



## Assessment of the Maine Trails Bond Campaign

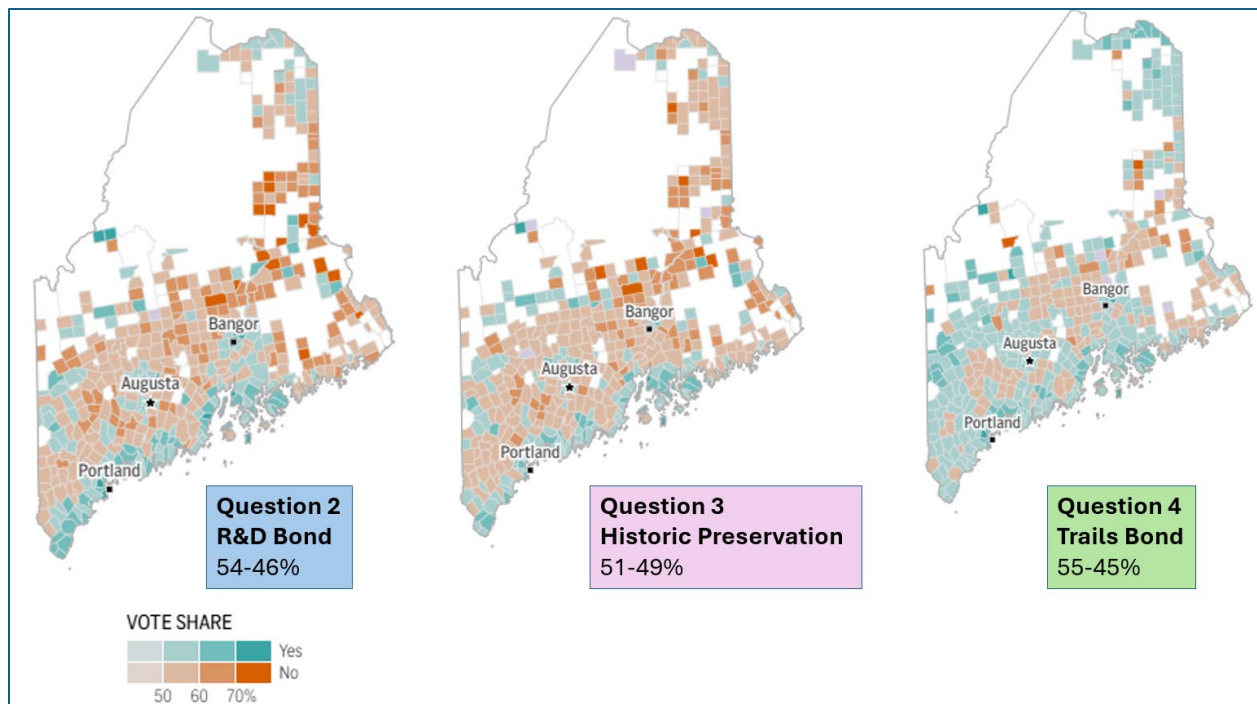
By almost every measure, the coalition campaign to pass the Maine Trails Bond (Question 4) on the November 5 ballot was a success. We developed a strong campaign team that worked well together to launch the campaign, design materials, coordinate outreach, and develop and implement a budget. Organized as the *Partnership for Maine Trails*, our Ballot Question Committee raised sufficient funding to support a broad-based digital ad campaign and produce campaign materials that elevated voter awareness of the Maine Trails Bond.

Winning the vote on Maine's first-ever \$30 million Trails Bond was our top campaign priority, and we did that. But we also wanted to increase awareness of the value of Maine's trails, the role of organizations that build and maintain Maine's trails, and the importance of investing in our trails to support Maine's outdoor recreation economy. We met this goal as well.

**Election Results:** The Trails Bond was approved 55% to 45% on November ballot. Notably, the Trails Bond received more votes in more towns than either of the other two bonds on the ballot (Question 2 – R&D Bond, and Question 3 – Historic Preservation Bond).

The Trails Bond won in 14 of Maine's 16 counties and was the only bond to win in Aroostook, Oxford, Somerset, and Washington Counties. Question 2 won in nine counties and Question 3 won in eight counties. Androscoggin and Piscataquis Counties voted against all three bonds, although the Trails Bond was the best performing bond in both counties.

In 112 towns, the *only* bond that was approved was the Maine Trails Bond. Our digital ad campaign included target voters in each one of these 112 towns where the Trails Bond won and the other two bonds lost.



### Coalition Campaign and Strategy

The foundation for success was built through our advocacy, outreach, and communication work aimed at building broad, bipartisan support from the start of the legislative campaign all the way through the ballot measure campaign. Key features included:

- **Bipartisan support from the beginning** with lawmakers on key committees from both parties recruited to introduce the bill and kept involved throughout.
- **Relentless, ongoing coalition building** to create a “big tent” coalition of more than 520 organizations, businesses, and towns supporting the bond.
- **Rural organizing and recruitment**, with attention on leaders and legislators from towns including Millinocket, Greenville, Rumford, Skowhegan, Oakland, Kingfield, and Bethel.
- **Careful message framing** with a focus on economic benefits that resonated statewide and attracted support from towns and economic development groups.
- **Effective communications** involving key messengers and messages, op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, press conferences, and social media.
- **Unwavering focus on a bond** despite the difficult challenge of a needing a two-thirds majority vote, we stayed focused on building the support needed to win.



These strategies were critical to the unanimous vote in the Appropriations Committee to pass the Trails Bond and the overwhelming, positive votes in the House (133-6) and Senate (29-3) to place the bond on the November ballot.



## Partnership for Maine Trails

In July 2024, we formed a Ballot Question Committee as the entity to manage our campaign, as required by the Maine Ethics Commission. The Partnership for Maine Trails was formed as a “doing business as” account of the NRCM Action Fund.

- **Broad coalition** – involved regular meetings with representatives from NRCM, Appalachian Mountain Club, The Nature Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Maine Outdoor Brands, Maine Snowmobile Association, and Maine Trails Coalition.
- **Generic content creation** – we hired Blaze Partners to produce a logo/mark, factsheet, and social media kit that was broadly used by supporting groups.
- **Coordinated fundraising** – the coalition raised \$102,500, with MOB, NRCM, MCHT, and Maine Snowmobile Assn leading the effort.
- **Administrative management** – NRCM managed all revenues, expenses, and filings with the Maine Ethics Commission.
- **Coalition and targeted outreach** – we sent digital tool kit materials to the 520 endorsers of the Trails Bond. These and other materials were featured at over 40 events and distributed by at least 50 organizations. We also conducted presentations and local outreach strategy sessions throughout the state.



## Digital Ad Campaign

We hired HG Creative for our digital ad campaign. Most of the campaign budget was used to produce digital display and video ads and place the ads to reach our three target audiences: 1) infrequent voters statewide, 2) Republican women in CD-2, and 3) targeted Outdoor Style voters.

These ads performed well, reaching more than 225,000 households, with high completion rates on the ads and an overall 4.5 million impressions. The primary digital ad, and other materials, can be viewed at the [Maine Trails Bond website](#).



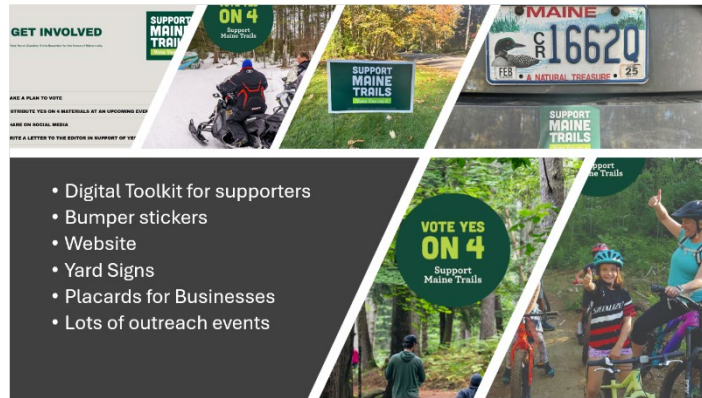
## Evidence of Campaign Success

We are particularly pleased that the Maine Trails Bond secured the highest level of statewide support of any of the bonds on the ballot – winning in 112 towns that voted against the other two bonds. We believe this outcome was a direct result of our grassroots outreach effort to keep our “big tent” coalition involved throughout the campaign.

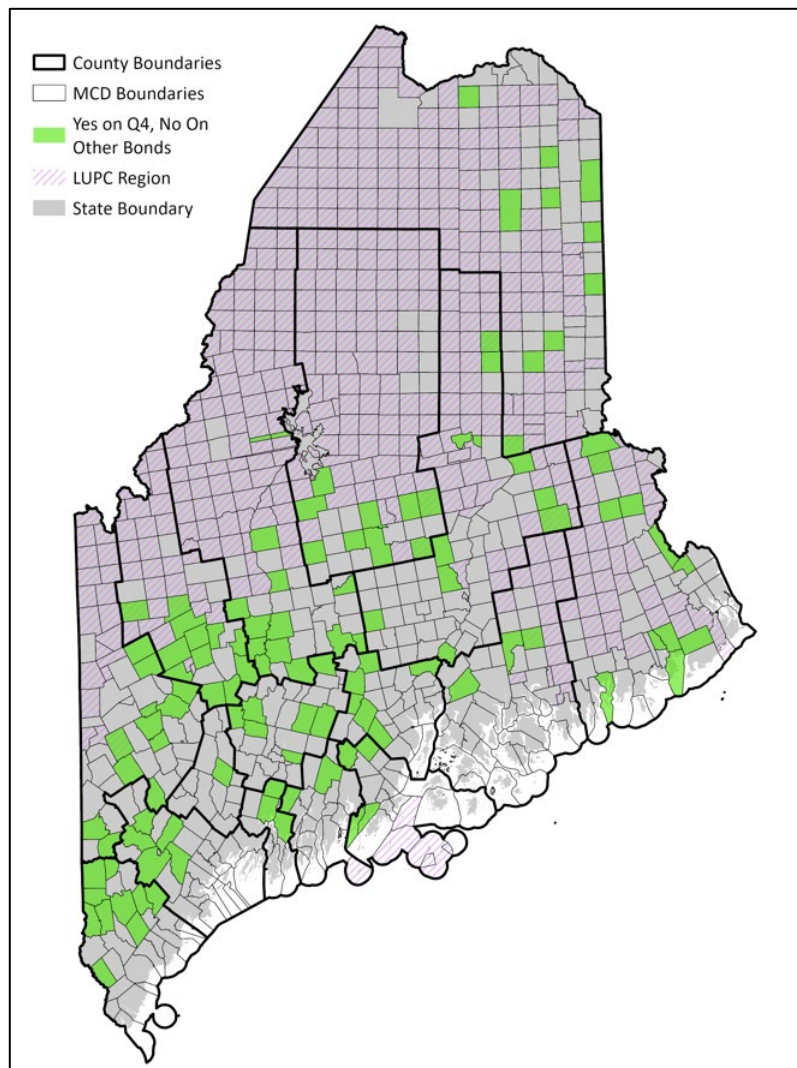
The Partnership for Maine Trails provided factsheets and other materials for tabling events activities at more than 40 events, including multiple fall festivals and the Maine Snowmobile Snow at the Augusta Civic Center.

We also amplified the visibility of the campaign through a website, yard signs, placards for businesses and trail heads, digital media content, and bumper stickers.

These materials were broadly utilized and distributed by more than 45 organizations through Instagram, Facebook Posts, and mass emails.



Perhaps the best evidence of success of this strategy can be seen the map below, which shows the 112 towns that voted to support the Trails Bond but voted against the other two bonds. Our digital ad campaign reached targeted voters in each of these 112 towns.



We could not have won this campaign so decisively without the involvement of our 520 supporting organizations businesses and towns, strong allies at the State House, leadership provided by countless trail advocates statewide, the seven organizations that comprised the Partnership for Maine Trails, and the donors who provided the campaign with the funding needed to win on this first-ever \$30 million Trails Bond that will support projects that will benefit Mainers and visitors for generations to come.