

2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Active Transportation

Maine residents throughout the state should all have access to safe places to bike and walk for work, school, recreation, or transportation. Currently, many people report that they do not feel safe walking and biking on Maine's roadways. By providing more active transportation (especially bicycle and pedestrian) facilities, we make every street safer for all users and create vibrant communities.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) invites you to share your position on issues related to making Maine a better and safer place to bike and walk. Your answers will be made public so voters can better understand your position on active transportation.

Candidate Name

Janet Mills

Running For

Governor

District

Statewide

Do you think active transportation should be a priority for the state?

Yes

Why do you think active transportation should/should not be a priority for the state?

Our 3-year Work Plan released in January provides more than \$38 million for active transportation including 25 stand-alone active transportation projects in 18 different communities across Maine. This is in addition to other projects funded as a part of a highway, bridge, or other capital project that also integrate active transportation improvements; based upon numbers for the last 3 years, we are expending on average \$20 million per year in bike/ped improvements delivered through non-stand-alone projects.

MaineDOT's Active Transportation Program supports local and regional efforts to improve the walkability, bikeability, livability, and social vibrance of communities. Support is provided through educational programming, on-site technical assistance, and grant funding for the design and construction of active transportation infrastructure improvements. Sidewalks, pedestrian crossing improvements, off-road transportation-related trails, and projects that address the safety of vulnerable roadway users and ADA compliance concerns are all examples of these enhancements.

The first ever Statewide Active Transportation Plan (SATP) is currently being developed and is designed to gather input from around the state. It will drive investments for years to come. The SATP will lay out MaineDOT's vision and goals for active transportation, assess current programs and practices and identify implementable strategies for meeting the vision and goals.

Additionally, this active transportation plan will review key corridors for potential trail-until-rail options and assess state highway corridors for potential shoulder enhancements.

The end goal is to develop a plan that guides active transportation policy and investment decisions at MaineDOT, outlines potential rail and highway corridors that can be used to grow active transportation options, and includes a list of potential investments that assist in meeting the established vision and goals. The SATP will complement MaineDOT's Long-Range Transportation Plan as part of MaineDOT's Family of Plans.

The SATP will also be used to develop criteria and prioritize 40 to 60 miles of rural, lower class state and state aid highways for new shoulders, and an additional 60 to 80 miles for longer term consideration. It is anticipated that the plan will be finalized by January 2023.

Do you agree that Complete Streets (a design philosophy that provides safe accommodations for all users based on the context of the street) is the approach Maine needs to take when designing and reconstructing roads, even if it means prioritizing people walking or biking in certain contexts?

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has a long history of providing for the needs of all modes of travel in the planning, programming, design, rehabilitation, maintenance, and construction of the state's transportation system. Complete Streets policies have a foundation in federal law, guidance, and best practices, and have been signed into law or policy in states and communities throughout the nation.

The intent of this policy is to help ensure that all users of Maine's transportation system - including bicyclists, pedestrians, people of all ages and abilities, transit users, and motor vehicle users - have safe and efficient access to the transportation system.

My Administration strongly supports a multimodal transportation system, and recognizes that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, separated facilities, transit stops, ADA-accessible routes, etc., are crucial elements of the transportation system. In addition, a safe, multimodal, and vibrant transportation system is vital to Maine's economy, and to the community environments which are such an important component to our transportation system.

Do you support increasing funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, even if it means deferring some motorist roadway projects?

Whether walking to get the mail, biking to school or work, or simply walking or biking around the block, many of us are pedestrians or bicyclists at some point during our day. Some people walk or bike for recreation, to save money, or to reduce pollution. Others walk or bike because they do not or cannot drive. This includes our children and many of our elderly. It's important for communities to recognize this and to give people the opportunity to walk and bike efficiently, and most importantly, safely.

To that end, my administration is investing in a number of projects that will support bicyclists and pedestrians, such as:

- Mountain Division Trail
 - The Maine Mountain Division Trail (MDT) is a 6 mile rail-with-trail built by MaineDOT along the abandoned Mountain Division Rail Corridor connecting the towns of Gorham, Windham, and Standish. This is the first section paved and open of the long-term vision of the Mountain Division Alliance, Portland Trails and the Sebago to the Sea Coalition to connect Portland to Fryeburg for both rail and trail. MaineDOT currently owns the section between Fryeburg and Westbrook with hopes of acquiring the remaining section linking to Portland.
- The Kennebec River Rail Trail
 - In partnership with the Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail and local municipalities, MaineDOT has recently completed the Kennebec River Rail Trail (7 miles), connecting Augusta, Hallowell, Farmingdale, and Gardiner along the MaineDOT-owned rail corridor. This trail is one of the most heavily used in the state, because of its proximity and connectedness to the four downtown areas. There is currently an initiative in development to connect the Kennebec River Rail Trail to the Brunswick Bicycle Path by creating the Merrymeeting Trail (Gardiner to Topsham). This 20-mile trail could eventually form part of the East Coast Greenway as a continuous 34-mile off-road bicycle/pedestrian facility along the Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers.
- The Down East Sunrise Trail
 - The Down East Sunrise Trail is being built along an 85- mile trail corridor that roughly parallels the Calais Branch rail line from Brewer to Calais. The Maine Department of Transportation and the Maine Department of Conservation are working together to develop the Calais Branch Rail Corridor Rehabilitation and Multi-Use Trail Project. This interagency effort will rehabilitate and preserve the rail corridor for future rail use as well as provide a wide, compact gravel base, multiuse trail for snowmobiles, ATVs, pedestrians, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, equestrians and many other outdoor enthusiasts. The trail will be built using the existing rail bed from Washington Junction to Ayers Junction. The two-mile section from Ellsworth to Washington Junction will be a Rail with Trail along the existing trail corridor that runs adjacent to the rail.
- The Eastern Trail
 - The Eastern Trail is a multiuse, off-road trail that is being created as part of the East Coast Greenway long-distance urban trail project. The trail is currently located on-road and an interim route has been identified connecting Kittery to Calais. The new off-road sections are being built along the abandoned Eastern Railroad Corridor. MaineDOT has already constructed sections of the trail in South Portland, Scarborough, and Old Orchard Beach and trail connections to Saco, Biddeford, Arundel and Kennebunk are all in the final stages of development. The envisioned 57-mile trail will eventually connect Kittery to Portland and will become a crucial link

on the East Coast Greenway's 3,000-mile route between Florida and the Canadian border.

The number of pedestrian fatalities in Maine doubled in 2021 compared to 2020, and eight pedestrians and one cyclist have died on Maine roads in 2022 to-date (August). What will you do to make our streets measurably safer for people biking, walking, and using wheelchairs?

MaineDOT's *Heads Up Pedestrian Safety Project* targeted 21 communities that experienced 69% of all the state's pedestrian crashes. We have currently delivered 15 Pedestrian Safety Action Plans to these communities and have an additional three in development. We are in the early stages of the project with the final three communities. To date, MaineDOT has committed approximately \$6.5 million in funding to support municipal implementation of the *Heads Up* recommendations found in their community action plan.

How would you support transportation options for the 24% of Mainers who don't or can't drive?

Through MaineDOT we would continue to invest in multimodal options with a focus on targeted transit options, including microtransit. MaineDOT has been working collaboratively with the Departments of Health and Human Services and Labor to ensure that existing on-demand services and programs are as customer friendly as feasible.

Forty years ago, more than 60% of school children in the US walked or rode a bicycle to school. Today, that figure is less than 10%. This decline in bicycling and walking and physical activity in general has been mirrored by dramatic increases in negative health impacts for kids. What would you do to reverse this trend?

The merging of smaller, neighborhood based public schools into larger, community schools, coupled with constructing new schools where land is less expensive and more available (more removed from neighborhood/urban settings) has certainly contributed to this decline. Parent choice, including before and after school care has also played a part in the decline. Nevertheless, all users of the system need to feel safe while traveling.

MaineDOT has recently established a Village Partnership Initiative designed to work with communities on transportation corridors allowing municipalities to make their village areas more walkable, bicycle-friendly, and business-friendly. The Village Partnership Initiative will focus on projects in lower-speed areas where people meet, walk, shop, and do business on a human scale. Our iconic New England villages are part of who we are, part of our brand, and a key part of our economy and quality of life.

When was the last time you rode a bike?

Within the last year

Do you walk?

For errands, for health/recreation, and for other reasons

Is there anything else you would like to share about active transportation in Maine?

Active transportation is part of our Maine brand. Our residents expect safe, easy access to trails, paths and bikeways. Our over 22 million visitors a year enjoy and expect easy access to

active transportation opportunities. Through targeted investments and partnerships we can work together to continue to grow active transportation options for Maine.

Would you be interested in a BCM-led bike ride in your community? The BCM would gladly lead a small (3-8 people), short ride for elected officials and key stakeholders in your area. We can provide bikes, as needed, and all rides will cover basic bike safety demonstrations and be tailored for your community.

Yes

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