

SOUTHERN MAINE VISION FOR TRAINS AND TRAILS

Casco Bay Trail Alliance
October 2021

Background

During the 2021 legislative session, five complementary bills were enacted to study Maine's rail infrastructure, its potential use for expanded train service, and its potential for rail trail (bikeway) use where train service is not economically viable.

LD 1133 establishes a Rail Corridor Advisory Council process to advise the Commissioner of Transportation on future uses of currently unused state-owned rail corridors. LD 672 initiates the Rail Corridor Advisory Council process for the Mountain Division corridor. LD 227 and LD 991 study passenger train service viability between Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, and Bangor. LD 1370 directs Maine DOT to develop an Active Transportation Plan that may encompass trail use on some state-owned rail corridors.

This rail corridor debate has sometimes been framed as a "battle" between train and trail advocates. The purpose of this report is to demonstrate just how complementary the two visions are in Southern Maine; the opportunity to accomplish both public purposes: trains and trails. This is possible because the most logical corridors for expanded train service are totally different from the most logical corridors for rail trails.

The Passenger Train Vision

Amtrak trains currently run from Boston to stops in Wells, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Portland, Freeport and Brunswick. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority plans to relocate the Portland station to avoid trains having to "back up" to get to the main track north to Freeport and Brunswick. They are also planning a new stop at Maine Turnpike Exit 53. These are excellent projects that the Casco Bay Trail Alliance enthusiastically supports.

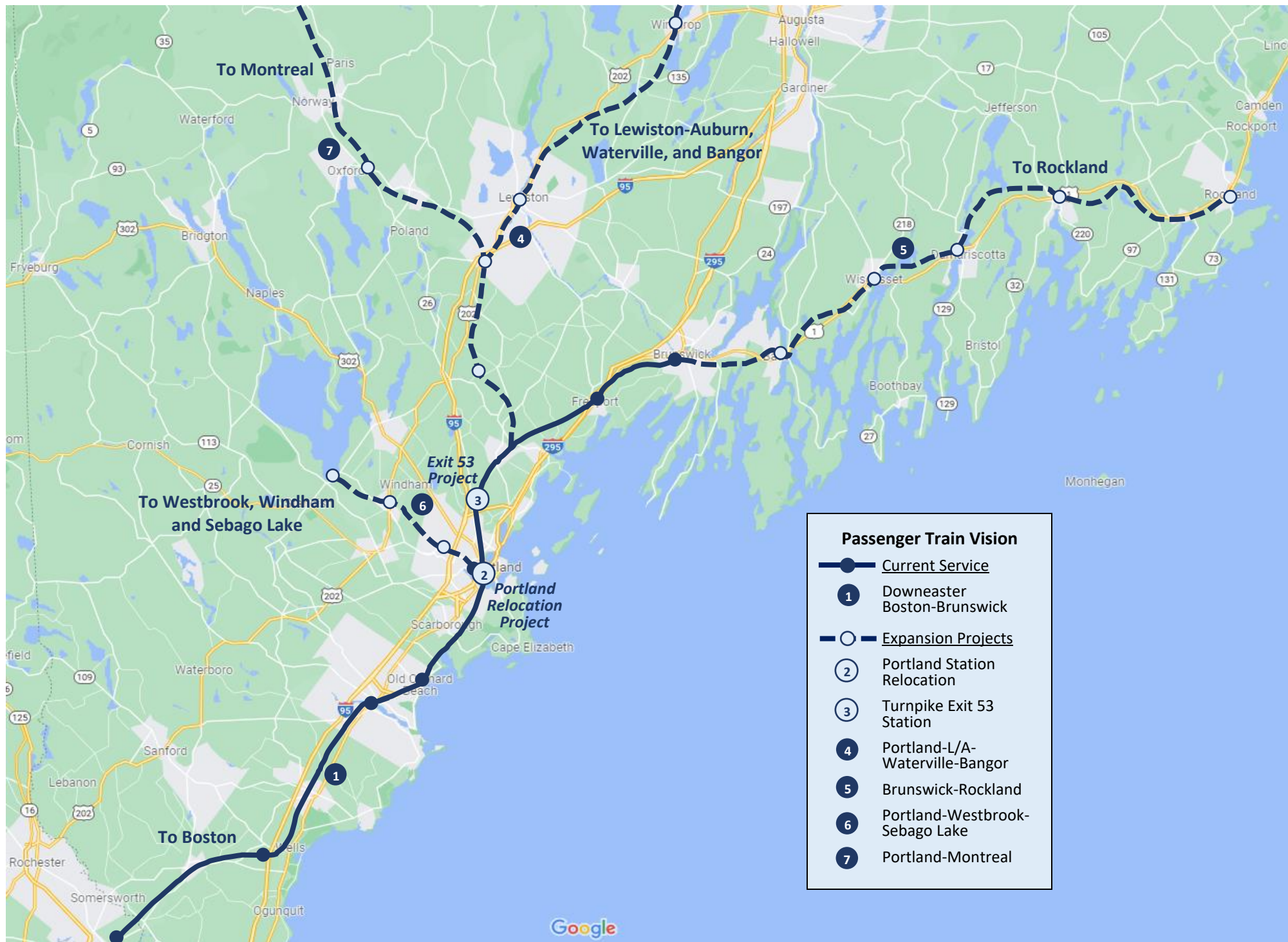
Also being considered are a potential Amtrak extension from Brunswick to Rockland, and potential passenger services from Portland to Lewiston-Auburn and Bangor. Our complementary vision for trains and trails connects Maine's largest population Centers by train using a continuous and *still-active* corridor from Amtrak's Portland station to Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor – all on the same line. Assuming such train services are determined to be economically viable, the Casco Bay Trail Alliance strongly supports these projects too.

The Active Transportation Vision

Maine Transportation Laws (Title 23, Chapter 10) define bikeway "as a vehicle way, paved or unpaved, upon which bicycles, unicycles or other man-powered vehicles may be pedaled." It further directs Maine DOT to "consider development of bikeways when developing capital improvement programs." We envision a bikeway network in southern Maine that links at least 9 existing trails through a capital improvement program consisting of 14 new bikeway connector projects. Many of these connector projects take advantage of unused rail corridors or, in selected cases, rail with trail projects. This *Active Transportation Network* would connect Portland with Lewiston-Auburn, Brunswick-Topsham, Augusta, and Bath to the north; Westbrook, Gorham-Windham, Sebago Lake and Fryeburg to the west; and South Portland, Scarborough, Biddeford-Saco, and Kittery to the south. This fully connected long-distance bikeway network would enable emission-free commuting and other active transportation, promote exercise and public health, attract economic development and tourism, and enrich the quality of life in Maine's communities. The network also fills in key gaps of the 3,000-mile East Coast Greenway from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida.

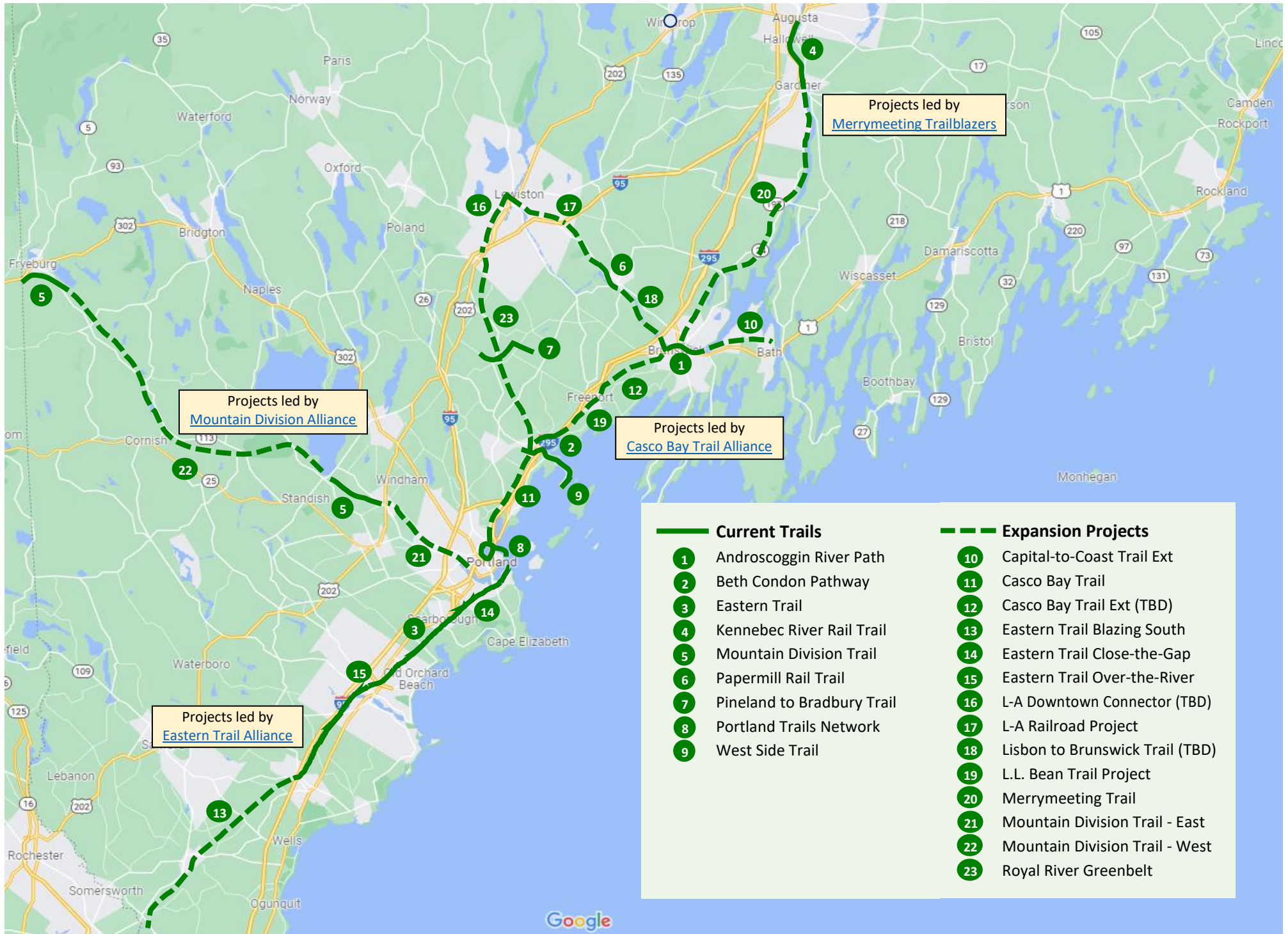
SOUTHERN MAINE *PASSENGER TRAIN* VISION

A Building Block for Maine's 2022 Passenger Rail Plan



SOUTHERN MAINE **BIKEWAY** VISION

A Building Block for Maine's 2022 Active Transportation Plan



COMPLEMENTARY VISION FOR PASSENGER TRAINS AND BIKEWAYS

Building Blocks for Maine's 2022 Active Transportation and Passenger Rail Plans

