

To: Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, Maine State Legislature.
Senator Ben Chipman, Chair; Representative Lynn Williams, Chair.

From: Richard H. Rudolph, Ph.D., Chairman, Rail Users 'Network; Maine Rail
Group Director.
Re: LD404

Date: May 18,
2023

Dear Senator Ben Chipman and Representative Lynn Williams 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 the Rail Users Network which
represents long distance, commuter and transit rail riders all across America. I
also serve on the "Lower Road Rail Use Advisory Committee."

I'm opposed to LD404, An Act to Direct the Department of Transportation to
Implement the recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory
Committee." There seems to be a mad rush to tear up the state-owned railways
and convert them into bicycle / walking paths without first analyzing how restoring
these lines could enhance the mobility of citizens interior Maine and support new
economic development for Maine businesses.

Having lived in Steep Falls, Maine for over twenty three years, I have first hand
knowledge why it would be a horrible mistake to tear up the tracks from Standish
to Fryeburgh, Maine. I attended a number of meetings that were sponsored by town
officials and the Greater Portland Council of Government during the past two
decades where town officials and business people expressed interest in restoring
freight rail service along the line to transport cement, lumber, fuel pellets,
aggregates and other fuels. There was also interest in restoring seasonal passenger
rail service to take tourists especially cruise ship visitors on the Mountain Division
line who would enjoy spending time in a more rural area of the state.

I am also concerned about the process used to reach the decision to tear up the
Mountain Division Line for a bicycle/walking path. Thank you for your time and
attention to this urgent matter.

I currently serve on the “Lower Road” Rail Use Advisory Committee (RUAC) as the only rail advocate and have seen first hand how MEDOT has created stacked decks to insure that the state own rail lines will be turned over to the bicycle interests. The consultant hired by DOT to provide an economic analysis for the state owned rail lines which the Maine State Legislature had voted to purchase back in the late 1980’s also leaves much to be desired. The consultants believe that people walking and riding bikes will spend much more money than those who might utilize the state owned rail lines if they were restored. On several occasions I have actually ridden on the four mile walking / bicycle rail/trail which was built during the last decade in Fryeburg, Maine. My wife and I spent less than \$6 dollars to purchase sodas and candy bars on our way there.

The work that was done to create a trail along the rail line in Fryeburg serves as an excellent example of what can be done elsewhere on the Mountain Division Line since 85% of the line can easily accommodate a trail along the existing rail line.

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
211 Ocean Ave
Portland, Maine

In closing, LD404 ought not to pass and LD 1450 should be modified to fund rail WITH trail only where possible. No rail infrastructure should be removed or altered.

Richard Rudolph
Portland
LD 404

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