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LD 209

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Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 209- An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Transportation Committee

The Mountain Division was the first RUAC and was plagued by member trail bias, confusion of the mandate(do we need to reach consensus?) and a turning of a deaf ear to legitimate findings to support rail use on the line.

The Berlin RUAC addressed some of those issues, and although the mandate was still vague, and a new bias developed in the consultant chosen, expanding the member make up to include rail and transportation experts was an improvement.

Questions remained about the scope of the work chosen (they only studied heavy passenger rail despite light transit being a perfect fit for this corridor) and VHB had a large conflict of interest as a rail to trail designer for multiple entities.

This RUAC decision was a SPLIT vote, not a majority. 6 voted to keep the tracks (either rail only or rail with trail) 2 voted to abstain due to not having enough information to make a good judgment, and 7 voted for interim trail, with two of those votes noting that they would also support rail with trail if necessary.

The absolute best presentation I have seen to explain the issues related to the Berlin RUAC is from Jeremiah Bartlett Portland's Transportation Engineer. He presents to the Portland City Council Sustainability and Transportation Committee, with Mayor Snyder also sitting in, twice on 1/11/2023 and again on 3/8/2023 when he adds in possible light rail transit options. He must have used the word "bewildering" 5 times to describe this RUAC process, and the Committee decided NOT to tear up the tracks, (as did the City of Auburn).

I would recommend all of you watch those two presentations.

Please vote OUGHT NOT TO PASS on LD 209.