

Jean Sideris
Testimony for Transportation Committee Hearing on LD 511

Dear Members of the Transportation Committee,

I am writing in strong support of LD 511 to build a trail on the unused rail corridor between Portland and Auburn. Investing in trails has proven time and again to improve public health, protect the environment, spur economic growth, and provide a safe place to recreate and travel. We need only look at the success and positive impact of the Eastern Trail, Androscoggin River Bike Path, Kennebec River Rail Trail, to name a few, to understand the vital importance of trails to our communities.

The residents of Maine are paying to maintain an unused rail line—we deserve better. There is an existing in-use rail line that also runs between Portland and Auburn, so converting this trail will provide an invaluable asset to residents and visitors of Maine. It would also create an active transportation corridor that would give people biking and walking a safe way to travel in the area that is fully separated from vehicles.

A majority of the members of the Rail Use Advisory Committee voted in 2023 in support of a trail (7 for trail-only, another 5 voted for rail with trail, and only 1 for rail only). That demonstrates a clear directive to move forward with building a trail. I urge the Transportation Committee to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 511.

Thank you,

Jean Sideris
South Portland, ME