



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Rep. Amy Kuhn in support of*

## **LD 209, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation*

Good afternoon, Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and honorable members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Amy Kuhn, and I proudly represent the town of Falmouth in House District 111. I am pleased to offer testimony today in support of **LD 209, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor**, as well as the amendment that was presented.

Converting the inactive Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor to an interim trail until rail is an important opportunity for the Portland to Auburn region and the state as a whole, helping us to realize numerous environmental, economic and recreational benefits. Many advocates and users of the proposed trail will speak to these benefits behind me, so I will skip repeating those and instead focus on one of the concerns you may hear, that conversion to an interim trail could inhibit development of rail alternatives.

This trail until rail project, as presented, will actually support and enhance transit options across the region. You will hear from multiple transit leaders today that the proposed trail is in alignment with the region and the state's long term transit planning. It will not displace rail service because an additional rail line with excess capacity already exists in the same corridor (the CSX Freight Main Line). In fact, the trail could help achieve the state's planning goals by providing first mile/last mile connections, which can otherwise stand in the way of transit utilization, by allowing people to safely walk or cycle to a bus stop or train platform.

In addition, it is important to remain aware that the SLR line (the proposed Casco Bay Trail) is not sitting idly by, ready to go. Significant investment would be required to render it usable for passenger rail, ranging from \$241m to \$294m in 2019 dollars.<sup>1</sup> Completing rail with trail is even more costly, adding another \$90m - \$94m. This combined trail with rail cost renders the total

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 Lewiston to Portland Passenger Rail Report: [https://www.nnepra.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Final\\_Phase\\_2\\_L-A\\_Report\\_with\\_Appendices.pdf](https://www.nnepra.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Final_Phase_2_L-A_Report_with_Appendices.pdf)

project cost to be so high as to be potentially unattainable, which would leave the unused rail in place further deteriorating indefinitely.

By contrast, completing the interim trail would cost in the neighborhood of \$50m in 2022 dollars and could be done in pieces over time, bringing abundant local benefits as the trail is completed in different communities. My own community is overwhelmingly in support of this trail and asks the committee to support its advancement.

Thank you for giving this measure your serious consideration. As both a town councilor and a state representative serving in the proposed trail corridor, I hope you will feel free to reach out if I can be a resource to you during your deliberations.

I urge you to vote **Ought to Pass on LD 209** as amended. Thank you for your consideration.