



Town of Brunswick, Maine

INCORPORATED 1739

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

85 UNION STREET

BRUNSWICK, MAINE 04011-2418

TELEPHONE 207-721-0292

FAX 207-725-6663

March 4, 2025

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Support LD 29, a "Resolve, to Require the Department of Transportation to implement the Recommendations of the Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Committee."

Senator. Nagle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

Please accept this testimony from me as a representative of the Town of Brunswick and in support of LD 29. I am the Director of Economic and Community Development, and therefore, will keep my remarks related to the potential for economic benefits and impacts of an interim trail and/or preserving the existing rail along the 33.5-mile Lower Road Rail Corridor from Downtown Brunswick to the east side of the Maine Central Railroad bridge in Augusta.

There are documented economic benefits of interim trails and rail with trails to municipalities and States around the Country, and here in Maine, that holds true. More specifically, according to an economic analysis conducted by Camoin Associates in 2021, the Eastern Trail in Maine has a total annual economic impact of \$44.6M on the Maine economy. Trail counts estimate that roughly 250,000 people use the trail annually and spend an average of \$118.00 per day. The trail supports 364 jobs across the State, \$12.5 M in earnings and \$32.1M in sales which support our service and tourism industries including overnight lodging, food and beverage, and retail.

Source: <https://www.easterntail.org/the-economic-impact-of-the-eastern-trail/>

As outlined in MDOT's Lower Road Rail Corridor Study, and according to the State Rail Preservation Act, the corridor must be preserved for eventual rail use but can be repurposed on an interim basis for alternative use such as a trail, as provided in Chapter 615. The two trail options under consideration were an "Interim Trail," which utilizes the existing rail corridor in place of the rails, or a "Rail-with-Trail," built beside the existing tracks. Given that the State taxpayers are currently paying for the maintenance of the railroad tracks and not getting any benefit from this investment as rail use is not active, use of the state-owned railroad track - more specifically, the 33.5 miles recommended by the RUAC for conversion to an Interim Trail - would provide some tangible return on the public's investment.

https://www.maine.gov/mdot/ofps/ruac/lowerroad/docs/230808_LowerRoadRUACReport-FINAL.pdf

Brunswick serves as a hub for several trails that are part of the Maine Active Transportation Arterials Plan – these bikeway trails are part of the 3,000-mile trails system along the East Coast from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. Time and time again, the people of Brunswick express their desire for safe, convenient, and enjoyable places to run, walk, bike, roll, and more to the

Brunswick Town Council and staff. What the public desires is a system of connectivity that creates safe places within and outside of Brunswick to reach the neighboring communities for work, school, and recreation.

In 2023, Brunswick renewed its League of American Bicyclists Bike Friendly Community status. This effort included a community survey which showed that the number one and two most desired changes to Brunswick are to create paths and lanes to accommodate safe movement and travel of bicycles, pedestrians, and other mobility devices. More support for investment in active transportation was demonstrated in the public process of the Cook's Corner Revitalization planning effort in 2022; the final plan shows a similar result of Transportation and Connectivity in the Cook's Corner area as the number one goal.

More recently, on December 16, 2025, the Town Council adopted a Climate Action Plan that prioritizes safe walking and biking infrastructure first, even before addressing the electrification of our vehicle fleet. This prioritization of active transportation is a result of clear and consistent community input, and LD 29 will be a step in the right direction to address this desired community outcome.

Thank you for hearing my comments on LD 29. I urge you to support its passage, as it will result in a productive economic asset long into the future.