

April 12th, 2023

To: The Joint Transportation Committee

Re: Support for LD 406. "Directing the Department of Transportation to Develop and Adopt a Rail Corridor Use Vision Plan for State of Maine Owned Railroads"

From: Patricia Barber Hiram

Chairman Chipman, Chairwoman Williams and the Members of the Joint Transportation Committee,

*I come of this problem as a student of a usual, economically depressed town along one of these State Owned Corridors*

I am a scientist by trade. When I need to make an informed decision, I look to researched data.

My guidelines for using data are: 1) you need to have more than one set of data 2) you need to evaluate the source of the data and 3) all data must be peer-reviewed. Not following these guidelines could have devastating results, consequences that are not easily reversed.

Such guidelines should be followed when evaluating the Best Use of our Maine State Rail Corridors. These corridors are important, taxpayer-owned, transportation assets. Transportation uses might include train-based freight, passenger trains including light rail transit use, and non-motorized bicycling and pedestrian options.

There have been some initial studies looking at these corridors from a trail-based perspective. To achieve a complete data set, we need to undertake rail-based transportation studies. Data that looks at a wider scope of uses. Existing RUAC reports are missing valuable information such as light rail uses, station locations with surrounding economic potential, how these corridors integrate into existing Maine railroad uses as well as interconnections to other State and Canadian railroads.

It would be a mistake to continue the current policy of piecemeal evaluation of this section or that section of track for different purposes. At best, a fully realized Vision Plan would allow space for all possible uses. The only way to get a full analysis of the Best Use is to get a comprehensive set of data from multiple sources.

With this Best Use Vision Plan, Maine could become a leader in accessible transportation available to all abilities and all incomes, extending to every corner of the State. We could realize our commitment to advanced climate-protective policies. With full utilization of our railroad corridors, we could connect rural and urban communities and offer a better standard of living for everyone.

LD 406 would complete this Vision Plan, and set guidelines for further implementation.

Please support LD 406. Thank you.

*Patly Barber*