

Date: April 14, 2021

Re: Maine DOT's Bill - LD1133 -An Act to Amend the State Railroad Preservation Act

Dear Senator William Diamond and Rep. Danny Martin and other Members of the Committee,

My name is Andrew Sandweiss, a graduate student in city planning, born and raised in Bangor, Maine. I am urging you to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 1133, an act to amend the State Railroad Preservation Act.

I had originally planned to write testimony on the proposed bill to sponsor a feasibility study for rail service to Bangor--but it is clear that this LD puts that effort in jeopardy. I fear that LD 1133 will create a council stacked in favor of the whims of certain groups--particularly those of the rail trail coalition.

Don't get me wrong--I am a supporter of "active transportation" (bike/pedestrian infrastructure), and Maine could do more to support such infrastructure. However, it *must not* be done at the expense of rail service. The vast majority of Maine citizens will not (and many *can not*) use rail trails for the purposes of long-distance (or even short-distance) travel. They are meant for recreational purposes--a fine goal to be sure, but not one worth destroying Maine's potential for more sustainable and easily accessible transportation. Our seniors, as well as those with physical disabilities, will be unable to use these corridors fully. And come winter--while trains and other forms of non-car transportation continue to roll across our state and the nation--these rails-to-trails will fall silent, and become unusable except to those who own snowmobiles, or perhaps cross-country skis. Rail service is a far better option for the corridors that already have, unsurprisingly, railroad tracks. From sustainability to accessibility, there are benefits--which I'm sure others will have already discussed or will do so soon in other testimonials.

Nonetheless, regardless of your current attitude about passenger rail, it is *at least* worth conducting a feasibility study on some of the routes that could see passenger service (e.g. Brunswick-Bangor, Portland-Lewiston). And that is why this L.D. concerns me--its appearance at a time full of potential for rail service in Maine (given the other bills that are coming up, in addition to President Biden's infrastructure plan) makes me highly suspicious that it will be used to strike down any chance not only to expand rail service in Maine, but even to study the possibility of expansion.

As someone who grew up in Maine, I know plenty of people who have left the state (myself included) to pursue educational and career goals. To be frank, the ability to bike from Augusta to Brunswick, or from Portland to Yarmouth, is not going to attract people like me to live in Maine. There is already a plethora of trails and bike routes in the state. What will, however, make Maine a more desirable place to live will be a stronger, wider connection to the nation's rail network. I urge you to not be hasty--to give passenger rail in Maine the feasibility studies it deserves, and to vote "Ought Not to Pass" on L.D. 1133.

Many thanks,

Andrew Sandweiss

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