

Joseph Leonard
Bangor
LD 209

Dear members of the Transportation Committee,

I am here today as a passenger rail subject matter expert to express my deep concerns regarding the proposed legislation to replace rail tracks with a bicycle path. While I understand the importance of promoting alternative modes of transportation and addressing climate change, I must emphasize that proceeding with this plan would be a grave mistake. It would not only constitute economic malpractice but also perpetuate an elitist agenda that neglects the needs of disadvantaged communities and relies on fabricated data from organizations such as Maine DOT, the bicycle coalition, and trail organizations.

Firstly, it is imperative to recognize that dismantling rail tracks without a comprehensive assessment of their economic benefits and long-term value would display a disturbing lack of foresight. Rail transportation is a key driver of economic growth and connectivity, facilitating efficient and reliable movement of passengers and goods. By removing rail infrastructure, we deprive communities of the economic advantages that it provides, undermining businesses, trade, and tourism.

Furthermore, replacing rail tracks with a bicycle path may appear to be a sustainable initiative, but it is crucial to question the integrity of the data and motivations behind such a proposal. Organizations like Maine DOT, the bicycle coalition, and trail organizations have been caught fabricating data to support their biased agendas. Trusting such sources without scrutiny would be reckless and irresponsible.

Moreover, this approach promotes an elitist activity that caters primarily to wealthy individuals, leaving those suffering from economic poverty behind. Passenger rail services form an essential part of a comprehensive and inclusive transportation network. Eliminating rail tracks restricts the potential for future rail expansion, limiting transportation options for commuters and travelers from all walks of life. It is vital to consider the diverse needs of our communities and ensure equitable access to reliable transportation services.

Lastly, combating climate change demands a holistic approach that encompasses various strategies. Passenger rail is widely acknowledged as one of the most energy-efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation. It significantly reduces carbon emissions and eases traffic congestion. By tearing up rail tracks, we not only impede ongoing efforts to mitigate climate change but also hinder future opportunities to expand rail infrastructure and foster sustainable transportation systems.

Instead of pursuing this misguided path, I implore the committee to explore alternative approaches that prioritize the integration and enhancement of existing transportation systems. For instance, developing greenways alongside rail tracks can allow for the coexistence of cycling and rail transportation, fostering sustainable mobility while preserving crucial rail infrastructure. This approach promotes a balanced and inclusive transportation network that caters to the diverse needs of our communities.

In conclusion, proceeding with the legislation to rip up rail tracks up to 30 miles in length and replace them with a bicycle path would be an alarming display of negligence. It would constitute economic malpractice, perpetuate an elitist agenda, and rely on questionable data from organizations with vested interests. I urge the committee to reconsider this proposal and instead seek alternative solutions that promote sustainability, economic growth, and equitable transportation access for all.

Thank you for your attention.