July 5, 2023

Dakota Howlett

Active Transportation Planner

Maine DOT Division of Public Outreach and Planning

16 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333-0016

Re: Bowdoinham’s MaineDOT BikePed Grant Application

On behalf of Bowdoinham’s Community Development Advisory Committee, we are proud to support the town’s DOT BikePed Grant application to extend the sidewalk along Main Street from its intersection with Center Street to Post Road. We are a town committee that addresses items in our town’s Comprehensive Plan relating to our local economy. One of our top priorities is to enhance a major pillar of our economic vitality—outdoor recreation opportunities, including safe walking and biking routes.

The Town would like to increase the village density and walkability. Enhancing outdoor recreation has become an important avenue for attracting people to our village center. Our existing marina, skatepark, and new ADA kayak launch to be installed this fall are major attractions to our waterfront parks in our village. Further, the Town also supports three different bike riding events as part of our annual open farm and studio day in July, a charity ride for the food pantry in August, and our birthday celebration in September. Moreover, a potential rail/trail passes through this property and is slated for exciting new development in the coming years.

In addition, our village includes the Three Robbers Pub and Country Store—our two primary businesses. In the summer, the Farmers’ Market, art gallery, boat launch, rowing club, and free concerts, are active on the waterfront and bring large crowds. The highway-only use has become incompatible with the many surrounding bicycle and pedestrian uses. The stretch along Main Street the Town is looking to address from its intersection with Center Street to Post Road is the most dangerous stretch of road we have in our town. Since 2003, the DOT Maine Crash Public Query Tool has documented 16 crashes, 6 of which included injuries, including one fatality. Most of these incidents were cars going off the road so getting pedestrians onto a sidewalk would bring increased safety and peace of mind our community members. We would also encourage going a step further an including a shoulder in this area give the growing number of bike riders more safety as well which is much needed on the deteriorating Route 125.

In Phase One of our Walkable Village Plan, the Town with DOT’s help, added paved sidewalks throughout the village over a decade ago which has been a tremendous asset for our community. There is a critical gap we are looking to address in Phase Two of the project which this grant could help complete. In total there is an additional mile of sidewalk the Town is aiming to install. The first half mile outlined in Town’s proposal would complete a safe one-mile circuit of sidewalks for pedestrians and connect vital village neighborhoods to community services, and cultural and commercial areas. More importantly, it will also cut in half the one mile gap along Main Street that will eventually connect our largest housing complexes in our community, which are also our only rent assisted developments we have on the outskirts of Main Street to the sidewalk network. Given other budget pressures in town, it looks like this important project cannot be completed without some help.

We strongly recommend the DOT to fund the development of our sidewalk network to help us accomplish many of our goals and bring safety and peace of mind to the community on this dangerous stretch of road. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Community Development Advisory Committee

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Jean de Bellefeuille, Chair

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Ian McConnell

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Leleah Parker, Secretary

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Wendy Rose, Co-Chair

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John Scribner