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Verizon donates its portion of the Eastern Railroad corridor to the Eastern Trail Alliance

Verizon Communications who owned a short section of the historic Eastern Railroad corridor in Old Orchard Beach today donated that land to the Eastern Trail Alliance. The Eastern Trail Alliance, a Maine 501 (c) 3 non-profit land trust, has a vision of reopening the railroad corridor, first open in 1842, as a recreation and nonmotorized greenway connecting Kittery with Casco Bay at Bug Light Park in South Portland.

The donated land lies in Old Orchard Beach extending westerly from the OOB-Scarborough town line. It is the first fee ownership of the corridor by the ETA. A year ago, Biddeford & Saco Water Company granted a permanent trail easement to the ETA for the section of the corridor it owns in Saco and Old Orchard Beach.

According to ETA President John Andrews this land donation is one more critical step in fulfilling a dream. Andrews also said this donation demonstrates Verizon's commitment to livable communities and supports Governor King's initiative for a healthier Maine.

The dream of reopening the corridor has been endorsed by the 12 municipal governments connected by the corridor. The trail has also been endorsed by both Senators Snowe and Collins and by Congressman Allan. Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission has supported the effort since it began in 1998. The National Park Service Rivers Trails Program has been providing technical staff support.

In February 2001 Governor King announced Maine Department of Transportation money awards to build the Eastern Trail. Those funds included federal transportation

enhancement funds (TEA-21) and recommended additional funds to be included in the November 2001 transportation bond. The funds announced by Governor King together with private funds raised by the ETA and municipal matches will provide \$1.66 million to begin Eastern Trail construction during 2002 and 2003.

Most users are expected to be residents who live within a mile of the corridor, but groups such as Boy Scout troops dream of using the trail for 50-miler hikes. Equestrians, cross-country skiers and families out to enjoy its peaceful passage are among anticipated users. The estimated annual economic impact on Southern Maine's economy by trail users is \$1 million.

The ET will be the Southern Maine trail gateway for the East Coast Greenway. The East Coast Greenway will connect Key West, Florida with Calais, Maine. During 2000 the White House designated the East Coast Greenway as one of only 16 Millennium Trails in the United States. The Chambers of Commerce of the Southern Maine Coast Tourism Association support the vision to open Eastern Trail "...to greatly enhance the recreational opportunities for both the visitor as well as residents."

Verizon Communications is one of the world's leading providers of communications services. Verizon companies are the largest providers of wireline and wireless communications in the United States, with nearly 109 million access line equivalents and more than 27.5 million wireless customers. Verizon is also the world's largest provider of print and online directory information. A Fortune 10 company with approximately 260,000 employees and more than \$63 billion in annual revenues, Verizon's global presence extends to 40 countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. For more information on Verizon, visit www.verizon.com.

The ETA invites all residents and visitors to join it in supporting the Eastern Trail. Checkout WWW.EasternTrail.Org for more information and to find a membership application.

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