
Acadia Gateway Center News – August 2007

Public Meeting Scheduled

WHEN: September 25, 2007, 7:00–9:00 PM
WHERE: Trenton Elementary School

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) will host a public meeting to discuss Trenton transportation investment including the Acadia Gateway Center, highway resurfacing, changes to the Route 3 and Route 230 intersection, airport improvements and the proposed Acadia Scenic Byway extension. The MaineDOT will present updates on all of these projects. This presentation will highlight ways that the public can participate in planning and help create a center that benefits Trenton, surrounding communities and Acadia National Park. Persons attending will be encouraged to ask questions and submit comments. If you cannot attend, please send written comments.

How can the public provide input?

Come to the next public meeting, call or e-mail us with your comments and questions.

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Update

Residents of Trenton received an earlier newsletter in August 2006 that summarized the Acadia Gateway Center design concept and answered some frequently asked questions. This current newsletter describes what has happened since then. *There is another formal public meeting scheduled for April 2008.*

MaineDOT Coordinating Major Transportation Investments

The MaineDOT is working with Route 3 corridor communities in Hancock County to improve safety and efficiency. Residents have expressed concerns about traffic congestion, accidents, air quality and quality of life along the Route 3 corridor.

A coordinated strategy to improve traffic flow, provide better traveler information and give people more choices in how they travel is underway.

MaineDOT has planned major improvements in Trenton. Plans are also underway to improve transit connections in Ellsworth and to provide year-round bus and park-and-ride services between Bangor and Bar Harbor. The Trenton comprehensive plan, adopted by the voters in November 2006, supported many of these improvements.

Trenton Receives \$16.1 Million in State Transportation Support for 2008-2009

These improvements, with a total value of \$16.1 million for Trenton, will help promote the smooth and safe flow of traffic within and through the town. The improvements include the following:

Road Improvements: \$3.1 million

Intersection Improvements: (\$1.4 million) This project will realign the intersection of Routes 3 and Route 230 with a new airport access road. A traffic signal will be installed, if warranted by MaineDOT analysis, greatly improving the safety at this busy and sometimes hazardous intersection.

Route 3 Highway Resurfacing: (\$1.7 million) This project will improve the road surface, shoulders and drainage beginning at Route 204 and extending to the Thompson Island Bridge. Access management strategies, and site distance improvements will be encouraged during this project design. These improvements will preserve the road surface and improve traffic flow through this busy area.

Airport Improvements: \$3.7 million

Runway Improvements: Grants have been awarded to improve runway safety, remove obstructions, purchase easements, and to acquire land and airport snow removal equipment. These improvements are part of the ongoing effort to provide Hancock County with an airport that offers reliable passenger service.

Acadia Gateway Center: \$9.2 million

This grant substantially pays for the completion of Phase I of the Acadia Gateway Center, which is described in detail below.

Other Transportation Projects

Scenic Byway Designation: A committee, composed of town residents and businesses is working with the MaineDOT and the Hancock County Planning Commission on a corridor plan and proposal to extend the Route 3 Scenic Byway from its current ending point at Thompson Island to the Trenton-Ellsworth line. Scenic byway designation will help Trenton to plan for future preservation of scenic, recreational and historic assets along Route 3 and to apply for scenic byway planning and improvement grants.

Improved Directional Signs: Many Trenton residents are frustrated by the volume of through traffic on Route 230 and Bayside Road. Planning is underway to locate signs at various points in Ellsworth indicating that Route 3 is the best route for visitors to take to get to Acadia National Park. The proposed Acadia Gateway Center is expected to draw additional visitor traffic from Route 230 to Route 3.

Ellsworth Strategic Transportation and Recreation Center (STAR): The MaineDOT and various other groups are studying the feasibility of a passenger facility to be located close to High Street and the Calais Branch Rail Line. This facility would provide visitors with information and access to an excursion rail tour, an 86-mile multi-use trail, intercity bus service and transit connections to Mount Desert Island as well as other destinations in Hancock and Washington counties.

This facility would house the Ellsworth Chamber of Commerce, an information room, bus and automobile parking and ticket sales for the excursion rail. This facility would serve as the next link in a passenger transportation system that will provide more convenient bus service between Hancock County, Bangor, Portland and beyond.

Island Explorer Expands Bus Service

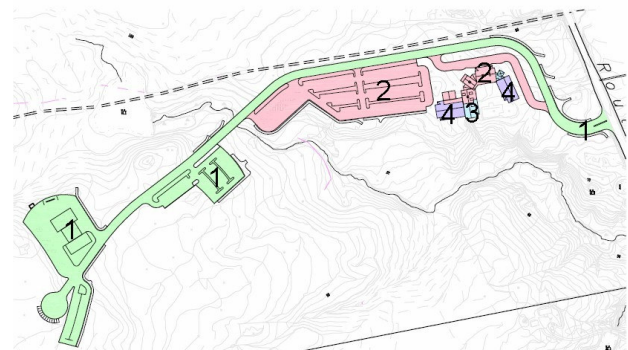
New buses are arriving this summer to replace older buses and enable Downeast Transportation Inc., a non-profit transportation provider in Hancock

County, to improve services to Trenton and Mount Desert Island. These buses are part of the overall effort to reduce vehicle congestion in Trenton and on Mount Desert Island.

Acadia Gateway Center: Questions And Answers

Why is this facility needed? Automobile congestion within Acadia National Park and on the roads to the park has been a concern for many years. The Island Explorer has been successful at removing cars from the park, but is currently designed to serve people on Mount Desert Island. The new Acadia Gateway Center would invite day visitors to use the Island Explorer service starting in Trenton, as well as commuters to the island who would use year-round commuting buses. MaineDOT is required by law to consider alternatives prior to undertaking highway widening projects. Alternatives, such as highway preservation, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities can save money, reduce pollution and increase quality of life. Also, taxpayers cannot afford to pay for endless highway widening projects when there are other, less expensive ways to manage traffic congestion.

What Will be Built and When? As presently foreseen, there are four phases to the project. The first phase, scheduled for completion in 2009, would include some commuter and staff parking, utilities and a bus maintenance facility. The facility would accommodate all aspects of Downeast Transportation's business including; the seasonal Island Explorer bus service, year-round bus service, and weekday commuter bus service.



Phase 2 (targeted completion date: 2012) would include the construction of the transit facility, National Park information and pass sales, regional chamber of commerce information area and restrooms.

Phase 3, (targeted completion date: 2012) would include the construction of the National Park Service's welcome center. The park's Hulls Cove Visitor Center in Bar Harbor would continue to operate, while the park's smaller information center on Thompson Island may be closed when its functions move to the AGC.

Phase 4, proposed, would consist of theaters and the development of the auxiliary space on the site, if viable uses were identified.

Will MaineDOT provide Trenton with financial support for hosting the Acadia Gateway Center?

The MaineDOT is not permitted to make unrestricted payments to towns for transportation infrastructure. However, as described above, the MaineDOT has proposed to invest more than \$16.1 million in Trenton for highway and airport improvements as well as Phase I of the Acadia Gateway Center.

The Crippens Creek property presently pays about \$1,600 annually in taxes, which would be lost since the land would no longer be subject to property taxation. The lost tax revenue represents less than 1% of approximately \$2.4 million raised in property taxes in Trenton.

Would Trenton have to provide any municipal services to the site?

Local agencies met in May 2006, to discuss emergency services. The group determined that existing municipal services had the capacity to provide coverage for the proposed facility. The Trenton fire department would provide primary services and County Ambulance would provide ambulance service. Basic safety, security, snow removal, solid waste removal, and recycling services would be provided by the facility occupants. Since there is no residential development proposed for the property, there would be no impact on the school system.

What are the effects on the environment?

An environmental assessment was completed and is available at www.acadiagatewaycenter.com. The Federal Transit Administration and National Park Service have concluded that this project will have no significant adverse environmental impacts. There are extensive areas of wetlands, which are protected by state and federal law. All buildings, other structures, and parking areas would be located to minimize impacts on any wetlands. Vehicle storage, maintenance, and fueling operations would

be designed in accordance with federal, state, and local guidelines.

Approximately 27 acres of the 369-acre parcel would be developed. The remaining land would be permanently protected as open space. The undeveloped land likely would be managed by a local land conservation group, and some outdoor recreational activities might be allowed by the landowners. Preserving areas of open space is consistent with the recommendations of Trenton's comprehensive plan.

How would this project affect traffic congestion and safety?

The project would be designed to assure that all traffic safely enters and exits the site from Route 3. Overall, the project should have a positive impact on traffic flow since it will make it easier for more people to car pool or travel by bus rather than car, thereby reducing traffic congestion on Route 3. If public transit options are not introduced, traffic on Route 3 is projected to increase at a rate of 2.5 percent per year. Traffic on Route 3 in Trenton is already about 20 percent over its design capacity during peak times. The project is part of a multi-prong effort to address traffic congestion between Bangor and Mount Desert Island. Road improvements, expanded transit services and better driver information are expected to contribute to safer and more efficient travel.

Would the increased use of buses hurt local businesses?

The local and regional chambers of commerce met in May 2006, to discuss how this facility can help their businesses. Designed correctly, the Acadia Gateway Center would help people find information about local businesses. Chamber of Commerce representatives would be on hand to provide information about local business.

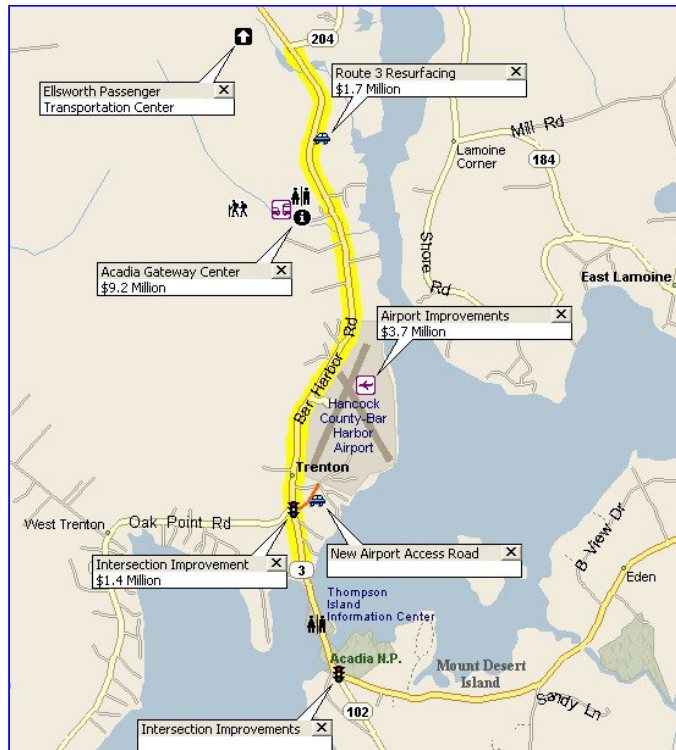
Most visitors will still use their cars to visit Acadia National Park, and may be more likely to visit Trenton businesses after highway improvements make it easier to exit and enter. People who continue their journey by bus will still see Trenton businesses and have an opportunity to return later by bus or car.

The Center would be designed to minimize competition with private sector operations. There are no plans for restaurants or general retail operations on the property. A small sales outlet selling park-related items such as books on park history and trails and some vending machines are possible.

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Maine Department of Transportation Investments Targets to Route 3 Corridor
Log on to www.AcadiaGatewayCenter.com for more information, photos, and project updates!