

Testimony in Support of LD 30 and LD 511

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Dick Woodbury. I live in Yarmouth.

22 years ago this month, when I was in my young 40s, I stood at this podium in this room to introduce one of my very first bills as a freshman legislator. It was LD 1263, "Resolve, To Promote the Construction of Off-Road Bike and Walking Paths Along the Busiest Commuting Corridors in the State." Here's the bill summary.

LD 1263 (2003): "This resolve requires the Department of Transportation to conduct a study on the feasibility and expense of constructing a network of off-road bike and walking paths along the commuting corridors with the highest volume of traffic in the state."

Over the next 22 years, and especially the last 5, through the COVID pandemic, through the elevated safety hazards of cell phones and driving, and through the market proliferation of e-bikes, the demand for safe-from-traffic active transportation arterials is many times greater than it was then.

So here I am in my mid-60s, back at this podium in this room, asking you to please bring this vision to realization, and to let me bike, walk, or roll my wheelchair on this interim trail before I die.

I worked on many issues in my 10-years as a Maine legislator. But never have I worked on an issue that advances so many different domains of public policy.

This bill is important to public health and safety, which is why it is endorsed by the Maine Association of Public Health, the Maine Heart and Lung Associations, MaineHealth, Northern Light Mercy, Martin's Point, and many provider practices.

This bill is important to business and economic development, which is why it is endorsed by L.L. Bean, the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, and many businesses in the Portland-to Lewiston-Auburn region.

This bill provides an emission free transportation option through one of the most heavily traveled corridors in the state, and through the picturesque public lands of the Royal River Watershed, which is why it is endorsed by major environmental groups in the state.

And this bill is important to the quality of life for residents in the Casco Bay Trail communities, which is why close to 1000 of them signed a petition or submitted testimony supporting it.

Speaking as a member of the Board of the Casco Bay Trail Alliance, we are indifferent as to whether you use LD 30 or LD 511 as the vehicle to advance the recommendations of the RUAC report, but we ask that you authorize interim trail use on the full 25-mile corridor between Portland and Auburn, and not just the 10-mile segment between Portland and Yarmouth.

I am in the weeds of just about any question you may have about the corridor and the RUAC process that brought us to this point; and I would be pleased to answer any questions.