



May 18, 2023

**Testimony in Support of
LD 404 “Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the
Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council” and
LD 1450 “An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use
Advisory Council”**

Greetings Chairs Chipman and Williams, and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. I am Jean Sideris, Executive Director for the Bicycle Coalition of Maine. On behalf of our more than 20,000 members and supporters, I am submitting testimony in support of both LD 404 “Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council” and LD 1450 “An Act to Fund the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council” and recommends that the committee issue an “ought to pass” report on this bill.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine supports these bills, which directs the MaineDOT to follow the legislatively formulated Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) Process outlined in Title 23, Chapter 3, §75. Rail Use Advisory Councils are formed to assess the various possible uses of fallow railroad corridors, including restoring rail or creating multi-use trails.

LD 404 explicitly directs the MaineDOT to implement the trail recommendation of the Mountain Division RUAC, and LD 1450 provides a one time funding mechanism to construct the recommended trail. The BCM supports immediate action to begin conversion to an interim trail as the best and highest-impact use of this public resource. A 31 mile trail along this corridor would provide a safe, off-road option for recreation and transportation. The conversion of rail corridors to interim trail use is generally the least expensive option available to the state with enormous public health and active transportation benefits. The creation of multi-use paths is a proven economic and tourism driver, as demonstrated by the Eastern Trail and Downeast Sunrise Trail.

We urge the committee to honor the RUAC process, and to support the findings of these hardworking committees, by issuing an Ought to Pass report on these bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of LD 404 and 1450.

On behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, sincerely,

Jean Sideris

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Sideris".

Executive Director