The consultants have met with an advisory committee, the Downeast Trail Advisory Committee. The consultants also met several times with MDOT officials to review the results of the analysis and preliminary recommendations.

John Balicki noted that all the material presented tonight is available on the World Wide Web.

## **Purpose and Need for the Downeast Trail**

Sally Jacobs, chair of the Sunrise Trail Coalition, reviewed the history of the proposed trail, the idea for which hatched 10 years ago. The goal is to create a four-season trail that would serve both visitors and residents and would be the first segment of the East Coast Greenway, a proposed 2,000-mile trail from Calais to Key West, Florida. Goals of the trail project are to generate economic development in Downeast Maine by attracting some of the tourists visiting Acadia National Park as well as to serve local residents with recreation and transportation options.

## **Description of the Downeast Trail Concept**

Paul Smith, project manager from Rizzo Associates, described the project and key findings from the engineering feasibility study.

- The 133-mile project would consist of 89 miles of off-road trails and 44 miles of on-road bicycle facilities.
- 81 miles would be a rail-with-trail along the Calais Branch Railroad right-of-way and about eight miles would be dirt roads or trails outside the railroad corridor.
- The rail-with-trail would generally be 12 feet wide, with an asphalt, stonedust, or compacted earth surface.
- About eight miles of dirt roads and snowmobile trails would be used.

Paul Smith said the proposed project was divided into 21 segments for analysis. Each segment was examined to determine the feasibility of building a trail alongside the railroad tracks. After identifying areas where a rail-with-trail project would be difficult to build due to land use, environmental, or topographic constraints, alternative locations for trails and on-road bicycle facilities were investigated.

Rizzo identified four basic types of trail and roadway design for the Downeast

Trail:

- Stonedust or asphalt trail
- Dirt trail
- Shoulder bikeway
- Shared roadway

**Stonedust or asphalt trails** would generally be 12 feet wide on a gravel base. This high-end type of multipurpose trail would provide a surface compatible for all types of bicycles, pedestrians, and wheelchairs.

**Dirt trails** would be built in the same way as the stonedust or asphalt trail with no gravel base and a surface of compacted earth. This trail would not be suitable for road or touring bicycles with narrow tires or wheelchairs. Dirt trails would be open to all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and cross-country skiers except where currently prohibited within the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge.

**Shoulder bikeways** would be created on segments of Route 1 and 1A by adding a paved shoulder of approximately six feet to both sides of the street.

**Shared roadway** segments include portions of Route 214 and Charlotte Road near Ayers Junction. Roads with wide lanes or shoulders less than six feet wide would be designated as "shared roadways."

Paul Smith described five types of trail construction that would be necessary along the 133-mile corridor: construction on level terrain or in utility corridors; construction at the bottom of the slope of an elevated section; major and minor berm widening; and timber platform. In the Brewer-Ellsworth area, the trail would be a rail-with-trail from Brewer to East Holden. At East Holden the trail would either follow Route 1A using a new, widened six-foot shoulder or it could follow a series of back roads part of the way, reducing the miles on Route 1A from 17 to about 2.5. Several locations, such as Phillips Lake and Green Lake, present problems combining the trail with the existing rail, and with no other options for roads, Route 1A will need to be improved and incorporated in the Downeast Trail system.

## Cost and Phasing

Paul Smith said the total cost estimate for the Downeast Trail as proposed is \$32 million. Rizzo divided the project into five phases:

**Phase 1 (33 miles total, 22 miles of off-road trails):** Includes segments from Ellsworth Falls to Ellsworth; Eastbrook to Sullivan; Whitneyville to Machias; existing dirt roads in the wildlife refuge; and snowmobile trails to South Street in Calais. Estimated cost: \$5.6 million.

**Phase 2 (21 miles total, all off-road trails):** Includes Ellsworth to Hancock; Hancock to Eastbrook; and Sullivan to Cherryfield. Estimated cost: \$9.6 million.

**Phase 3 (22 miles total, all off-road trails):** Includes the two segments from Jacksonville to Dennysville and Dennysville to Ayers Junction. Estimated cost: \$8.2 million.

**Phase 4 (17 miles total, all off-road trails):** This phase is one segment from Cherryfield to Jonesboro Station. Estimated cost: \$4.7 million.

**Phase 5 (7.3 miles total, all off-road trails):** This phase completes the Downeast Trail project with the Brewer to East Holden rail-with-trail. Estimated cost: \$3.9 million.

Paul Smith said the project is likely to take up to 15 years to complete, assuming the State of Maine continues to receive about \$3 million per year in TEA-21 Enhancement funds, the main source of money for trail projects. He suggested that considerable cost savings could be achieved if cooperative arrangements could be made with the National Guard, local sports clubs and technical colleges. Sally Jacobs said the state is entitled to money from offshore drilling fees to be used in coastal towns and is currently not receiving its share. These funds, which range from \$3 million to \$32 million, could be a source of funds for the trail.

## Discussion

*Will Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge allow the Downeast Trail on its land?*

Paul Smith said officials at the wildlife refuge have agreed, since bicycles and pedestrians are currently allowed on the dirt roads in the refuge. ATVs are not permitted in the refuge and therefore would not have access to these trail segments.

*How will emergency vehicles fire and ambulance—be provided for?*

Suggest MDOT supply local fire departments with four-wheel bicycles to ensure access to the trail at all points Paul Smith said the trail will be wide enough for a maintenance or emergency vehicle (EMS ambulance) and the bridges would be designed to support the load of these vehicles.

*Where will access to the trail, trailheads, and parking lots be located?*

John Balicki said in general, access to the trail will be at road crossings. Locations for parking, restrooms, and other access points will be identified with community input in the design stage.

*A dirt trail is not likely to be a year-round trail available to everyone. Suggest building a higher-quality trail that would not become a series of mud holes. There are examples in the area in which trails were ruined by ATVs.*

John Balicki said the proposed dirt trails would be done on an experimental basis in relatively short segments. MDOT would expect ATV users to help maintain the trails and keep them in good condition, and if the experiment is not satisfactory, the trail design would be changed. Paul Smith said that segments in wetland areas would be constructed to the specifications of the stonedust path.

*How were costs estimated for sections through the bog?*

Paul Smith said some sections were assumed to need fill and others would need timber platforms.

*Who is responsible for maintenance, which could be a significant cost?*

John Balicki said maintenance is an issue that has not yet been resolved. MDOT's bike path in Orono is 20 years old and has not had extraordinary maintenance requirements.

*Is a railroad operator really likely to take over a line that is shared with a bike path 15 feet from the rail?*

John Balicki said the federal government allows states to develop their own standards and guidelines for rail-with-trail projects. Extensive research on rail-with-trail projects around the country has been done to determine what is a safe distance. The Maine Coast Railroad will be operating rail service with the Kennebec River Rail-Trail bike path soon. MDOT could provide the railroad with additional insurance.

*My family is very excited about the trail. It would be worth spending some more money to get the trail off Route 1A so all types of cyclists would feel comfortable.* John Balicki said they are looking for alternatives to Route 1A such as Eastern Avenue out of Brewer connecting to other back roads.

*There is a lot of latent support for a high-quality trail, so MDOT should not always try to minimize the cost. Route 1A is a bad road for cycling. What is the decision-making process on trail design?*

John Balicki said MDOT is looking at alternatives to Route 1A in response to public suggestions. Cost is a major factor, and the goal of MDOT is to try to stretch dollars to build such a long trail.

*Is MDOT assuming the railroad would be restored after the trail is built? Wouldn't the railroad equipment damage the trail?*

Paul Smith said the goal would be to coordinate the two projects, especially since they are managed out of the same MDOT division.

*Don't wait for the railroad to be built to initiate the Downeast Trail. The railroad is a boondoggle and may never be restored.*

John Balicki said MDOT will not wait for rail restoration, whichever project gets funding first will proceed.

*Is it necessary to close Spring Street to motor vehicles to accommodate the trail? Couldn't Spring Street be a "shared roadway" segment, allowing access to motor vehicles?*

Paul Smith explained that the rail right-of-way will not accommodate the bike trail, so using Spring Street is essential to completing this segment. Spring Street is a very narrow (13 feet wide), neighborhood street that suffers from the effects of cut-through traffic from Route 1A. Keeping it open for motor vehicles would not provide sufficient width for safe bicycle travel. He said the real issue is that the intersection of Route 1A and Oak Street needs to be improved so vehicles won't be tempted to cut through the neighborhood. Note: A resident added that MDOT has agreed to add another lane to Oak Street to alleviate the problem.

*On the "shared road" segments, would there be any barriers to separate bicycles from cars?*

No, barriers are generally not provided and can be a hazard to motorists and bicyclists. Experienced cyclists are comfortable riding on a wide, paved shoulder. Pavement markings—a white line in this case—are very effective at keeping cars away from the shoulder area.

*Consider working with environmental groups and organizations to route the trail onto land they own as a way to cut costs and create an easier route.*

John Balicki said other routes would be considered in the design stage of the project.

## **Next Steps**

John Balicki reviewed the schedule and next steps. This meeting is one of four public meetings being held throughout the corridor to review and discuss the proposed Downeast Trail. The Executive Summary of the feasibility study will be prepared following the public comment period and mailed to those requesting it. Once the feasibility study is complete, the next task will be to build support for the

project, seek funding, and initiate design on a segment-by-segment basis. Creating coalitions to support the trail will be key to getting it constructed in a timely manner.