

LD 1450 - PD Written Comment In Favor

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Paul Drinan
POB 17834
Portland, ME. 04112

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Paul Drinan and I am a resident of Westbrook. I am writing to testify in strong support of Senator Bennett's LD 1450 "Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council".

This isn't just about money to build a trail, it's *an investment* in Maine's rural economy.

The Mountain Division Corridor runs through some of the fastest growing and most dense communities in Maine and this future trail system will be a critical bikeway that will connect Portland to Fryeburg and become a regional economic development hub for the people of Maine.

- LD 1450 can help make Maine a top destination for hiking, biking, active transportation, skiing, snowmobiling and many other uses.
- LD 1450 will keep us on track to contribute to Maine's economy, since trails are such a critical part of Maine's \$3 billion outdoor recreation economy. .
- When the trail connects to Portland, it will pass through 9 towns with a combined population of 144,000 people. Trail use is predicted to be substantial in both directions as people ride to recreational areas as well as to connect their communities. Many of these towns are in the same school districts and the trail serves as a commuting corridor for students. There will also be ample opportunity for business creation along the trail.
- Looking at trip estimates: In interviews conducted by prior Maine DOT staff, municipal officials and members of the Mountain Division Alliance, many residents of Westbrook and Windham indicated they would very much like to commute by bicycle into Westbrook and Portland.

- Like similar trails in other parts of the country and Canada the Mountain Division Trail will attract tourists who may take multiple days to ride the entire length of the trail with the possibility of connecting to the Eastern Trail, Casco Bay Trail or the Amtrak/Downeaster.
- [Maine's Climate Action Plan](#) calls for using “available infrastructure” and “reducing carbon emissions” and rail trails fit the bill.
- Key goals of Maine Department of Transportation's [Maine State Active Transportation Plan](#) align with the outcomes of LD 1450. These include:
 - Safe Travel
 - A Vibrant Economy
 - Connectivity
 - Environmentally Sustainable Transportation System
 - Equitable Access
 - Healthier Maine (which translates to a healthier economy)

If, indeed, the State of Maine wants to support economic impact opportunities, equitable transportation, environmental justice, and public health, a rail trail checks all the boxes. Climate change has elevated Maine's active transportation imperative from desirable to essential and urgent. Active transportation infrastructure enables emission-free transportation, outdoor recreation, and improved public health.

Nothing is safer, nothing is cleaner, more affordable, more accessible, and therefore more equitable, than a car-free trail for walking and biking. The proposed RUAC's recommendations for the Mountain Division Trail will provide these benefits to the residents, visitors, and neighbors in the region. I ask that you vote Ought To Pass on LD 1450.

Thank you,

Paul Drinan