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LD 209

I write in strong support of LD 209. The corridor connecting Portland to Auburn is a perfect venue to meet pent-up demand for safe-off-street cycling, both for recreation and transportation.

I anticipate being a frequent user of the trail, if approved, for cycling on the weekend with my family and for commuting to the Old Port in Portland on weekdays. The towns north of Portland have a dearth of sidewalks and other facilities where children (and adults!) can safely ride away from car traffic. For this reason, I occasionally drive with my family to the Eastern Trail in Scarborough. If the Berlin Subdivision Trail is approved, we would presumably be able to access the trail by bike (assuming there is some access in the town of Cumberland), thus avoiding the emissions and congestion caused by our trips to Scarborough. We would absolutely welcome the chance to ride with our young child on a smooth path, safely away from car traffic, close to home. I expect that we would use the corridor in winter for cross-country skiing as well, if allowed.

I have seen concerns of property owners near the now-unused public corridor that interim trail use will bring crime and unhoused people's encampments to their back doors. These concerns appear unfounded. Experts who have studied this issue have concluded, time and time again, that rail-trails do not drive crime. See, e.g., [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/docs/rt\\_safecomm.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/docs/rt_safecomm.pdf) ; [http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas\\_chap3.pdf](http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas_chap3.pdf) ; [http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Indiana\\_Trails\\_2001.pdf](http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Indiana_Trails_2001.pdf) ; [https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=rail-with-trails-best-practice-s-and-lessons-learned&id=26482&fileName=Rails-Trails-Layout\\_06\\_17\\_21\\_508.pdf](https://www.railstotrails.org/resourcehandler.ashx?name=rail-with-trails-best-practice-s-and-lessons-learned&id=26482&fileName=Rails-Trails-Layout_06_17_21_508.pdf) . And it is difficult to imagine why turning an unused rail corridor into a recreational trail would encourage unhoused people to congregate in the largely rural areas this trail would cross.

Adjacent landowners who have enjoyed the quiet of discontinued rail use along the public corridor may indeed see a change with interim trail use. But as any property owner knows, your neighbor's use of their own property (and indeed, this is a state-owned corridor) is their own choice (within legal limits, of course). That adjacent landowners have long been able to privately enjoy the discontinued rail service along this public corridor does not entitle them to continuation of the status quo. Rather, the public corridor should be used for its best--interim--use: a public trail.

And importantly, interim trail use is interim. I have not seen studies that suggest that demand for rail use along this corridor is high enough to justify the costs of returning the corridor to active rail service in the near term. In contrast, the demand for trail use is high now, and will continue with the lack of any similar facilities in the nearby area. The best use of this corridor now is trail use, at least until demand for rail service along this corridor is strong enough to justify a change to that use.