

City of Rockland, Maine 2003 Mini- Bike Pathway Planning Study



MBNA Harbor Walk



Waterfront Park

Prepared by:
The Rockland Bicycle Pathway Committee,
Rockland Community Development Department, and
Midcoast Regional Planning Commission, with MDOT funding

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City of Rockland, Maine

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Purpose: The purpose of this in-house planning study is to identify, inventory, and eventually utilize existing resources for the incremental development of a bike pathway network within the boundaries of the City of Rockland. The members of the Bicycle Committee and the Community Development Department prepared this study. The following is a summary listing of the related areas that will be discussed in this report.

- RTAC-5 Bicycle Transportation Subcommittee report that identified high priority shoulder paving projects for the purposes of bicycle transportation
- Involvement in the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) Study for the location of a High Speed Ferry Facility at Atlantic Point which may involve land purchase and construction of off-site walks and pathways leading to the passenger train station and to downtown
- Tie into MDOT's plans for the renovations of the old City Hall into a railroad station.
- Revival of the Harbor Trail route concept
- Pathway connector between the schools on Broadway
- Identify old rail rights-of-way for a rural trail system and identify existing City owned land and public rights of way as part of an urban pathway
- Utilization of City-own property
- Link up with MBNA's Harbor Walk
- Link up with the off-street improvements to Lindsey Brook for storm drainage detention
- Solicitation of public opinion
- Funding

Background

The origins of this report emanated from the April 10, 2000 Rockland City Council meeting in which the Council adopted the following bicycle and pedestrian pathway goals for FY 2001 (July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001):

- The creation of a cross-town bicycle plan
- The development of the Harbor Trail and improvement of public access to the harbor
- Improvements to Lindsey Brook

The City Council action on the FY 2001 goals was followed up with the establishment of the Ad Hoc Cross-town Bicycle Path Committee on August 14, 2000. The Committee is composed of seven members of the public, as well as a member of the City Council, the Community Development Director, and the Police Chief as ex-officio members. The Committee was charged by City Council Resolve #49 to perform the following tasks:

“ . . . develop a plan for the location, design and construction of an attractive, safe and practical bicycle route through Rockland for both children and adults. The Committee shall also oversee the implementation of this plan. The committee will also make further recommendations concerning the appropriate improvements and additions to the bicycle and pedestrian ways within Rockland, as well as recommendations concerning the design and development of bicycle and pedestrian pathways to connect Rockland to neighboring communities. The Committee, in cooperation with the City Manager, shall prepare appropriate fund requests to be submitted to the County, State and Federal agencies.”

The project bike pathway goal received further support from the City Council on October 11, 2000. The Council unanimously voted to approve the submission of the planning grant application to the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) for a comprehensive study of a bicycle/pedestrian pathway network in the City; and to commit the City to the 20% required local match in the amount of \$6,000.

On June 25, 2001, the City was officially informed by MDOT that its application for a planning grant was denied. Following that decision the Committee embarked upon conducting its own low cost Mini- Bike Pathway Planning Study.

Public support for a bicycle pathway has been received from the *Courier Gazette*. The newspaper endorsed the concept on its August 10, 2000 editorial page. In addition, throughout the week of October 16, 2000, the *Courier Gazette* conducted a telephone poll on “Is a Bicycle Path Needed in Rockland?” Of the 77 respondents, 75% responded that Rockland needs a bicycle path.

Both the unsuccessful MDOT application and this study involved public participation including 13 Bike Pathway Committee meetings from September 18, 2000 to October 15, 2001; as well as a public hearing on the MDOT application that was held on January 31, 2001.

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee-Five (RTAC-5) Bicycle Transportation Subcommittee Report on Shoulder Paving Projects

This report is a summary of the work undertaken by RTAC-5 Bicycle Transportation Subcommittee to identify high priority paving projects for purposes of bicycle transportation throughout the RTAC-5 region, which encompasses the midcoast area from Winterport in Waldo County to Bath and Brunswick. The study was performed pursuant to the Maine Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) shoulder paving policy with the view that the Subcommittee’s recommendations will be considered when arterial and collector roads are scheduled for reconstruction. The study entitled “Bicycle Transportation Subcommittee Shoulder Paving Priorities Report” was completed in 2000, and by consensus vote, supported by the full RTAC-5 Committee on August 9, 2000.

One of the study's highest priorities for shoulder paving for bicycle transportation was Route 73 from Rockland to Route 131 in St. George. This route begins at the intersection of Route 1 (Park St.) and Route 73 in Rockland and continues south to Owls Head and South Thomaston, passing by the Owls Head Lighthouse and following the shoreline with its scenic ocean views. Improvements or upgrades to the 6.6 mile section of Route 73 from Rockland to St. George have been included in the present MaineDOT Six-Year Plan 2004 through 2009. Some shoulder paving improvements have been completed in Owls Head

Rockland Waterfront Assessment: Location of Intermodal Marine Facility

A year long study of the Rockland Harbor waterfront for the location of a marine intermodal facility capable of supporting vehicle ferries, passenger ferries or high speed ferries and cruise ships, resulted in MDOT recommending the Atlantic Point site near the South End Neighborhood as offering the best option for providing ferry and associated building and parking services. According to the study, which was completed in February 2001, there would need to be some upgrading/widening of existing roadways serving Atlantic Point. This could be limited to maintaining a single lane in each direction with the addition of a shoulder for improved pedestrian and bicycle passage for persons to travel to different destinations such as downtown, the train station or the waterfront.

Given the results of this study, MDOT has commenced a Phase II Study involving a further detailed analysis of the Atlantic Point site. It is expected that it will take 18 months to two years for the study to be completed; or, sometime in 2004. Again this study will also involve intensive public participation and scrutiny.

Recommendation: The City and the Committee track the status of the project as to how MDOT plans to disburse ferry and cruise ship passengers once they get to Rockland, and to involve itself in the detailed site analysis that will soon be underway.

Renovations to the Old Train Station

When rail service ended in the late 1950s, the former train station was converted into Rockland City Hall. The City outgrew this building and located to new quarters at 270 Pleasant Street. The building was then acquired by MDOT and renovated into office spaces for use by the Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP). With the advent of passenger train service returning to Rockland in 2004 -2006, MDOT has included \$400,000 for rehabilitation of the historic railroad station in the Biennial Transportation Improvement Program: Fiscal Years 2002-2003, as well as listed as a project in the MaineDOT Six Year Plan; 2004 through 2009. As a result, people will be brought near downtown Rockland, and they will need to utilize alternative transportation means in order to get to their destinations. This could mean construction of off-site sidewalks and pathways leading to the downtown, ferry facilities, the harbor, and to other places.

In conjunction with the present train station the present tenant, Coastal Community Action Program, has organized a group of volunteers to establish a walking path parallel to the old railroad tracks. This effort has involved cleaning up the area and clearing it of bushes and the other vegetation that has grown up over the years. The walking path is approximately 1000 feet in length and is widely used by neighborhood residents. It can also accommodate persons in wheelchairs.

Recommendation: The City and the Committee track the status of this project as to how MDOT plans to disburse train passengers once they get here, and to assist MDOT on this matter.

Revival of the Harbor Trail Concept

The Rockland Harbor Trail Coalition was the outcome of a recommendation by an international conservation exchange study of the Penobscot Bay region in 1991. A citizen's group worked for over 3 1/2 years to try to create a waterfront/harbor trail (see map) that would be a lasting asset to the quality of life in Rockland as well as provide people with a view of, and involvement with the future development and care of Rockland harbor. The Coalition worked with the city to obtain:

- \$80,000 in a U.S. Department of Transportation Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant for trail construction;
- two year-long grants from the National Parks Service for
- technical assistance; and
- a lease with MDOT to build a portion of the trail within the Atlantic Spur railroad right-of-way in the South End of Rockland.

Additionally, the Coalition worked on:

- creating, printing and distributing a "vision map" of the trail;
- signage;
- design and placement of the trail; and
- fundraising to obtain the necessary match (\$20,000) for the ISTEA grant.

In January 1993, the City Council approved Resolve #53 authorizing the use of City funds to pay for Harbor Walk signs. By January 1995 it was obvious that the City and the Rockland Harbor Trail Coalition could not agree on what/where the trail should be. Concerned by the progress being made on the trail, the Rockland Harbor Trail Coalition quietly ceased to exist.

Through the good offices of the Harbormaster and the Harbor Commission, occasional efforts are made to keep the concept of the Harbor Trail alive (i.e. the 'Blue Line'). Five sturdy 30" by 42' Interpretive Signs have been constructed. The signs depict important historical sites along the Harbor Trail. They were designed and assembled by CheTed Gallery of Rockport and paid for from private funds donated to the City by the former Rockland Harbor Committee on December 10, 2001. They will be installed at selected

sights along the "Trail". Arrangements have made to place these "trail markers" along the Harbor Trail in 2003.

Recommendation: The City and the Committee continue to pursue the development of a completed Harbor Trail from Snow Park to the Breakwater, and wherever possible, make it accessible for bicycles.

Pathway Connector between the Schools on Broadway

Residents of Broadway and neighboring streets, have witnessed, over the years, several accidents involving both automobiles and bicyclists. As a result, it became very clear that there are numerous safety issues existing on what is undoubtedly one of the busiest residential sections of Rockland.

Originally, the Bicycle Path Committee had hoped to connect a bicycle path from South School to Rockland District High School (see map). However the existing narrowness of Broadway from the Limerock St. intersection south, and from Park St. to Thomaston St., makes the pathway impossible to develop.

After conferring with John Balicki (State Bicycle Coordinator for the MDOT), it was suggested that the City of Rockland put together a formal proposal. This proposal will include but will not be limited to:

1. A 4-5' minimum width to designate solely as a bicycle path
2. To provide striping along pathway and signage, particularly at the intersection of North Main St., Rankin St., Limerock St., and Park St.
3. Include a diagram of Broadway, identifying intersections, streets and the differences in the width of the streets
4. Specifically identify length of the pathway, and which side, or sides, of the street will be designated pathways

After numerous conversations with Police Chief Alfred Ockenfels, City Engineer David Chittim, and John Balicki, the MDOT Bike Coordinator, there was consensus that a partial bike path would be advantageous for the safety of Rockland residents. A partial pathway between the High School, south to Limerock St. (where existing widths may be utilized) would be better than no bicycle path at all. Our views are that: A) this would improve the flow of bicycle traffic; B) Increase public awareness (particularly at intersections with proper signage; C) Minimize the cost for signage and striping to the city; D) Encourage bicycling as a recreational activity for individuals and families; and, E) Improve safety aspects of bicyclists and motorists.

Identification of Old Rail Rights of Way for a Rural Trail System or Loop (by David Kalloch)

One of the ideas that the committee has started to explore is the possibility of creating a loop or loops to allow biking and walking from the in-town area through to the outlying areas of the city (see map). This loop could someday continue to more rural and scenic

areas such as the Oyster River Bog and Dodges Mountain. The city owns land in both of these areas. This rural loop could also become the connector to other trails being developed by neighboring communities and groups such as the Georges River Land Trust and the Oyster River Bog Association. Some day we may be able to bike or hike from downtown Rockland out to a pathway along Old County Road, up over Dodges Mountain, through the Bog over to the Thomaston Town Forest Trail, or in the other direction over Pleasant and Ragged Mountain toward Camden Hills State Park.

The most obvious rural route is clearly visible on aerial photographs of the city. The old rail beds from the Limerock Railroad shows the routes from the quarries near Limerock Street and Old County Road to where it joins the main railroad near Park Street and continues to Atlantic Point and the lime kilns located in the South End. The rails also ran northerly along Old County Road, behind the present high school, crossing Maverick Street near the shopping center and across Camden Street to the kilns along the northern end of the harbor. Unfortunately, the old right of way is no longer owned by one individual or entity. In recent history, Central Maine Power Company owned the right-of-way but sold most of it off when they abandoned the transmission line that ran along it. Some of the old rail bed is still used today by pedestrians and by motorized vehicles such as ATVs and dirt bikes.

This very preliminary look at the concept of a rural pathway only intends to look at the ownership of the old right-of-way and other adjacent properties to it. The Assessor's office provided us with copies of aerial photographs with the property boundaries. We added the property owner information. We made special note of land owned by the City of Rockland, School Administrative District 5, and by civic organizations. We also noted residential developments and offices and businesses with many employees who walk and bike.

Our starting point is the intersection of Broadway and Park Street, assuming that one could connect with the in-town trails here. The easiest route from here would be to follow Park Street to Pleasant Street, and then on to the City-owned land at the solid waste facility. A more rural option would follow the CMP right-of-way from near the transformer station on Park Street to Oliver Street and beyond to the solid waste facility near Limerock Street. Other possibilities that could be explored include crossing the Knox County Jail property further up Park Street, or even following the old rail bed beside the warehouse, owned by A. Sewall from Park Street to the solid waste facility land. Motorized vehicles have created a well-worn dirt path that extends from Highland Street behind PikQuik westerly along the CMP right of way, over the Limerock Street Bridge by the landfill quarry. Most of this traffic crosses private property without the owner's consent. Besides the property damage and erosion caused by the rutted trails and stream crossings, these vehicles also pose safety problems at the Limerock Street Bridge and the intersection with Old County Road, and where other public streets are heavily traveled.

From the solid waste facility the old railroad continued north across land now used for boat storage and owned by Horatio Knight. The Knight property continues to a line of

smaller house lots along Talbot Avenue. Just to the east of the solid waste facility, on the northern side of Limerock Street is land that the American Legion purchased for the construction of its new home. Directly across Talbot Avenue from the Legion property is land owned by the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks. The Elks' land extends to Rankin Street just to the east of the old rail bed. CMP, Alan Harvey and Jon Dean own the former right of way from Talbot Avenue to Rankin Street.

The eastern end of the Meadows Subdivision is located on the rail bed to the north of Rankin Street. Four narrow lots are planned between the detention basins (one is already constructed) on either end of the Meadows Subdivision. Possibly a pathway beside the detention basin by Rankin Street could connect to the street in the development and continue along the planned basin at the north end of the Meadows Subdivision to the city-owned property beyond. This City owned section of the rail bed (part of the ball field property that extends to Old County Road) connects to Lawn Avenue Extension. The old right of way on the other side of Lawn Avenue Extension continues across two residential lots with homes, a larger undeveloped parcel owned by Linda Nuesse, and a lot with a single-family home on the south side of Cedar Street. The Nuesse lot is between the rear of MSAD #5 high school lot and the City land. Options here, if the Meadows development cannot be traveled, include traveling east on Rankin Street to the roadway into Coughlin Park or the Fieldcrest housing developments. Pathways could continue from the ends of these roads to the city recreational land abutting on the north.

The high school property is envisioned as the northern connection point with the in-town pathway(s), although some possibilities exist for continuing on to Maverick Street (Route 17) and even beyond to the Rockland Golf Club land. Other ideas that have not been pursued include: a connection, near upper Limerock Street, of this trail to the West Meadow Road and beyond to the Bog along Thompson Road and the CMP right of way; a connection near Coughlin Park could extend easterly over the cemetery and Maine DOT land to the MacDougal school; and the northern end of this trail, possibly from the city ball park land, could connect to a trail through or adjacent to the Achorn Cemetery to West Meadow and Tolman Road to a scenic lookout on the city owned land on Dodge Mountain.

The committee has taken no action beyond this very general layout of the concept. No property owners have been contacted. It is to be expected that some property owners may be less than enthused to have people walking or riding by their homes or properties. On the other hand, a trail that offers some controls over certain types of activities may be more acceptable.

Recommendation: Seek City Council guidance, direction and approval of this concept.

Utilization of City Owned Property

Following the landslide on Samoset Road, which destroyed two homes, the City acquired two lots, with a total of 1.97 acres, on the south side of the Samoset Road

abutting Rockland Harbor. The land offers nice scenic views of the harbor and could be developed in to a passive bike and pedestrian turnout with few physical improvements. The plateau or turnout area along the road is 227 feet in length and an average of 30 feet in depth or 6,800 square feet, or 0.16 acres. In addition, it could also serve as one of the links in the Harbor Trail System.

Recommendation: Seek City Council guidance on the issue and with the neighbors to gauge their feeling and acceptance of this proposal, with follow up signage.

Another City owned parcel is Sandy Beach situated off Ocean and Scott Streets, which connects the Dragon Cement Property (and perhaps the future home of a high-speed ferry and cruise ship facility) and the MBNA facility with its own Harbor Walk. This is a 0.36 acre parcel of land. It already has a stone gravel path, which is being overtaken by weeds, and an asphalt path leading to the sewer pump station.

Recommendation: Harbor Trail signage be placed in the vicinity of the park and the appearance of the path on the property be improved.

Link up with the Pathway Improvements Performed by MBNA

As part of their new facility off Water and Ocean Streets and fronting on the harbor, MBNA has constructed a 12-foot wide Harbor Walk consisting of an estimated 745 feet of wooden planks and 740 feet of cement concrete pavement for a total distance of approximately 1,385 feet (see map). This path will link the City owned Sandy Beach Park and the Municipal Harbor Park. If a ferry and cruise ship facility is constructed on the Dragon Cement Property, it could also link this facility to Harbor Park and Downtown and become another link in the Harbor Trail System.

The new Harbor Walk has attracted many people to the harbor and opened up a larger area of the harbor that was previously closed to the public. Now people leisurely stroll along the boardwalk and view the harbor. However, the drawback to the Harbor Walk is that where it ends on City owned property at Sandy Beach it turns into a cow path. Potentially, the Sandy Beach property could be connected to the Harbor Walk. Added to the MBNA Harbor Walk, it would create a continuous third of a mile pathway around the southeast portion of the middle harbor. The estimated length of any new cement concrete pathway located on the Sandy Beach City owned property would be about 340 feet. Estimated cost of any cement concrete pathway would be between \$14,000 to \$19,000. An additional 92 feet on the adjacent Dragon Cement Co. property ending at the terminus of the rail tracks would cost between \$4,500 to \$5,600. Eventually this could connect with the proposed MDOT facility at Atlantic Point for a high-speed ferry, and other recreational cruise ships. MDOT consultants for the Phase II High Speed Ferry Location Study at Atlantic Point have been asked to look at the location and the feasibility of bicycle and pedestrian pathways as part of the Phase II study.

Former Harbor Master Jon Trumble proposed extending the Harbor Walk northerly along the middle pier and wrapping it around Buoy Park for a distance of 990 feet. His

proposal, plus the MBNA Harbor Walk and a pathway along Sandy Beach and on a small piece of the Dragon Cement property, could create a continuous half-mile pathway along the middle harbor, which would be unique to the Midcoast.

The pulling together of these various disconnected pieces is in line with the Rockland Bike Pathway Committee's policy of creating a connective harbor trail in an incremental manner.

Recommendations: The Bicycle Pathway Committee endorse the concept of continuing the MBNA pathway to wrap around the Sandy Beach Park and extending it in the direction of Snow Marine Park; and support the concept of extending the pathway along the Public Landing and Harbor Park in conformance with future plans of the City for these locations.

Follow up as to whether or not bicycles will be allowed on the MBNA Harbor Walk; and if not, bicycle travel improvements be made along Water and South Main Streets.

Utilization of Public Rights of Way and Sidewalks

The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) is intending to reconstruct and perform realignment and drainage work on Main Street from Lindsey Street to Front Street for a distance of 0.53 miles. This is an Urban Highway Reconstruction backlog project and one that Rockland has been promoting for several years. The project is listed in the MDOT Six-Year Plan 2004 through 2009 for preliminary engineering design work, and is included for preliminary engineering funding in the amount of \$125,000 in the current 2003-2005 Biennial Transportation Improvement Plan (BTIP). The earliest it could possibly be funded as a construction project is in the 2005-2007 BTIP, or later.

Recommendation: The City and the Committee track the status of the project to ensure that during the engineering and design phase MDOT considers the inclusion of striping and shoulder width for a bike pathway.

The City obtained a \$77,000 grant in 2000 from the MDOT and matched it with \$18,000 in local funds to reconstruct approximately 1,500 feet of sidewalk from the entrance to the ferry terminal northerly to Atlantic Challenge for developing it as a segment of the Harbor Trail.

Recommendation: Harbor Trail signage be placed along this section of sidewalk.

On October 11, 2000, the City Council approved the location of the East Coast Greenway as it traverses Rockland. The Rockland route follows Main Street from the Owls Head Town Line northerly to Route 17 to the Rockport Town Line (see map).

Recommendation: East Coast Greenway signage be placed along this route.

Link up with the Improvements to Lindsey Brook.

As part of the effort to control flooding along Lindsey Brook, the City may acquire easements or land for holding the back storm waters during periods of heavy downpours. Along with the use of these areas as stormwater detention areas, the City may also want to consider the use of such areas as part of the off-street pathway network and open spaces. This would necessitate minimal structural improvements and could be performed in conjunction with the improvements for stormwater control.

Recommendation: The Bicycle Pathway Committee cooperate with the City Engineer and the Ad Hoc Lindsey Brook Committee on this project.

Bike Pathway Survey Results

For ten days in June 2001, questionnaires created by the Ad Hoc Cross-town Bicycle Path Committee were left at four locations in Rockland, soliciting ideas for routes and uses of a multi-purpose bike path. Designed to measure enthusiasm subjectively, the 41 returns (mostly from the Recreation Center and Second Read sites) are not a representative sampling of the views of Rockland residents. No attempt was made to obtain a profile of the respondents, for example by determining age or automobile use.

The 41 returns from the public suggested the following: (1) that a core of strong support exists for a multi-use bike path in Rockland; and (2) that the Committee has anticipated the primary uses for the path. A map on the reverse side of the survey form was not filled in by anyone and only one respondent volunteered a vision of a pathway network.

Recommendation: A more thorough survey along these lines would be fruitful, in both advertising the project and anticipating problems in public relations. Also, a community gathering to build support and liaison with grass roots efforts like the Tracks to Trees project, which recently held such a gathering, would perhaps be beneficial to marketing the bike pathway concept to the public.

Funding

Since good ideas are not implemented without money, the following funding sources have been identified.

- MDOT High Speed Ferry Project; and, Main Street from Lindsey Street to Front Street Reconstruction Project
- MDOT Transportation Enhancement funds
- City of Rockland Lindsey Brook Project
- City of Rockland Sidewalk Pavement Project
- City of Rockland South End Combined Stormwater/Sewer Separation Project