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LD 1750

I support LD 1750 “Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Complete a Service Plan and Determine the Scope of Work for Restoration of Rail Use of the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor from Downtown Portland to Auburn”.

This legislation asks only to investigate the rail option along a highly traveled corridor in southern Maine. A report will be completed in nine months or less. Please allow this time to research the value of the existing state rail assets.

From what I understand, virtually all previous studies indicate that passenger rail service can operate on this line. Rail proponents have identified several sources of existing transportation funding that could fund this study and any determined future development.

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, and input from property owners abutting the rail/trail corridors. The RUAC had absolutely no citizen representation, it was dominated with trail voices and Maine Department of Transportation analysts who used questionable data. These councils were not fair, they were biased. The advisory committee established in LD 1750 would supply an honest appraisal of the highest and best use of the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor.

I understand that I speak in the minority opinion based on the testimony that has already been communicated to the committee. But I am also aware that bike and trail groups are using this process as a fund raising vehicle. Those activists typically do not speak for the majority of voters.

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 the rail line through the communities in this 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.

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 take the time to get this right.