

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Kristine Keeney, from Greenwood, and I am the New England Coordinator for the East Coast Greenway Alliance. I am testifying on behalf of the Alliance's 3,000 members and as a member of the Maine Trails Coalition Leadership Team to urge you to support LD 1370.

The East Coast Greenway Alliance leads the development of a connected biking and walking route, 3,000 miles from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. The Greenway is designed to transform the communities it connects through healthy lifestyles, safe and sustainable transportation, community engagement, climate resilience, and economic development. The Greenway offers a safe place for bicyclists, walkers, runners, and more — of all ages and abilities — to commute, exercise, and visit new places.

During the difficult days of the pandemic, the Greenway and other trails were and continue to be sanctuaries of sanity and havens of health for Mainers, with usage of the multi-use Back Cove Trail in Portland tripling and the Loon Echo Land Trust recording a 40% growth in trail use on their property in Bridgton. Not only has trail use significantly increased in the last year, but the outdoor recreation industry has long been key to the state's economy; generating \$2.9 billion annually and ranking the state 5th in the country in terms of percentage of GDP created by the sector (2017 Outdoor Industry Association Recreation Economy Report). This industry is also an employment driver in Maine, accounting for 40,000 jobs and generating \$548 million in state/local tax revenue. By establishing, and then investing in our outdoor recreation and transportation assets like "trail until rail" corridors, we can sustainably support growth of the outdoor recreation and hospitality sectors as the state recovers from COVID-19, attract high-quality businesses and employees, and help drive overall growth across all sectors of the Maine economy.

The Alliance is a strong supporter of LD 1370 for several reasons:

First, the bill outlines a process by which the State of Maine can pursue a connected transportation network comprised of both rail and trail corridors, that both reduce emissions and increase mobility options for Mainers in their communities and beyond. The Maine Rail-Trail Plan 2020-2030 calls for the continuing preservation and maintenance of a separate and active rail corridor that can be used to extend future passenger or freight service from Boston through Maine's largest population centers. The plan illustrates that the most important inter-urban corridors do not require a choice between trains and trails; that there are alternate routes that allow for both, including on the four corridors outlined in LD 1370.

Second, 86% of Mainers favor creating "trail until rail" corridors, if the trails could be converted back to railroad use if needed, according to a statewide poll conducted by Critical Insights in 2019. This support was consistent across regions (North (88%), South (85%), Central (84%), Coast (86%), and political parties Democrats (87%), Republicans (83%), and Independents (88%). It's clear from these results that the majority of Mainers support "trail until rail" corridors.

Third, it would authorize long planned trail projects that have significant public support on corridors which have specifically have not had trains running on them in years, and in many cases, decades. By using the federal railbanking process, we can put all four of these public assets to work in the short-term, while also preserving and protecting Maine's rail infrastructure for future use should service become feasible. Railbanking allows for rail service to be reactivated at any time on these corridors.

Fourth, the economic impact from all four "trail until rail" corridors will be meaningful for the communities they run through in southern, western, central, and Downeast Maine. Based on an evaluation of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects in 2012, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) found that sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenway projects created nearly 50% more jobs per million dollars spent, when compared with new highway construction, bridge replacement, road widening, and paving. Investments in Maine's outdoor recreation and active transportation network will not only create more good paying jobs in the short term, but the long-term

economic benefits to Maine's tourism economy and quality-of-life appeal will generate sustainable economic growth for decades to come.

Fifth, 54% of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation; active transportation can provide zero-emission travel options for Mainers, particularly along the major commuting corridors in the state. With the emergence of electric bicycles (e-bikes), active transportation is an even more viable transportation alternative for a wider range of people and trips. A regional multi-use trail network is complementary to expanding transit in Maine by providing critical first/last mile connections from where people live to transit, which will bolster ridership on existing core passenger service from Boston to Brunswick and increase the potential service area for future passenger rail expansion.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to support LD 1370 and vote for an "ought to pass" Committee Report. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.