

# The Eastern Trail

# Trail Facts

## The Trail

The Eastern Trail is a 55-mile non-motorized transportation corridor between Kittery and South Portland. Construction of the entire Eastern Trail will establish an all-season resource that will provide for alternative forms of transportation, connect communities, help to create walk-able and healthy communities and reduce unsanctioned land use. Uses will include walking/hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and other non-motorized activities.



## How Was the Route Determined?

The Maine Department of Transportation and the Eastern Trail Alliance hired Wilbur Smith Associates to conduct a three-phase feasibility study: Project Scoping, Alternatives and Recommendations. The process began in 1999 with initial public scoping meetings along the proposed Eastern Trail Corridor. Field work, environmental screening and existing structural reviews were conducted. The Alternative Phase considered existing conditions, bicycle compatibility and relative feasibility of improving roads and trail corridor sections. The Recommendation Phase included a series of five public meeting along the proposed trail route to provide an opportunity for public comment on preliminary recommendations. The final culmination of this process was the “Eastern Trail Feasibility Study” released in April 2001.

## Two Parallel Trail Routes

The Eastern Trail is actually two parallel routes: **Off-Road** and **On-Road**. The ultimate goal of the Eastern Trail is to be off-road; however, it was necessary to identify an on-road route so that the trail would be operational during the time that it will take to construct the off-road route. Unfortunately, preliminary engineering studies were not able to determine a suitable off-road route through Kittery, Eliot and a portion of South Berwick. This means that the on-road route will be the permanent route until opportunities present themselves to move a portion or the entire route off-road.

**On-Road Route:** Utilizes public roads and can be identified by the “ET” road sign. [See example to the right]. For a detailed on-road trail guide visit the Eastern Trail Alliance Website at [www.eastertrail.org](http://www.eastertrail.org)

**Off-Road Route:** Currently planned to begin in South Berwick near the intersection of Routes 236 and 91. The route follows the Old Eastern Rail Corridor to its terminus in South Portland. The corridor is primarily used by utility companies and has a variety of owners to include utility companies, municipalities, the State of Maine, The Eastern Trail Alliance and private.



## Community • State • International Significance & Connectivity

The Eastern Trail has been identified as one of three trails of statewide significance in the Maine Department of Transportation 20-Year Plan 2000 – 2020 and Six Year Transportation Improvement Plan 2002 – 2007. In the draft Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan 2004 – 2009 the Eastern Trail is regarded as one of three proposed trails systems that will provide the “backbone of a statewide trail program.” As a completed system, the Eastern Trail will provide connectivity between each of the 12 municipalities that it is a part of. It will also connect Maine with New Hampshire bicycle routes at the Kittery/Portsmouth line. The Eastern Trail has been designated as the Southern Maine portion of the East Coast Greenway, a facility for non-motorized transportation connecting Key West, Florida to New Brunswick, Canada.

## Easements for the Trail

The Eastern Trail Management District, with the assistance of the Eastern Trail Alliance, must secure easements or ownership of each section of off-road trail prior to beginning construction. The process of securing easements for the entire off-road trail is intense and requires time, legal, monetary and administrative resources. Because the ETMD and ETA cannot focus on all [easements] at once, resources are directed toward landowners that own large sections or multiple sections along the trail first. As progress is made with those large landowners, resources are then directed toward medium and small land owners. This is not a value judgment against smaller landowners, but a practical approach; the ETMD can effectively work with smaller landowners to develop alternatives that address a specific concern for a relatively small section of the trail, but cannot as effectively deal with a block by a large landowner.