



Testimony in Support of LD 1170, Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters

To the Committee on Transportation

by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator

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Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Josh Caldwell. I am the Climate and Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator at the Natural Resources Council of Maine. NRCM has been working for more than 60 years to protect, restore, and conserve Maine’s environment, on behalf of our 25,000 members and supporters. I’m here today to testify in support of LD 1170, Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters.

Strengthening a diversified multimodal transportation system to move people around the state with less carbon pollution is a top priority for Maine. Electrification of personal vehicles — the top source of greenhouse gas emissions in Maine — is an essential step toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. This approach, however, must be paired with investment in public transit and other transportation options to provide more choices for Mainers that do not, cannot, or can’t afford to drive a car.

Maine’s bipartisan Climate Action Plan identifies reducing emissions from the transportation sector as “Plan A,” citing that 54 percent of greenhouse gas emissions come from cars and trucks in Maine.¹ The Clean Transportation Roadmap, commissioned in 2021 to establish a pathway for reducing emissions from the transportation sector, identifies transit expansion and transit-oriented development as key recommendations to reduce vehicle miles traveled and diversify Maine’s transportation system.² The 2021 Transportation Energy Data Book shows that of all major forms of transportation, trains emit the least amount of greenhouse gases per passenger mile.³ Investment in passenger rail research and infrastructure where it’s appropriate is a critical step in the decarbonization of Maine’s transportation sector.

A sustainable climate future for Maine features an accessible and convenient public transit system, and it is common sense for that vision to include enhancing service along our existing passenger rail routes. LD 1170 would study existing Amtrak Downeaster service to determine what improvements can be made to better facilitate travel along the Brunswick to Boston rail corridor. We can then apply the learnings from this research to strengthen service along that rail line and to make passenger rail more accessible and appealing to users in communities this corridor serves, and throughout the state. Not only would this research contribute to climate

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/the-plan>

² <https://www.maine.gov/future/initiatives/climate/cleantransportation>

³ https://tedb.ornl.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/TEDB_Ed_39.pdf#page=68

change mitigation, it would also improve the quality of life for many Maine residents and remove transportation barriers and lower transportation costs for those that do not have access to a vehicle or would prefer not to drive if given the choice.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on this bill. I would welcome any questions you may have.