

04/12/2023

To: Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Honorable members of the committee

From: William Barry

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

My name is William Barry. I primarily live in Saco, but I am a full-time student at the University of Maine at Orono. I am currently majoring in Civil Engineering, and I am planning to go into a career in public transportation management. I am writing as a concerned citizen and supporter of public transportation, to urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1170.

I've always enjoyed trains. When I was 6, I took my first Amtrak Downeaster ride. My family went to Boston in December 2010, just after Christmas. That was when I realized I wanted to work on trains when I grew up. I imagined how I could redesign systems like Boston's "T", then I actually started to draw maps of planned expansions to its current system. That train ride also led me to choose the college degree path of Civil Engineering at UMaine. This trip was a "vacation", and not a trip I took often at all. This is the inherent problem that we face; that most Downeaster riders are traveling for leisure, and are not everyday travelers.

- The downeaster only runs five trains per day in each direction, and these aren't at fixed intervals like the MBTA's Commuter Rail. The official Amtrak schedule, rather has them go end-to-end, with a layover of between 45 minutes and 2+hours. This makes it very inconvenient for travelers commuting on a regular basis, as if you miss one train, you might have to wait hours until the next one. As such, **most day-to-day commuters choose to drive**, as cars inherently are a more flexible mode of transportation. **This could be changed** if more **trains were added** or if the **trains left at a given time interval** (ie: every hour), as would be outlined by the proposed study in LD 1170. This would **give more travelers and commuters easier access** to the Downeaster.
- Most Mainers use some sort of transportation everyday, even to/from cities and towns with Downeaster stations. For example, I often drive to Wells to visit family and go to the beach. Although it is only one stop away from me on the Downeaster, it is quicker and cheaper for me to drive, and therefore the train is not a feasible option for me. For the Downeaster to be a competitive option, it needs to be able to draw riders in, it **needs to be attractive**. It also needs to be **at least as efficient** (if not more so) **as car travel**. **The proposed study will explore those options, and determine the best ways to meet the necessary standards.**
- Right now, **you** have the power to **shape the future for my generation**. If you don't act now, and support this resolution, you will **be ignoring the climate and transportation equity crises** that we currently face. We will have to face those crises later on in the future, and by then, it **might be too late** to solve them. Please act now to create better access to transportation and meet our carbon reduction goals.

The study outlined in LD 1170 will create more accessible, more efficient, and more convenient rail transportation, and will have a positive impact on the cities and towns it stops at. If I ever do get a job in Boston, an effective Downeaster service would allow me to live in Maine and commute to work by train each day, which would be really ideal for avoiding traffic. By supporting this resolution, you will enable regular train travel for myself and others, and you will start tackling the important crises we are facing.

Thank you all for your time. I hope you will make the right choice for the future in supporting this resolution.

Respectfully submitted,  
William B. Barry