



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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March 4, 2025

Testimony of Representative Amy D. Kuhn 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

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and honorable members of the Transportation Committee, I am Amy Kuhn, proudly serving House District 111, in the town of Falmouth. It is a pleasure to be with you today to speak 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."

Converting the inactive Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor to an interim trail would create an active transportation corridor, bringing numerous benefits to our region and our state. The trail would provide walking and biking alternatives for commuters in these high-volume corridors, which are separate from vehicle lanes, enhancing users' health and safety. This use of the trail would also take cars off the road and reduce carbon emissions, moving Maine closer to achieving its climate goals. In addition to commuting uses, the trail would help individuals and families get outside, be active, and engage in their communities. Along the way, they may explore new commercial areas. In fact, numerous studies have shown that trails and green space help spur economic development.

In addition to these myriad benefits, I wanted to address a couple of concerns you may hear today. First, the idea that conversion to an interim trail would inhibit the development of rail alternatives. The proposed trail is in alignment with the region and the state's long-term transit planning. It will not displace rail service because an additional rail line with excess capacity already exists in the same corridor (the CSX Freight Main Line). In fact, the trail could help achieve the state's transit

planning goals by providing first-mile/last-mile connections, which can otherwise stand in the way of transit utilization, including trains.

Second, I wanted to address potential concerns you may hear about the recommendation of the Portland to Auburn Rail Use Advisory Council. I was at that final RUAC meeting back in December 2022 and cast Falmouth's vote in support of an interim trail. The RUAC's majority decision was the result of a carefully organized and executed process, where municipal officials and diverse stakeholders convened to engage in a robust public process (including nearly 800 public comments) and make decisions. We did just that. I urge you not to set aside the majority findings of a body that was conducted with such a thoughtful process and further ask you to consider the consequences downstream of setting that precedent.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in support of this bill. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 511.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy D. Kuhn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Amy D. Kuhn