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Testimony of
Bruce Van Note
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Neither For Nor Against

LD 511

Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council

Chair Nangle, Chair Crafts and other distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Bruce Van Note, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and I appear before you neither for nor against LD 511.

LD 511 involves the same subject matter as LD 30. LD 30, a department bill, is a Resolve that implements a statutory Rail Use Advisory Council (RUAC) process and authorizes removal of state-owned inactive track and construction of an interim Trail Until Rail (TUR) on 10 miles of the state-owned Berlin Subdivision line from Back Cove in Portland to Royal River Park on East Elm Street in Yarmouth. LD 511 also directs MaineDOT to implement the recommendations of the same RUAC, but is different in that it would authorize the removal of 25 miles of state-owned inactive railroad track and construction of an interim TUR between the City of Portland and railroad mile post 26.5 at the Auburn town line. Like LD 30, this Resolve is subject to available funding resources, permitting and municipal agreements.

For background information about the general requirements of all RUAC processes established during the 130th Legislature, as well as the specific makeup, process, input and recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council (Council), I respectfully refer you to my testimony on LD 30.

Regarding the factors influencing LD 30's focus on the 10 miles portion of the rail corridor from Back Cove in Portland to East Elm Street in Yarmouth – as opposed to the 25 miles from Back Cove to Auburn - they included population density, the likelihood for higher trail use, the existing community spaces at the proposed Yarmouth terminus, limited funding for trail construction, the existence of freight and passenger rail service between Portland and Yarmouth

on another line, and the desire to take an admittedly measured approach to track removal under the RUAC process.

With that said, if the Committee determines - based upon information it receives as part of LD 30 and this bill and its policy judgment - that it desires to amend LD 30 to change the northerly terminus of the segment impacted from Yarmouth to railroad mile post 26.5 at the Auburn town line, MaineDOT would not oppose, subject to the understanding that project(s) in furtherance of the Resolve would be dependent upon available funding, permitting, and any needed municipal agreements.

The RUAC estimated cost of constructing a TUR with gravel/stone dust surface on this 25-mile segment was over \$28 million; a paved trail was estimated at almost \$36 million. Federal funding for such projects is limited and could become even more so. Any state funding would need to be identified through MaineDOT's Work Plan process. Given the cost and limited funding, the project would need to be divided into phases and will take many, many years to complete.

That concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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