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As a resident, taxpayer, and small business owner I strongly oppose LD29, LD30, and LD511. These rail corridors have the potential to serve both rail and trail interests. There are currently rail operators that have interest (and I know of some personally) that would be willing to provide both freight and passenger(tourist) service on parts of these lines. The State of Maine would benefit from a partnership of rail & trail. This would be positive for our local economy, catering to both interests. Both uses are extremely environmentally friendly. Please go back to the drawing board to allow for rail and trail. Once the railroad is removed, it would be a monumental undertaking to reinstall it. These corridors are assets for both interests (and the State of Maine) and should be treated as such. I urge the DOT to put out RFPs for the 'rail' side of these corridors while partnering with trail groups (similar to rail operators).

There are many examples in our own country where rail & trail work wonderfully together. Portland has the narrow gauge that has revenues of over 2MM while at the same time, allowing for trail use along the beautiful waterfront. The Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (WMSRR) in Cumberland Maryland has 18 miles of rail and trail. Both are big economic engines in that area. WMSRR Railroad alone brings in over 4MM in revenue and provides many jobs for skilled workers in that area. This does not count revenue at other businesses such as hotels, restaurants, etc. That rural area of Maryland is not much unlike Maine, please have a look. We could benefit from the same. These corridors have the potential to be both beautiful trails and active rail lines. Both lines have great potential for passenger and freight service, and the ability to remove vehicles off the road. We need to put operators in place that will look to attract business to our state and more specifically, along our rail lines to reduce the truck traffic on our highways. Rail is far more efficient, and environmentally friendly than more trucks on the road.

Again, there are operators that would take on the challenges of these lines and make them successful. These lines have direct connections to active rail service and some of the largest population bases in our state. Let us not sell ourselves short; use these assets to benefit all aspects of Maine instead of treating them as a liability.

Remember just a 'few' years ago discussions about the Downeaster service before it began. I was skeptical myself. Look at what a wonderful thing we have now, and how well it is used. Let us use its success as a model for what we can do elsewhere in the state. At the very least, leave these corridors intact so that we can continue to have that discussion. Thank you for your time!