

Testimony of Kim Anderson True, Freeport, in Support of LD 209

Sen. Chipman, Rep. Williams and distinguished Transportation Committee members:

My name is Kim Anderson True, from Freeport, and I offer this written testimony in support of LD 209, "An Act to Authorize Interim Use Trail on Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor." I have been involved with bicycle tourism, both as a traveler and as a provider, for more than 30 years. I was the Bicycle Coalition of Maine's founding BikeMaine Ride Director, charged with developing and managing a weeklong on-road bicycle tour for 450 bicyclists to promote bicycle tourism throughout the state. I co-led efforts to create the signed 211-mile, on-road Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway in Washington and Hancock Counties, which was completed in 2020. I was on the board of the national Bicycle Tourism Network, which put on an annual conference. I have seen first-hand how bicycle tourism has improved the economies, vitality and quality of life of rural communities throughout world.

Maine is a popular destination for bicyclists. People love its exquisite natural beauty, strong cultural identity, opportunities for unique and authentic experiences, and ruggedness of land and people. BikeMaine attracted people from across the country and around the world primarily because the first several 300-mile tours included at least one marquee community, such as Bar Harbor, Boothbay Harbor or Bethel. BikeMaine riders came back in subsequent years, bringing new riders with them, to discover what communities not well known outside the state, towns like Fort Kent, Lubec, Bridgton, Waterville and Kittery, also had to offer. They were not disappointed, and they spent money wherever they went.

In every community where BikeMaine lunched or stayed overnight, residents assisting with the event commented on how much fun the bicyclists appeared to be having. They were encouraged to join in riding the event, but in almost every case the residents said they would not ride a bicycle on state roads. They felt that they did not have the skill or confidence to ride on roads shared with fast moving vehicles. It was disheartening that so many Maine residents believed they couldn't be bicycle tourists in their own state.

I have biked extensively throughout Maine, the United States and in other parts of the world. While most of my biking has been done on roads, I have felt more vulnerable riding in traffic in recent years due to driver inattention and my advancing age. I have grandchildren now, and I want safe places to introduce them to the joys of bicycle tourism. I have become an advocate for the creation of off-road multiuse paths to revitalize rural communities, support local businesses, promote health and fitness, provide safe, carbon-free options to motorized travel, and elevate the human spirit. I am involved with Freeport's efforts to build multiuse pathways that will allow vulnerable users to travel safely to points throughout the town and into neighboring communities.

By your granting permission for the currently inactive Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor to be used as part of the 72-mile Casco Bay Trail Loop, the people of Maine will have a safe place to bike and perhaps hone their long-distance riding skills. People from Maine and away will welcome the opportunity to explore the communities along the trail, stopping to take advantage of the many cultural, historic and natural points of interest, as well as to patronize local businesses. The Casco Bay Trail Loop has the potential to be every bit as successful as looped multiuse trails in other parts of the country, such as the 89-mile [Raccoon River Valley Trail](#) in central Iowa, which attracts more than 350,000 users a year.

Please join me in supporting LD 209. Thank you.