

**To: Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, Maine State Legislature.
Senator Bill Diamond, Chair; Representative Danny Martin, Chair**

**From: Richard H. Rudolph, Ph.D., Chairman, Rail Users' Network; Member
of the Central Maine Passenger Rail Stakeholder Group and Maine Rail
Group Director.**

Re: LD 1370 Ought Not To Pass

Date: May 18, 2021

**Dear Senator William Diamond and Representative Danny Martin and other
Members of the Committee.**

**My name is Richard Rudolph. I am a Portland resident who has served as the
chair of Amtrak's National Customer Advisory Committee, and currently
serve on the Maine Rail Group's Board of Directors and chair, a national
organization called the Rail Users Network which represents long distance,
commuter and transit rail riders all across America.**

**I am here today to urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass LD1370. This proposed
bill undermines the original intention of your predecessors who had the
wisdom to provide state funds to purchase what are now state-owned rail lines
before they were abandoned by Guildford Industries in the late 1980's and
early 1990's. They recognized the value of preserving these lines for possible
future rail passenger routes and invested \$17,582,400 to acquire these
properties.**

**The bill before you now is designed to turn over these preserved rail lines to
special interest trail organizations who want to usurp these corridors for
pedestrian and bicycle trails, usable by those with the health and leisure to
enjoy it as a linear playground for recreation, and with its use governed by
favorable conditions of season, weather, daylight, week-ends and vacations.**

**While feasibility studies would need to be completed to determine what it
would actually cost to restore passenger rail service on these state -owned rail
lines, the economic benefits would far out way what walkers and cyclists
would ever spend utilizing the proposed trails. The potential economic
benefits include increased tourism and visitor spending and increased
business activity in sectors that support tourism and transportation. It would**

also promote economic development which would attract millennials and families who want to live in a city or more rural area, but no longer can afford housing in southern Maine. The return of passenger service would also play an important role in confronting environmental challenges. It would improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, facilitate compact development, conserving land and decreasing travel demand and save energy.

While there are many examples of economic development taking place all across the nation as passenger rail service is restored, we don't need to look beyond Maine to discover what has already happened. Brunswick residents have seen how restoring passenger service is an investment in their future. A once barren Brownfield site located between downtown Brunswick and Bowdoin College has been transformed into the bustling Brunswick Station. The complex includes a restaurant, medical offices, retail shops, a visitors center and a 52 room hotel along with the train station adjacent to the train platform.

An economic resurgence has already taking place in Saco. An old tannery mill has been transformed into a mix-use development that includes 150 apartments and 4,000 square-feet of commercial space. Close proximity to the transportation center in Portland has also been a huge factor in the ongoing development of Thompson point. It has become "a hub of creative activity: brewers, restaurateurs, designers, musicians, and makers have set up shop in the site's once forgotten buildings." It has become a new center for residential and commercial activity, with plans for a hotel, children's museum, recreational opportunities that take advantage of the water and trails nearby, homes, office spaces, and shared green space.

Finally, it is delusional to believe that passenger rail would ever be restored once rail lines have been covered up or removed. Restoration almost never happens. "The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's [review of railbanking](#) points to success, but only nine railbanked corridors have had rail service restored out of 301." The rest have been paved over, and often have enough non-railroad users that any restoration would be politically difficult if not impossible.

I respectfully ask that LD 1370 be voted Ought Not to Pass.

Thank you for your time. I am available to answer any questions.

