

LD 209 – May 18, 2023

Good afternoon: Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Michael Boyson and I live in Portland. I speak today in support of LD 209, an act to authorize an interim bike and pedestrian use trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor.

I do not speak alone. The Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council, after thorough review of the issues involved, voted to recommend the conversion of 26.5 mile of the inactive Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor to bike and pedestrian use. Please respect the hard work of these citizens by following their recommendations.

Doing nothing, or more precisely continuing to leave this corridor unused in hope that somehow the massive funding and population density necessary for even a heavily subsidized passenger train service would somehow materialize seems like a terrible waste.

To paraphrase Albert Einstein, “doing the same thing over and over while expecting a different result is...unwise.

I urge you to take a different path by passing LD 209. Maine already has a highly successful rail to trail example, the Eastern Trail, named to the Rail Trail Hall of Fame. 250,000 people use the Eastern Trail annually at a fraction of the public “cost per user” of the Downeaster Train service, (still running a sizeable annual deficit despite capital investment of approximately \$100 million over 22 years.)

Invest in a trail on the Berlin corridor for far, far, less. Gain far greater benefits-- both economic and health-wise. Join Phineas Baxter and John D. Rockefeller and Roxanne Quimby in establishing an open transportation and recreational trail for generations of Mainers and our visitors.

Rail proponents suggested at several meetings that I attended that a rail converted to trail has never been converted back to rail. I take that to mean that converting rail to trail has an undefeated track record!

I once more urge you to take proactive action to foster this incredible opportunity by passing LD 209. Our history shows you’ll never regret it.