December 20, 2022

Stephen Cole

Regional Planning Coordinator

Community Services Div.

Maine DOT, Station 16, 24 Child St

Augusta ME 04333-0016

Dear Mr. Cole:

I am writing to you on behalf of Bowdoinham’s Community Development Advisory Committee. 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 village density and walkability. Enhancing outdoor recreation has become an important avenue for attracting people to our village center. Because we are situated on the Cathance River leading into Merrymeeting Bay, our town has been steadily developing this asset into attractive waterfront parks. A potential rail/trail passes through this property and is slated for exciting new development in the coming years.

Route 24 leads through our village past the Three Robbers Pub and Country Store—our two primary businesses—as well as our skatepark and waterfront parks. It has become a major thoroughfare for recreational biking. 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.

As a result, there are some major issues that need to be addressed that the Maine Department of Transportation can help with:

* The Route 24 and Main Street intersection in the village center is very unsafe. Cars come zooming along Route 24 through this critical spot without pausing. Two improvements need to be made: 1. a pedestrian crosswalk; and 2. Two “speed tables” which would slow down traffic.
* The addition of paved sidewalks throughout the village several years ago has been a tremendous asset for our community. A critical gap was left out of the initial paving, however, which would take people safely from the intersection of Ridge Road and Cemetery Road to the recreational field entrance area—a gap of about 225 feet. We would like to request help from Maine DOT to close this gap. In addition, we were only able to complete Phase One of these sidewalks. Our Walkable Village Plan lays out a Phase Two which would complete a safe, one-mile, circuit of sidewalks for pedestrians and connect vital village areas to community services and cultural and commercial areas. Given other budget pressures in town, it looks like this important project cannot be completed without some help.
* Route 24, comprising part of the interim route of the Merrymeeting Trail, is a much-loved route for bicycle riders between the Topsham town line and the Richmond town line. Unfortunately, the road has deteriorated significantly and the gravel shoulders are very unsafe. It appears as though Maine DOT will be re-paving Route 24 very soon given all the markers on the pavement. We request that the paving include adequate shoulders so that a safe bike lane can keep bikers and drivers from collisions.

We appreciate your consideration of these important priorities for Bowdoinham.

Sincerely,

Wendy Rose, Chair

Bowdoinham Community Development Advisory Committee

wendelynrose@gmail.com

Cc: Nicole Briand, Bowdoinham Town Manager

Jennifer Curtis, Bowdoinham Director of Planning and Development