

To: Bowdoinham Selectboard

From: Yvette Meunier, Director of Planning & Development

Date: February 2, 2026

Subject: Request for Permission to Apply for FY 2026 BUILD Grant — Preliminary Design & Final Engineering for Merrymeeting Trail Segment

Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation has released the FY 2026 BUILD Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity. The BUILD program supports planning activities needed to advance surface transportation projects toward construction. The grant will fund engineering design, drainage and surfacing plans, ADA access, safety improvements, cost estimating, and public engagement for the Merrymeeting Trail. For rural projects (under 200,000 population) there is no match required. Funds will be obligated no later than September 30, 2020 and must be spent by September 30, 2035. Applications are due February 24, 2026. More details here:

https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/FY_2026_BUILD_NOFO_Final.pdf

Project Description

The Town is allowed to submit three different applications to the BUILD Planning Grant. Here are the three suggested projects for your consideration:

1. Preliminary Design and Final Engineering for the 8.6-mile Bowdoinham–Richmond segment of the Merrymeeting Trail. From ½ mile south of the new park to a town owned parcel to Tulip Street in Richmond. (\$750,000).
2. Preliminary Design and Final Engineering for the 0.5-mile segment from Maily through the Bowdoinham Riverfront Park ending 0.5 miles south of the new park at a town owned parcel.
3. Preliminary Design and Final Engineering for the 2.2-mile segment from Maily through the Bowdoinham Riverfront Park ending 2.2 miles south of the new park at the new Hideaway Farm Preserve in Topsham near head of tide park.

We are also in the process of talking with Maine Department of Transportation and the Merrymeeting Trail Board of Supervisors to apply for the Preliminary Design and Final Engineering for the entire Merrymeeting Trail. If either organization is interested in partnering for the complete trail, then we would recommend applying for the design of the entire trail.

Funding Details

- No minimum award for planning grants.
- Maximum award: \$25 million.
- Rural communities may receive up to 100% federal funding.

Benefits to Bowdoinham

- Advances a long-planned regional trail.
- Improves transportation connectivity, economic activity, and public health.
- Positions the town for future construction funding.

Request for Selectboard Action

We request authorization to apply for the FY 2026 BUILD Planning Grant, commit any required match, and coordinate with Richmond, Topsham, BTLT, MaineDOT, and regional partners.

Next Steps

Upon approval, staff will finalize the application and submit by February 24, 2026.