

Jim Porter
Calais
LD 956

Testimony of Jim Porter
Calais Interim City Manager
April 4, 2025

My name is Jim Porter. I am The Interim City Manager of Calais and I am writing in support of LD 956. Thank you to the Co-Chairs and members of the Transportation Committee for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

On behalf of the City of Calais and its citizens, we are submitting this testimony of support to ensure the completion of the Down East Sunrise Trail from Ayers Junction to Calais in accordance with Calais Branch Rail Use Advisory Council's recommendation for the interim conversion of the existing railroad track to a multi-use trail. The fulfillment of this corridor will provide a much-needed positive economic impact on Calais and the surrounding towns. For many years our community has suffered from the disconnect and inability to access Ayers Junction and points beyond. Despite being geographically isolated with the closest city nearly one hundred miles away, our community has so much to offer visitors seeking recreation and boasts the amenities to become a premier destination for those enjoying the Down East Sunrise Trail every season of the year.

For walkers, bikers, or hikers traversing the multi-use trail, it would be a spectacular way to finish the U.S. portion with a scenic trek through the beautiful Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge, at the same time attaining the goal of the East Coast Greenway, which is to continue the path off-road whenever possible. ATV riders and snowmobilers will gain much-needed access to gasoline, supplies, restaurants, and over-night accommodations while enjoying two of the many attributes our region has to offer: breath taking scenery and the shared joy of outdoor recreation. The extension also affords connections to Atlantic Canada by way of the three international bridges located in Calais.

We respect MDOT and its right to terminate at any time the use of the Calais Branch rail corridor for recreational purposes and to use the rail corridor for railroad purposes as stated in Chapter 615 subsection 7108 of the State Railroad Preservation Act. Regardless of the outcome concerning future rail use, the rails will be dismantled due to their outdated condition. In fact, by pulling the section of rail, preparing the ground, and maintaining the trail system from Ayers Junction to Calais in compliance to MDOT standards, we are improving the railroad bed from its current dilapidated condition and making it more viable for future rail use.

I would like to thank the committee members and urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 956.