



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 88  
Belfast, ME 04915  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

To: Committee On Transportation  
From: Nathan Davis, Ph.D., Sierra Club Maine  
Date: April 9, 2023  
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 1170: Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters**

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Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and members of the Committee On Transportation, my name is Nathan Davis, and I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D 1170: Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters.

In my years advocating for active transportation and public transit in Maine, I've heard many variations of the refrain that "Maine is a driving state." It's true that many of us drive, and that there are often no other safe or feasible ways to get where we need to go (for example, Augusta). But I think it's important to remember that a great deal of this situation reflects public policy choices, not some innate aspect of our character as Mainers.

The Sierra Club nationally supports public transit for a variety of reasons, including its salutary impacts on climate protection, land use, and social equity.<sup>1</sup> In Maine, where 54% of our emissions come from the transportation sector<sup>2</sup>, low carbon solutions like passenger rail are key to reaching the goals of the Maine Won't Wait Climate Action plan. Though we believe that it is vitally important to give rural communities more options for active transportation and public transit, it's also undeniably true that the most effective way to get more cars off the road is to enhance public transit options in the more populated areas of our state. In particular, the corridor served by the Downeaster presents a great opportunity to allow more Mainers to travel via train for work or pleasure.

The Downeaster's current schedule and travel time can make it challenging for Mainers to realize its full potential benefits. The study ordered by L.D. 1170 would address this schedule and travel time as well as a variety of other aspects of the service that could lead to greater ridership and usability. We believe that L.D. 1170 is an important step in expanding Maine's rail service and realizing its latent environmental, social, and economic opportunities.

We encourage you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 1170. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sierraclub.org/policy/transportation>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait\\_December2020.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf)

Nathan Davis, Ph.D.  
Sierra Club Maine  
Legislative Team member