

Dear Senator or Representative:

Votes will shortly be coming up on **LD 209**, An Act to Authorize an Interim Use Trail on the Berlin Subdivision Rail Corridor **and LD 404**, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Implement the Recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council. These bills **seek to destroy State-owned rail lines** by ripping up the tracks from those lines and replacing them with trails. **TrainRiders Northeast**, the non-profit, § 501(c)(3), grass roots citizens organization that was the initiating force behind the hugely successful Downeaster train service between Brunswick and Boston **asks that you vote AGAINST each of these bills.**

The following, among other things, are the reasons for TrainRiders' position on these bills:

- These bills require all track, as well as other rail infrastructure, to be removed from each of these lines and replaced by a trail. Although proponents say that any such removal could be reversed if rail was again desired, this is a fantasy, since the cost of reinstallation (in contrast to an upgrade of the current track and rail infrastructure) would be too much to be economically feasible. Any such removal would, in the case of LD 404, permanently end rail service on the Mountain Division between Standish and Fryeburg, while also eliminating the rail connection from Portland to the North Conway area. In the case of LD 209, any rail service on the Berlin Subdivision formerly owned by the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railway between Portland and Auburn would end forever.
- A trail can be built along each line while leaving the rail in place for potential future use ("rail with trail"). While rail with trail would cost more than replacing rail with a trail, it would preserve rail as an otherwise irreplaceable asset for future economic development along each of these State-owned lines.
- The Maine Department of Transportation ("MDOT") opposes passage of LD 209 and, with one dissent, the Transportation Committee voted that this bill out as Ought Not to Pass. Even that dissenting vote was not to rip up the rails, but to allow for rail with trail along the Berlin Subdivision between Portland and Auburn.
- Both the Senate and House chairs of the Transportation Committee voted against passage of LD 404, supporting, instead, rail with trail along the Mountain Division line. Another Senator also voted against passage.
- The Conway Scenic Railroad, which now transports over 135,000 rail passengers in the areas around North Conway and the Mt. Washington Valley, says that it would be prepared to provide both freight and passenger rail services along the Mountain Division between Portland and North Conway if that line were first upgraded. Federal funding support for such an upgrade exists on a competitive basis, and the Conway Scenic says that it would not

need any sort of State subsidy to operate on, and maintain, the line after this upgrade. MDOT, without any study of the matter, has rejected this offer out of hand.

- Several shippers on the Mountain Division are interested in exploring the possibility of freight service over the Mountain Division line.
- The former B&M Baked Beans facility in Portland is being converted into the Roux Institute, which will increase the need for passenger transport into and out of that property. Currently, there is only one fairly small road providing such access, and no room to expand that street or to add another without going through nearby residential neighborhoods or widening an underpass directly beneath I-295. At least a portion of the rail line between Portland and Auburn formerly owned by the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad, with some upgrades, provides the only currently available alternative means of access to this property.
- Maine law, at 23 M.R.S. § 7107, prohibits the removal of rail from a State-owned line unless and until MDOT, in consultation with a regional economic planning entity and a regional transportation advisory committee, determines that this removal will “not have a negative impact on a region or on future economic opportunities for that region”. MDOT has not yet consulted with the required parties to make such a determination. Passage of either LD 209 or 404 is premature until that happens.

Please vote against passage of both LD 209 and LD 404 to maintain vital State-owned assets. If you want further information please feel free to contact F. Bruce Sleeper, President of TrainRiders Northeast at [bsleeper@jensenbaird.com](mailto:bsleeper@jensenbaird.com) or (207) 776-1648. Additional information is also available at TrainRiders' web site, [www.trainridersne.org](http://www.trainridersne.org).

Thanks,

F. Bruce Sleeper  
President, TrainRiders Northeast