



Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Kristine Keeney, of Greenwood, Maine, and I am the Northern New England Manager for the East Coast Greenway Alliance, which leads the development of a connected biking and walking route from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida, designed to transform the communities it connects through by offering people a safe place to commute, exercise, engage with their neighbors, and visit new places. I am testifying on behalf of our 3,000 members and as part of the leadership of the Maine Trails Coalition to urge you to support LD 290.

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During the difficult days of the pandemic, the Greenway and other trails were and continue to be sanctuaries of sanity and havens of health for Mainers, with usage of the Back Cove Trail in Portland tripling and the Loon Echo Land Trust recording a 40% growth in trail use on their property in Bridgton from 2019 to 2020.

The Alliance is a strong supporter of LD 290 for several reasons:

First, because it is a key step towards creating a complete and connected transportation system, comprised of both rail and trail corridors, that both reduce emissions and increase mobility options. The [Maine Active Transportation Arterials](#) vision calls for “connecting all of Maine’s 25 largest municipalities and over 2/3rds of Maine’s population” with multi-use trails for active transportation that increase safety and access to existing and future transit options, employment centers, and key community destinations.

Second, interim use of the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor as the Casco Bay Trail, will still allow the future option of restoring freight or passenger service if it is economically viable. The aforementioned Maine Active Transportation Arterials vision also includes the continuing preservation of a separate and active rail corridor that can be used for future passenger rail from Boston through Maine’s largest population centers. The plan shows that this connected network does not require a choice between trains and trails; there are alternate routes that allow for both.

Third, 86% of Mainers favor creating “trail until rail” corridors, if the trails could be converted back to rail use if needed, according to a statistically significant statewide *Critical Insights on Maine Survey* in November 2019. Support was consistently between 83 and 88% across regions and political parties, making it **clear** that the majority of Mainers support “trail until rail.”

Fourth, the economic impact from these corridors will be meaningful for the communities they run through. The potential economic impact of multi-use trails in Maine is well documented in analyses of existing infrastructure. According to a 2021 study commissioned by Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), total annual economic activity supported by use of the Eastern Trail is \$44.6 million, including \$32.1 million in sales, \$12.5 million in earnings, over \$1 million in incremental tax revenue, and 364 jobs supported in the region.



