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Cumberland
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Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

I am strongly against LD 209, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor. I am an abutter to the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor and will be heavily impacted by the proposed trail. The Casco Bay Trail is a proposed 25-mile land grab of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic rail line (also known as Berlin Subdivision) corridor through Portland, Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, North Yarmouth, Pownal, New Gloucester, and Auburn. This trail would run along homeowners yards. In my town of Cumberland there is no public access to the trail; it would be a hardship to abutters.

Proponents of the Casco Bay Trail have had a strong influence on the community to support their trail initiative. The data and reports they use to justify trails are flawed and can be factually disproven. They succeeded in keeping information about the plan away from abutters to the trail. Because this group took the position of keeping abutters out-of-the-loop makes me believe that much is being hidden from the community. The fact that, on the day prior to a public hearing, I can not view the actual language of this bill further makes me question the intent of the proponents. The Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) commissioned by the bike and trail non-profit groups have conducted themselves so as to eliminate any pro-rail input. The RUAC has absolutely no citizen representation, it is dominated with trail voices and Maine Department of Transportation analysts who use questionable data - which are not subject to peer review. These councils are not fair, they are biased. Current bills that they are promoting could effectively remove any rail expansion options in Cumberland and York Counties.

This trail is being promoted to reduce vehicle travel greenhouse gases. That is a false premise; people are not going to commute between Portland and Auburn on a bike path and most of the people promoting this trail will have to drive to reach an access point. Retention and development of a rail line through the communities in the rail corridor is the best option to address the affordable housing crisis. Building more homes in Portland is not a viable long-term solution. New transportation linkages will create competition for housing development projects, open up more housing options, and initiate a better transportation system.

Proponents have estimated that hundreds of thousands of people will use the trail. The existing land can't support rail plus trail use of that volume. Please do not rip up Maine's rail lines for recreational trails. The rail network is much too valuable. Once the rail lines are ripped up; history has shown that they will never be replaced.

Please do not support this bill and vote ought not to pass.

Thank you,
Joseph Kumiszczka