



February 5, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to provide the Bicycle Coalition of Maine's (BCM) enthusiastic support for the application submitted to the USDOT RAISE program by the MaineDOT, in partnership with the City of Portland and the IDEALS Roux Campus, for a project titled "*East Deering: Pathways to Bridge the Gap.*"

As the leading statewide education and advocacy organization for people on bikes or walking, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine is committed to increasing opportunities for active transportation and recreation. This project does just that, and it addresses a need to improve the bicycle and pedestrian access between the Portland downtown and points north.

A bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the mouth of the Back Cove, next to the existing I-295 bridge, will be a critical addition to Portland's active transportation network. The new bridge and additional proposed improvements to bike/ped access on Tukey's Bridge will make travel easier to/from communities north of Portland, facilitating and encouraging more people to commute by bicycle (including e-bicycles, which greatly extend the comfortable range of a bike commute and are a rapidly expanding mobility option in the region).

This project would also help address concerns within the Portland active transportation community that the Roux Institute project has, until now, seemed too automobile-centered and dependent. Providing a convenient and safe active transportation alternative to visitors, students, staff, and faculty of the Institute, as well as to other area bike commuters, the bridge will help reduce the considerable anticipated new traffic demands on the neighborhood streets near the campus. The active transportation improvements proposed in this application will provide a safe and convenient route from the commercial center of downtown Portland to the Roux campus and other points north, and will incentivize visitors to travel by foot or bike rather than motor vehicle.

And in addition to all its functional qualities as a transportation facility, the new bridge and other improvements to the Tukey's Bridge crossing will provide beautiful views and better access to the Portland waterfront. The bridge will quickly become a beloved and iconic addition to Portland's Eastern Prom.

"*The Pathways to Bridge the Gap*" project is good for Portland, good for the region, and good for Maine. We urge you to support the joint request of the City of Portland, the Roux Institute, and MaineDOT.

We are happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Jean Sideris, Executive Director
Bicycle Coalition of Maine