



City of Auburn, Maine

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Testimony in Support of LD 1957 - An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Invest in Maine's Railroad Infrastructure

Sen. Rotundo, Rep. Sachs, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs, please accept this written testimony in support of LD 1957. The investment priorities outlined in this proposed bond align with several state priorities that support economic growth, increased housing, while advancing strategies that reduce the carbon footprint of movement within our transportation network.

With respect to the economic growth that investments in passenger and freight rail can provide, I would urge the Committee to consider how these resources could be deployed with a focus on equity. As the Mayor of Auburn, I have been engaged in numerous studies that would bring passenger rail to our community, one of Maine's most diverse, only to see those investments made elsewhere. Auburn's progressive land use reforms, which have attracted national attention, along with our municipally owned freight intermodal facility, are ready-made to capitalize on this bond.

Our land use reforms, which are meeting a critical need for increased housing development, is a factor the state should also be considering as it prioritizes the deployment of these bond proceeds. The 2020 *Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan* lays out in Strategy A for Transportation that "our state must pivot to the future by pursuing aggressive transition strategies and innovative solutions within this important sector." It further details a specific action that by 2024, the state should establish "coordination, strengthen land-use policies, and use state grant programs to encourage development that supports the reduction of VMT."

Fixed corridors like the private and public railroads within Maine are an ideal place to strengthen land-use policies that reduce vehicle miles travelled, as they have been proven to do so nationally. I am proud that Auburn has led on zoning reforms and the promotion of great density in housing. Going forward, the state should reward with rail-based investments those communities that take these bold actions.

Again, I urge you to support LD 1957. Thank you.