

3/4/2025

(1)

Chairman Nangle, Chairwoman Crafts and committee member my name is Patsy Barber from Miami and I speak in opposition to LD 30, LD 29 and LD 511.

These 3 bills tear out state-owned railroads and replace them with temporary rec paths - an artificial 71 mile long trail.

The current MDOT cost of building this trail is over 1 million \$/mile - that's over 71 million dollars. Add to that the ongoing cost burden to each municipality for trail maintenance.

Building onto our already robust trail network is nice, but let's be pragmatic here.

over 71 million dollars

The new administration in DC has eliminated federal funding for trails, for these are not essential expenses, this is the reality for at least the next 4 years.

This state administration has 1/2 Billion dollar budget shortfall. There will be no transportation funding for non-necessary items such as rec trails when we have a backlog of road and bridge maintenance and repair.

The 2026 state election could usher in a conservative administration which would continue this austerity

going forward

(2)

These railroad tracks could be bringing in money to the state coffers imminently if we support freight opportunities on these lines.

These tracks are currently rated at least Class 1 which allows for freight movement.

Leasing out state owned railroads would bring in \$ by

- 1) The lease itself
- 2) alleviating maintenance burden on MDOT
- 3) private equity investment in the railroad and rail adjacent infrastructure
- 4) increasing the tax base
- 5) increased employment and the associated discretionary spending for local communities.

And best of all **NO STATE SUBSIDIES!!**

And there IS Federal funding for freight, especially in support of rural economies

Local private railroads are expanding service and investment.

CSX has invested 100 million\$ in Maine and New England infrastructure, and short-line railroads carrying Maine products such as wood, aggregates and agriculture along these very rail lines would be well poised to connect into those upgrades.

(3)

There are already freight rights and product movement on the Berlin Subdivision, local shortline railroads have developed business interests in the Lower Rd and the Mountain Division, and the Rockland Branch drew 5 bidders for the latest RFP.

For the naysayers who claim there are no interested railroads, there are no freight customers, return of freight service will never be profitable, the only use for these corridors are no trains - well I say

Put out an RFP. Put out a request for proposals for our state owned rail corridors. I am confident there would be multiple bidders.

Let's be practical, pragmatic and realistic. Let's allow private business to pay the state to use our rail infrastructure, as the Maine Rail Preservation Act intended.

Don't pull out the tracks! Put them to work for Maine!

Thank you.