

TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE FLEXIBILITY FOR THE FUTURE
In Opposition To LD 209

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FUTURE VISION

Although a proposal placed before a hypothetical 15 member legislative committee could result in a minority vote of 7 ought to pass, it would likely not reach the floor for consideration.

The split decision in the RUAC Berlin Subdivision Recommendation may reflect the uncertainty that surrounds this proposal. It is not yet known whether society can continue to rely solely or substantially on individual units of movement. The transition to electrification will require massive amounts of clean power and natural resources from throughout the world. It is currently problematic that it can be accomplished in the compressed time frames proposed or mandated.

Because of this uncertainty, and the mandate to combat climate change, the ability to provide transportation in the future will likely require diverse options. Twenty year planning, as put forward by the Transportation Department, should include a focus on being able to provide, or at the very least preserve the option for high volume transportation wherever available.

With the anticipated constrained availability of government funding going forward, low volume recreational uses should not be prioritized in transportation funding. Or at least those uses should be put in places * that do not jeopardize the ready availability of rail infrastructure in the medium to long term, unburdened by costs imposed by prior trail construction. The above could be within the scope of a Twenty Year Plan.

In 1982, if I were asked if Amtrak would ever operate in Maine, I would have regarded that as irrational thinking. Yet, just less than twenty years later, Amtrak did just that.

The need for alternative transportation methods might come sooner than currently anticipated. And decision making, legal barriers, land use conflicts and construction inertia in the political and economic system slowing electrification may force transportation decisions different to those currently contemplated.

The report focusses solely on the portion of the Berlin Subdivision from Auburn to Portland.

Keeping the above in mind, it should be pointed out for the record that the existing combined and in place rail network north and east of Portland surrounded by a growing population base provides a route directly to within walking distance of the business district and waterfront of Portland, which continues to grow as the major commercial hub of southern Maine.

The upgraded Brunswick branch through Freeport connects with the Berlin Subdivision track from Auburn and Lewiston at Yarmouth Junction in Yarmouth, which then runs through Yarmouth, Cumberland and Falmouth. These lines combined form a Y shaped rail system. The RUAC summary does not recognize this linkage.

Thus, rail infrastructure running from both Brunswick and Lewiston, through Yarmouth, Cumberland and Falmouth to the city center and waterfront of Portland can serve economic growth in the Greater Portland area. Commuter trains could operate from both Brunswick and Lewiston, or further from Augusta and Rockland if future conditions demand and possibly limited by commute times. The Berlin Sub track also passes near Pineland, and the proposed Roux Institute site in Portland is a short walking distance from the line. The RUAC summary does not recognize these linkages.

While not deemed a direct part of the corridor study, increased parking demand on the Portland peninsula is already problematic and without the ready possibility of alternative transportation will likely affect future development. The RUAC summary does not recognize this.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

NOTES

Track status: From Brunswick to Yarmouth Junction is active rail (Downeaster & freight). From Yarmouth to East Deering was active until 2015. Along the peninsula to the waterfront was active until 1984, but is now used by the Portland Narrow Gauge. The Brunswick branch line to the CSX mainline from Auburn runs through Portland, but does not give direct access to the city center and relies on local transit for the link.

* About potential uses for any proposed trail to include marathon races, there is already an alternative in southern Maine that could allow 26 mile marathon races, should those trail advocates entertain such use. The Eastern Trail from South Berwick to South Portland has substantial portions already in place and will, when completed, extend over 60 miles.