

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Abby Samuelson and I am a resident of New Gloucester. I am here to testify in strong support of Representative Bell's proposed amendment to LD 209, "*Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendation of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council.*"

My husband and I both grew up in Maine, went to Bates College and then spent 12 years in Portland, Oregon or as my parents call it "the wrong Portland."

Just last year, we moved back to Maine with our 2-year-old daughter and bought a property and a wedding and event business in New Gloucester.

We moved back for the way of life that all of us know as "the Maine-way," for the beauty and for the four incredibly distinct seasons that offer countless ways to recreate and be outside BUT what we are finding as active people who live off of Intervale Road is that we are taking our lives in our hands every single time we go out to run, walk the dog or bike (which is daily!) People are going 60+ miles an hour in a 35-45 mph zone and there is very little shoulder so recreating as a family from our home is impossible.

Having lived in Portland, OR for 12 years, we greatly miss the accessibility of safe areas to recreate away from vehicular traffic. Places where we can gather with friends and community members to go for a run, walk our dogs or get our kiddos together in strollers or on bikes. Maine should be setting the pace in this area and LD 209 is the opportunity for us to do just that – to lead in the recreation space which will in turn help us build healthier, happier and more involved communities.

The idea of teaching our daughter and the children of New Gloucester to ride bikes on a trail in our community that is safe, beautiful and accessible would be truly incredible. We believe it will help create a healthier, happier and more successful community, a community where the next generation will grow up dreaming of the day that they can make it point-to-point and bike, walk or run an almost perfect marathon from Auburn to Portland or Portland to Auburn.

I know our family is just one of thousands and thousands that would benefit from this trail daily. I am not normally one to put the cart before the horse OR should I say the chariot before the bicycle, but I am already getting excited about the amazing people that we will meet, the inclusive community events that could be hosted and the way that this trail could bring towns and their residents together in the name of health and happiness- two things that should not be taken for granted in 2023.

Thank you for your time.