

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

## JOINT RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE EXPANSION OF DOWNEASTER RAIL SERVICE IN MAINE

**WHEREAS**, since its inception in 2001, the Downeaster rail service operated by Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority has proven indispensable to the economy of Maine; the train now makes 5 round trips daily from Boston to Portland and is carrying more than 350,000 passengers per year; and

**WHEREAS**, communities along the route have enjoyed substantial economic development directly resulting from regular and reliable rail service, and this service offers to Maine citizens and visitors a travel option that is convenient, environmentally clean and safe; and

**WHEREAS**, the Downeaster allows commuters to work productively in a pleasant environment while traveling at speeds as high as 79 miles per hour, and rail service allows families to vacation together cheaply, safely and free from the stress and expense of travel by car; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of Maine's transportation policy encourages movement of freight and passengers by rail to relieve truck impact on roads, to mitigate highway congestion and to provide environmental advantages; and

**WHEREAS**, improvements to the rail bed, switching systems and other elements of infrastructure related to the Downeaster have enhanced and accelerated freight service for Maine manufacturers, and, since the extension of Downeaster service to Brunswick will provide similar track improvements along that route, additional benefits will accrue to Maine freight rail customers; and

**WHEREAS**, increases in fuel costs are a challenge to many Maine consumers and to industries, including tourism, Maine's largest industry, and enhancement of rail systems is a proven strategy to meet the challenge of increased energy costs for business commuters, for tourists and for freight forwarders; and

**WHEREAS**, the Downeaster's privately owned rail line pays property taxes to each municipality through which it passes and yet retains responsibility for purchasing and maintaining its own infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, it is not possible for privately owned passenger rail systems to survive without subsidy when competing with carriers using highway systems built and maintained with tax revenue; and

**WHEREAS**, the Downeaster passenger service was successfully launched and has since grown with the aid of federal subsidies that will end in 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, the benefits of passenger rail service into Maine can be greatly enhanced by extending the service north of Portland to Freeport and Brunswick, thus permitting passengers to travel between Boston and Brunswick on a single seat ticket; and

**WHEREAS**, an extension to Brunswick will permit passengers to connect with an existing line already servicing communities from Bath to Rockland and the extension may later permit adding service to other important locations in Maine, such as from Brunswick through Augusta to Bangor; and

**WHEREAS**, extensions could also occur from Yarmouth through Auburn to Lewiston, from Yarmouth to Bethel and from Portland to Fryeburg using the line known as the Mountain Division Rail, with a commitment to look at further expansions of passenger rail as they become feasible and economical; and

**WHEREAS**, since powerful demographic and market forces are driving the national growth of transit-oriented development, investment in passenger rail service will sustain transit-oriented development in currently served communities and could lay the groundwork for transit-oriented development across midcoast Maine and northward; and

**WHEREAS**, implementation of the Downeaster's business plan will greatly increase ridership, will bring more commuters and tourists into Maine, will relieve highway congestion, will encourage transit-oriented development along the rail corridor and will improve freight service; and

**WHEREAS**, while the current Downeaster business plan will require substantial public subsidies, the expansion will significantly increase ridership, which, through economies of scale, will reduce the subsidy per passenger mile and enhance the net public benefit; and

**WHEREAS**, according to a recent study by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, by 2030 development associated with Portland-Boston Downeaster service will generate \$3,200,000,000 in cumulative construction investment, create more than 8,100 jobs and contribute an additional \$55,000,000 in tax revenues annually to Maine; and

**WHEREAS**, also by 2030, the additional benefits associated with expanded service to Brunswick, with connections to Rockland, will generate an additional \$1,000,000,000 in construction investment, create an additional 2,400 jobs and add an additional \$16,500,000 in annual state tax revenues; and

**WHEREAS**, the counties through which the Downeaster line currently passes, and will pass in the future, are the primary benefactors of those developments, and so methods of capturing the increased economic benefits should be explored; and

**WHEREAS**, the existing Portland-Boston service and the proposed Brunswick link are essential foundations for future extension of freight and passenger rail services northward in Maine; now, therefore, be it

That We, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-third Legislature now assembled in the Second Regular Session, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to express our support of the intent that, upon the conditions specified below, the State will provide its share of operating subsidy for Downeaster rail service of approximately \$8,000,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2010; and be it further

That, upon the conditions specified below, the State will provide its share of debt service subsidy for a term of 25 years to amortize up to \$31,500,000 in capital investment to expand rail service from Portland to Brunswick; and be it further

That this intention by the State to fund subsidies and capital improvements is conditioned on an exercise of best efforts by Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority and the Department of Transportation to obtain such further capital and operating support for the Downeaster service as may be available from federal funds, other participating states and private and governmental sources.