



September 14, 2015

Ms. Helen Donaldson
Planning and Development Department
City of Portland, Maine
389 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101-3509

**Subject: Kennebec Street Future Development
Trail and Street Development Between Brattle Street and Forest Avenue
Meeting Request**

Dear Helen:

On behalf of our client, Northland Enterprises (Northland), we are writing to request a meeting with the City regarding the future development of Kennebec Street and the proposed Somerset Street extension. Specifically, we would like to explore with City staff potential options for trail and street development between Brattle Street and Forest Avenue that could allow for safer and more efficient use of the available space, while encouraging business growth and development.

Northland owns properties on either side of Kennebec Street and is exploring ways to put these sites to their highest and best use, while incorporating street infrastructure that allows safe and efficient travel for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The recently approved plans for the former Century Tire site include construction of a sidewalk and multi-use trail along the north side of Kennebec Street between Brattle Street and Forest Avenue. The multi-use trail transfers to an on-street bikeway at the existing Enterprise Rental Car site. As we observed during the review process, this configuration has potential to create conflicts between bicycle traffic on the trail, vehicles both travelling along the street, and turning into and out of driveways. The provision of parallel parking on the north side of the street also creates the potential for conflicts between parked vehicles and trail users.

It appears that a more favorable solution could be found by diverting the trail along the line of the former railroad tracks behind the two existing buildings on the south side of Kennebec Street (as delineated on Alternative 6 in the Somerset Street Extension Feasibility Study, attached). It is our understanding, based on discussions with Mike Bobinsky that the Department of Public Works (DPW) currently uses this space for the storage of the plows during the off season. However, once the trucks are relocated to Canco Road, this land may no longer be necessary for Public Works operations. The former rail bed is currently under-utilized and provides a place for homeless people to sleep and congregate. As a result, tagging of buildings and other illegal activities are commonplace in this poorly lit and largely un-maintained area. If the trail is located on this land, Northland will work with the City to maintain the area as a well-lit and safe passageway. The design of 200 Kennebec Street could also be adjusted to feature more windows along the south side of the building, creating greater visibility and connectivity to the adjacent trail area.

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This configuration would result in a significant reduction in the extent of potential conflicts between street and trail users and thus improve overall safety. It would also allow parallel parking to be incorporated on both sides of Kennebec Street, increasing the potential for small retail business growth along this section, while maintaining the pedestrian connectivity with adjacent streets. Northland has met with several local users who are interested in the building along Kennebec Street, but their interest is tempered by a fear that street parking is insufficient and will be further compromised once the redevelopment commences on city owned parcels currently used by the DPW. Being able to provide parallel parking on both sides of Kennebec Street would help draw more tenants and patrons to this neighborhood, and in our opinion would help clarify that the street is a one way street for traffic heading west on Kennebec.

Relocating the trail extension to the south side of Kennebec Street would also appear more feasible in the section to the east of Brattle Street. It appears that there is more available undeveloped land (associated with the former rail bed) on the south side of the street than there is on the north side. The Post Office maintenance facility on the north side of the street is privately owned and has an extended lease period that significantly reduces the potential for near-term redevelopment.

In summary, we feel that relocating the multi-use trail to run along the former rail bed west of Brattle Street, as shown on the attached figure has a number of significant advantages over the currently planned route on the north side of the Kennebec Street. Northland is willing to support development of a trail at this location, and contribute to the construction costs associated with the necessary street improvements. If City staff is agreeable, we would like to schedule a meeting to discuss how we can work together to develop a plan that will meet the needs of all street and trail users, and create an environment that is favorable for economic growth in the area.

Sincerely,

FAY, SPOFFORD & THORNDIKE



Andrew D. Johnston, P.E.
Principal Engineer

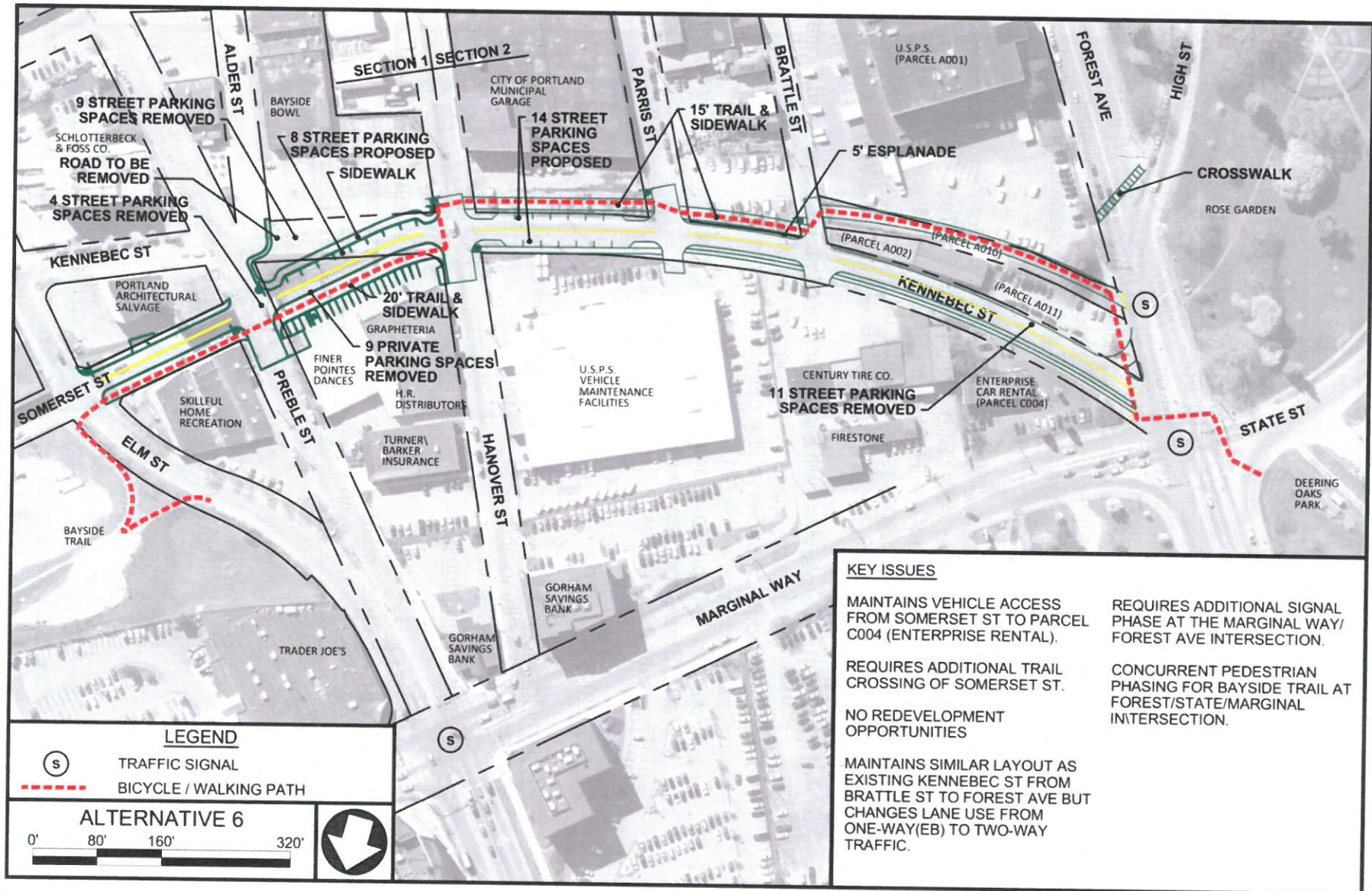
ADJ/cmd

Enclosure

c: Brad Fries

Somerset Street Extension Feasibility Study

Figure 8 – Alternative 6



LEGEND

(S) TRAFFIC SIGNAL

--- BICYCLE / WALKING PATH

ALTERNATIVE 6

0' 80' 160' 320'

KEY ISSUES

- MAINTAINS VEHICLE ACCESS FROM SOMERSET ST TO PARCEL C004 (ENTERPRISE RENTAL).
- REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAIL CROSSING OF SOMERSET ST.
- NO REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- MAINTAINS SIMILAR LAYOUT AS EXISTING KENNEBEC ST FROM BRATTLE ST TO FOREST AVE BUT CHANGES LANE USE FROM ONE-WAY(EB) TO TWO-WAY TRAFFIC.
- REQUIRES ADDITIONAL SIGNAL PHASE AT THE MARGINAL WAY/ FOREST AVE INTERSECTION.
- CONCURRENT PEDESTRIAN PHASING FOR BAYSIDE TRAIL AT FOREST/STATE/MARGINAL INTERSECTION.