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# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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*Testimony of Representative Anne Graham in support of*

## **LD 511, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation*

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and the honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Anne Graham and I serve House District 105, which includes North Yarmouth and part of Gray. I am here in strong support of **LD 511, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council.**

This resolve directs the Department of Transportation, subject to available funding resources, permitting and municipal agreements, to remove state-owned inactive existing railroad track along the section known as the Berlin Subdivision between the City of Portland and the City of Auburn and to replace the track with an interim bicycle and pedestrian trail surfaced with pavement or gravel or stone dust on the existing rail bed.

I absolutely support the Casco Bay Rail Trail. Why? YIMBY, or yes in my backyard, because it is in my backyard, so to speak. My family has lived on a private road off of North Road in North Yarmouth since 1994. The tracks noted in this bill run across the beginning of that road. When we first moved to our neighborhood, anyone who crossed the railroad tracks had to pay insurance to the railroad company just to cross it. There was a train that went to Sunday River on the track that crossed our road in 1994. It ceased that year and has been abandoned for the last 30 years. Now, the state of Maine has since taken it over. People will sometimes walk on the tracks, but it isn't easy. It would be wonderful to be able to walk without spraining an ankle on the railroad ties, bike without fear that a car will run you into a ditch as you ride down North Road or be able to cross country ski all the way to Auburn or downtown Portland.

As you may know, the campaign to convert approximately 26 miles of unused railroad track has been strong with a large group of supporters ranging from businesses, environmental advocates and community members who want to exercise and enjoy this beautiful area of our state. We envision people commuting to work on this trail as well.

It is no secret that I support train travel, and I would love to see a train run on the active rail line that currently exists. My parents met when my Dad traveled from Boston to Bangor by train for his residency as a new Maine surgeon (without trains, I might not have been born! Who knows!).

It would be amazing if we can extend trains all the way to Bangor and beyond. I do not believe that converting this inactive, unused rail line would affect the efforts to extend our rail system in the future.

I wholeheartedly support the Casco Bay Rail Trail, and I will work to help make it a reality. I hope you agree and vote to support LD 511.

Thank you for the consideration, and for the opportunity to share my thoughts.