

27 Riverview St.
Portland, Maine 04102

[mailto: MeLikesRail@GMail.com](mailto:MeLikesRail@GMail.com)

To: Maine Legislature Transportation Committee
From: Anthony J. Donovan, Resident, Portland, Maine
Date: March 2, 2025

Re: Opposition to LD 30 " Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council Regarding the Rail Line from Portland to Yarmouth".

I was on that RUAC committee. One of the minority members, the MeDOT included with the majority trails advocates. **We absolutely did not recommend railroad infrastructure be removed for a trial.** We advocated rails with trails – a big compromise on the part of us rail use advocates. MeDOT actually spent time getting the towns to change their minds, But the fact remains, based on the evidence presented to the members of the state-legislated Berlin Rail Use Advisor Council **this bill cannot be passed by this legislature.**

Currently neither the members of this legislature, nor the administration’s Department of transportation, have adequate information to make such a drastic decision as you are contemplating. The studies MeDOT is presenting are seriously flawed and do not consider impacts of rapidly changing transportation systems.

There have been 5 or six individual RUAC Studies and 5 or six individual bills is the greatest flaw. We need to consider this state-owned rail transportation infrastructure and a valuable asset. At the very least get it appraised. **The resident taxpayers who bought this infrastructure need to know what its actual value.**

But we need so much more.

I have been here since Governor King and John Melrose bought these tracks. I was at every hearing for the state’s \$1.3 federal grant to study light rail passenger use on these tracks. In 2011 MeDOT had in its hands a plan for using light rail hybrid electric passenger trains on this downtown Portland at Inda Street to Downtown Lewiston and Auburn route. In fact, on to Bethel and Montreal for that matter.

At the same time the federal government changed to criteria for funding from, how fast and how much to get there? – to what are the economic and environmental benefits from finding this system. MeDOT ignored not only this new criterion. That is the major flaw with this whole conversion concept. All studies since then ,including the Portland to Lewiston study done at the direction of this legislature, that so much of the trail data is based on, are flawed in that they were reliant on outdated criteria and outdated methods of transportation systems.

Please consider additional study

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Please consider additional study - a comprehensive study of all Maine-owned railroad infrastructure - how it works as a system and how it fits into the national and international system. What actual economic and environmental value do these railroad assets have? At a time when the state have attracted a Class 1 railroad to Maine, (CSX) who also is investing hundreds of millions into infrastructure - this is not time to disconnect routes that connect with the mainline. Stop and think about this. We need more information than what has been done by groups, including MeDOT, that are in support of trials.

It will do not harm to establish a study committee for a comprehensive evaluation if the entire system. Please stop for just a short period of time, step back and look at the bigger picture. Waiting until the next legislative session will do not harm and in fact could provide the time for all parties to come together for a plan of sharing this valuable public resource in a manner that is good for everyone.

Please do not vote to lass LD 30. Please consider this, and all related bills this session related to be considered under an new comprehensive analysis of railroad infrastructure in Maine. Please do not allow this railroad infrastructure to be removed.

Thank you
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Portland Maine

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LD 30

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