



Technology Association of Maine
Connecting Technology, Community & Education

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Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and members of the Transportation Committee

My name is Joe Kumiszczka, of Cumberland Maine. I am testifying in support of LD 406: **Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation To Develop and Adopt a Rail Corridor Use Vision Plan for State of Maine-Owned Railroads**

I am a resident of Cumberland and an abutter to the proposed Casco Bay trail. I state my support for LD 406 to develop a rail corridor use vision plan. The highest and best use of the corridor is for rail travel. Use for non-rail activities is not in the public's interest. Rail is the best option for bringing economic benefit to the corridors.

We in the technology sector are very aware of "networks." Maine's railway system is a network that must remain in place. This is not the time to reduce or diminish our transportation infrastructure. The state is wise to develop and adopt a rail corridor use vision plan for State of Maine owned railroads. Transformative new technologies are having and will continue to have incredible impacts on how we work, live, and travel. We must not underestimate the value of our current transportation infrastructure. The demolition of Union Station in Portland is the perfect example of what happens when rail is underestimated. We can't afford to remove current rail lines and repeat that mistake.

Proponents for the Casco Bay Trail had a strong influence on the community to support their trail initiative. They succeeded in keeping information about the plan away from abutters to the trail. The fact that this group took the position of keeping abutters out-of-the-loop makes me believe that much is being hidden from the community. From what I have seen from other similar rail/trail groups they have been counseled to establish direct communication with abutters, but most often fail to do so. Trail proponents and developers may not change abutters' way of life without including them in the process. Our area has an abundance of trails and recreational opportunities, but we suffer from a lack of transportation alternatives.

In the RUAC comments Train Riders Northeast highlighted some very important points. It seems that State purchase of rail lines by taxpayer bonds requires that the bond funds be used to promote rail, and not trail. If trail use is developed than abutters will likely be making claim to the land as owners in fee and assert their rights as claimants in this process. Abandonment of a rail bed often means the property reverts to the private landowners from whom the railroad took it.

I hope the State of Maine will aggressively pursue the establishment of a more robust commuter rail system across the state to provide sustainable public transportation, including the SLA line from Portland to Auburn.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the restoration and future use of Maine's rail corridors and reiterate my opening statement that the highest and best use of the corridor is for rail travel. Non-rail use is not in the public's interest.

Please support passing LD 406 **To Develop and Adopt a Rail Corridor Use Vision Plan for State of Maine-Owned Railroads**

Sincerely,

Joseph F. Kumiszczka
President