



City of Auburn, Maine

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Testimony of City of Auburn Mayor Jeffrey Harmon on LD 511

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

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Jeffrey Harmon, I'm the mayor of Auburn, and I am representing the residents of Auburn in support of LD 511.

The Auburn City Council recently passed a resolution supporting interim trail use of the Berlin Subdivision rail corridor as recommended by the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council.

We found that the Berlin Subdivision corridor is an underutilized public asset that would best be utilized for recreational and active transportation purposes until such time as viable rail use is identified. Such recreational and active transportation use will have a positive impact on the region and on future economic opportunities in the region.

There were several issues around continued rail use that were considered by the City Council prior to taking action to support interim use. One was the availability of expanded train services on the parallel, and still active, CSX track between Auburn and Portland, along with the requirement that CSX coordinate such service with Amtrak, as they already do for the Downeaster train.

Second, the MDOT is currently running an intercity bus pilot program between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland; and the capital and operational cost for this service is dramatically less than rail service while providing more flexible routing options.

Third, complementing LD 511, the city of Auburn is engaged in a major redesign of the Route 202 gateway into downtown Auburn, including active transportation pathways beginning not far from the end of the state-owned Berlin Subdivision corridor at Auburn's southern border. We are also in discussions with CSX on a possible trail extension between downtown Lewiston-Auburn and Lisbon, extending this active transportation network even further.

The City of Auburn would be disappointed to be excluded from the new trail authorization if it were to terminate in Yarmouth, as LD 30 proposes, and not continue for the full length of the state-owned corridor into Auburn.

For these reasons the City of Auburn urges the committee to vote in favor of LD 511.

Thank you for your time.