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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation,

Support LD 1612; Directing DOT to solicit proposals for the Utilization of Unused State-owned Railroad Lines

The State of Maine purchased rail lines because they saw them as part of a system which would be needed in the future.

Real interest in the branch lines has been shown recently by local short line providers with improved freight service by the class 1 Rail Company offered by CSX. Local short line operators can provide the individualized service that small businesses in Maine depend upon.

But this can only occur if the rails are protected. Look at what is occurring in Northern New Hampshire by Vermont Rail Services as lines, in worst shape than Maine's State-owned lines, are being reopened. Rail freight is returning, and small businesses are taking advantage of the promise of new service.

Some of the bids to use the lines may come from non-freight service providers, such as rail bikes, and that service will provide the State with income while protecting the existing tracks. Rail bikes not only make use of existing tracks at no cost to the state, but they also bring in direct income from taxes, and local business who would benefit from additional traffic that rail bikes would attract.

This bill is a "win-win" for attracting businesses in Maine, while protecting State owned assets for the reason they were purchased.

Maine DOT works hard maintaining our roads, but at a cost that is not sustainable. We need new sources of income and a willingness to try something new.

Sincerely,

Peter Cole, President
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