

March 3, 2025

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Natalie West. I serve as an at large member of the South Portland City Council. I speak today as an individual Council member in support of LD 457. My remarks are focused specifically on the importance of repairing or relocating the Spring Point Shoreway Trail, which was significantly damaged by the 2024 storms.

I am confident that your investment in this trail will eventually be repaid from increased revenues generated by those who use the trail. To explain in more detail, the Shoreway Trail follows the waterfront for approximately ½ mile through the campus of Southern Maine Community College along one of the most scenic and easily accessible portions of our coast. There is a photo with approximate location of the trail shown on my written testimony. (see below.) From the trail, there are views of lighthouses, islands, lobster boats, forts – and ship traffic coming and going to Portland Harbor. The Shoreway Trail has it all. It also links to our regional Greenbelt Pathway, which in turn becomes the Eastern Trail, extending 65 miles to the South.

In addition to its natural beauty, this one-half mile of improved paved trail has historic significance. It connects South Portland landmarks that span almost 400 years of Maine History - starting with the lighthouse in Buglight Park, past the memorial to the Liberty Ships built in World War II, through Fort Preble (built in 1808) and Old Settlers Cemetery (dating from 1658), to Willard Beach – a public beach, which in turn leads to Fisherman’s Point, part of the King’s Highway, constructed in the 1650’s.

Because the trail is paved, it can be used almost year-round, by pedestrians, bicyclists, families with strollers. Portions of it are accessible to those in wheelchairs or using other mobility aids.

Because of its accessibility, scenic qualities and historic importance, the trail heavily used by visitors who patronize our restaurants, shops and lodging opportunities, which supports and strengthens the economic base of our region. I urge your support of LD 457.

