



1/22/2024

1 | Page

To: Maine Legislature Transportation Committee
From: Maine Rail Transit Coalition
Tony Donovan, Director
Date: January 22, 2024
Re: **Support of LD 402 as Amended**

Senator Chipman, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation

My name is Tony Donovan, I am a Portland resident and founding Member of the Maine Rail Transit Coalition (MRTC). The Maine Rail Transit Coalition (MRTC) is an advocacy group engaged for the purpose of expanding passenger rail services as per the 1995 Maine State "Passenger Rail Service Act.", that established the Maine State rail authority NNEPRA "*... to take all actions that are reasonably necessary to initiate, establish or reinstate regularly scheduled passenger rail service between points within this State and points within and outside this State.*"

The MRTC is here in support of **LD 402 Directing the Department of Transportation to Consider Reasonable Rail Uses Before Recommending Interim Trail Use on State-Owned Rail Corridors**

Five Billion dollars. Including \$100 million contribution from the State General Fund. That is the amount (\$4.75b) that the current Maine Department of Transportation has allocated to transportation projects in Maine. About \$4 million over the 3 years will be allocated to maintaining the state-owned railway infrastructure. One hundred and eighty thousand for a new study of the state-owned Rockland branch, while the same amount is allocated to a study for ripping up the state mountain division railroad. Three million for the Rail to Trail in Portland. \$4.7 million for the Eastern Trail. \$450 thousand for the Rail to Trail in Westbrook, a project that had no public process. One million plus for the State Augusta Lower road for a trail in the rail corridor. \$400 thousand for trail design on the mountain division. Millions for snowmobile and ATV trails maintained by the department of conservation.

LD 402 directs the state to consider passenger rail use of these corridors. In the opinion of the Maine Rail Transit Coalition, supported by our own consultants in rail use infrastructure and operations, the state of Maine is failing to preserve, much less invest in, what might be one of our most valuable transportation resources.

The MRTC, and our rail use advocate colleagues across the state believe these railroads do have a very high value for train operations, particularly Light Rail Passenger Transit. Our findings say yes to owner operator use of these corridors. Our findings say yes to train station community locations that will attract private, Smart Growth development in Maine towns and cities bringing access to jobs, services, health care and affordable housing.

Last year, in this 131st Legislative session we asked that the state of Maine conduct a comprehensive study of how the state owned railroads might operate as a system. As opposed to individual rail use considerations, led by the notion that these corridors have no further value for their original and current potential use of train operations.

1/22/2024

2 | Page



The MeDOT successfully lobbied to kill that bill. In the DOT outreach to rail use advocates the MeDOT offered this compromise. We reluctantly accept this compromise, with the caveat that the language includes the word passenger, and that it be incorporated into the Department planning docs. If not amend the current planning documents, it will be in future MeDOT transportation plans.

We urge this legislature to give serious considerations to the railroad transportation infrastructure we own, for its use in meeting scarce resource needs, and in meeting actual carbon reduction and Climate mitigation needs.

Please support LD 402 directing the MeDOT to **Consider Reasonable Rail Uses for these assets.**

Thank you.

Tony Donovan

--

Anthony J. Donovan, Director
Maine Rail Transit Coalition
84 Middle St. Portland, Me. 04101
(207) 329-6732 Mobile
Mailto: MElikesRail@gmail.com

Train Time