

From Al Fazio  
***BRT Services, LLC***

April 12, 2023

**In Support of LD 406**

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

My name is Al Fazio. I am a railroad design engineer and consultant for Inter-Urban Light Rail systems throughout the country. My home base is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I am testifying in support of **LD 406 Directing the Department of Transportation To Develop and Adopt a Rail Corridor Use Vision Plan for State of Maine-Owned Railroads.**

In June 2022, my firm BRT Services was engaged by a railroad station development firm to inspect the state railroad between Portland and Auburn Maine, including a hi-rail ride on the tracks. Our findings indicate that this railroad is in condition that can be easily upgraded to light rail services. This corridor must not be converted to trail use. The value as is may be as much as \$1 million a mile and has the potential for establishing a model of light rail services for around the region.

Please consider some of our conclusions regarding the use of this railroad

- 1. Railway Types and Benefits - There are a number of benefits that accrue from passenger rail and their \_\_\_\_\_
  - Smart Growth and Land Use management
  - Traffic mitigation
  - Environmental Preservation
  - Social Justice, equitable access to jobs, housing, shopping, and services
  - Intercity connectivity
  - Railroad uses can be offered over a wide spectrum of designs and technologies. These could be Streetcars, Light Rail and ultimately high speed rail.
- 2. Mode Selection
  - The objectives (desired benefits) and available funds and rights of way , weigh heavily in the selecting the rail mode and technology. For example, intercity service from Boston at perhaps 3 to 4 trips daily will have little to no impact on traffic and will not naturally provide social just benefits.
  - Likewise, Light Rail Transit and Interurban light rail can be applied quickly and at a low cost provided that a railroad Row is available – as Maine has a number of corridors. Such a service will significantly affect land use and economic growth.
  - One, if not the most single most expensive, time consuming and challenging obstructions to deploying new passenger rail is equation of railroad rights of way.

- 3. The engineering report done for the state council reviewing rail uses by VHB was reviewed by our team.
  - It provided nice and worthy insights into bicycle, pedestrian, hiking opportunities. As this is not our expertise but does appear to be the expertise of the VHN consultants hired for that purpose.
  - The subject report is deficient regarding its assessment of rail in a number of areas. Two most significant deficiencies pertain to
    - Complete confusion regarding rail modes. In particular is their misunderstanding of Light Rail Transit. E.G., that light rail makes 2 or 3 stations per mile and requires double track. And that Light rail cannot operate on a railway used by freight. These are not correct.
    - The costs related to rail restoration is erroneous in the scope of additional information.
    - (1) the need for a second track and necessity for a 4 miles elevated crossing at Yarmouth junction of the CSX mainline crossings, and
    - (2) The assessment of the condition of the existing infrastructure E.G., required number of ties per mile to achieve 50 mph speeds is grossly inflated and the rework required to grade crossings.
- 4. Conclusions – Given the high road, this report is completely confused and “uneducated” regarding the railroads. Alternatively, this engineering firm appears to have been given the answer and then instructed to work it into an appropriate study.

There is a clear need for the State DOT and the people of Maine who own this railroad and other rail around the state to do an objective and professional evaluation of the rail.

LD 406 will achieve this purpose. We recommend passing this bill and immediately engaging in a report on how the rail can be used for the best purpose.

BRT Services are available to provide additional information and answer questions any time. We could not be available for this hearing but feel free to contact us at the following.

Thank you.

  
Al Fazio, P.E.

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