

April 14, 2021

Re: LD1133 - An Act to Amend the State Railroad Preservation Act

Dear Senator William Diamond and members of the Committee:

My name is **Robert Klose**. I am a resident of Orono and a Professor at the University of Maine. I have a long-standing commitment to public — especially rail — transportation as a means of investing in social capital for the benefit of our state communities.

In short order the Maine legislature will be considering LD227, which would authorize a feasibility study for reactivation of passenger rail service between Brunswick and points north and inland, specifically Augusta, Waterville and Bangor. LD1133, if passed, would shipwreck any hope of seeing the return of such passenger service in our lifetime.

Let me be direct: *the rails for potential future passenger train service are already in place*. They represent an infrastructure to build on. It seems terribly short-sighted and misguided to believe that, even if these rails are ripped up in favor of a recreational trail, they will be re-installed at a later date should the state decide to reinitiate passenger train service along this route. Please consider how difficult it is to get train service started *even when the rails are already there*. Once these rails are gone, it is highly unlikely that time, money and effort will be invested in reacquiring the land and rebuilding it for train service.

During his campaign, President Biden promised a "second great railroad revolution." This charge has already been taken up by many states, as emblemized by rail projects blossoming far and wide, from the expansion of Florida's Brightline, to the magnificent new Amtrak train hall in Manhattan, to the Texas high-speed rail project, to the multitude of rail transit systems proposed, planned, or in development across the Republic. Maine has an opportunity to be part of something compelling, instead of "missing the train" in favor of, essentially, a walking path which will do nothing to promote economic development in our state. In short, Maine is not lacking for recreational hiking paths, but its lack of mass transit alternatives is striking.

It has occurred to me that there is a solution that might satisfy all parties: leave the rails in place against the advent of future train service, and construct a recreational trail (where there is enough space to safely develop a walking path) that parallels the rail corridor. This would certainly be cheaper than tearing up the rails and re-configuring the rail bed. Other places have done this; there is no reason why Maine can't as well.

I urge you to vote "ought not to pass" so that LD1133 does not put the brakes on potential future rail projects in Maine.

Respectfully,

Robert Klose

