



**April 12, 2023**

**Testimony of Patricia Quinn  
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority  
Before the 131<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

**Neither For nor Against**

**LD 406**

***An Act to Expand Passenger Rail Services***

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Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Patricia Quinn and I am the Executive Director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). NNEPRA is neither for nor against LD 405, *An Act to Expand Passenger Rail Services*. Because this bill is a concept draft, NNEPRA is unable to take a definitive position, but would like provide the committee with information regarding passenger rail improvement and expansion efforts.

NNEPRA was established for the general purpose of promoting passenger rail service and is directed to take all actions reasonably necessary to do so. NNEPRA managed the construction and service development activities to initiate the Amtrak Downeaster in 2001 and remains actively involved in all facets of day-to-day operations to deliver quality and seamless passenger rail service that meets the needs of the traveling public and provides public benefit. To date, the Downeaster has transported nearly 9 million riders more than 650 million passenger miles.

The NNEPRA Team is committed to continual improvement and has planned and managed numerous operating and capital projects which have increased and expanded Downeaster service and the passenger experience. Construction on the Wells Area Improvement Project, which will improve reliability and add service between Brunswick and Wells, is underway. A series of Strategic Objectives, which have been identified in the Maine State Rail Plan, are also being pursued to diversify Downeaster ridership and expand mobility within and to Maine. These include the relocation of Portland Station to reduce passenger travel time and increase access to employment hubs, the addition of a station in West Falmouth to improve access to the I-95 Corridor and reduce VMT's, a pilot program to evaluate connecting service to Rockland to improve mobility and mitigate congestion on Route 1, and technology improvements to streamline connections to the Amtrak National Network in Boston.

In addition, NNEPRA works closely with MaineDOT and actively participates with transportation organizations and planning efforts at the local, state, regional and national level to understand and monitor transportation, economic, social and environmental trends and opportunities. This includes the Maine State Rail Plan, as well as propensity, economic and service planning studies for services between Portland and Lewiston/Auburn and Bangor.

Earlier this month, NNEPRA submitted an application for the Downeaster Corridor (Rockland – Boston) into the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) Corridor ID Program. If accepted into this new Program, created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), NNEPRA will receive federal funding to complete and update the 2016 Service Development Plan (SDP). Train frequencies, speeds, trip times, existing and proposed station locations and rolling stock needs will be explored in the SDP as well as connections with other passenger transportation services, environmental benefits, impacts on highway congestion, energy consumption, land use, and economic development. CSX Transportation, owner of the rail lines in ME and NH, has agreed to cooperate with NNEPRA on future projects to improve the rail lines over which the Downeaster operates to support improved and/or increased passenger service. Amtrak has also agreed to work with NNEPRA on service improvement and expansion projects. The SDP process will develop operating, capital improvement, financial and implementation plans to improve, enhance or expand passenger rail service. In addition, Downeaster Corridor projects identified by the SDP will be prioritized in discretionary grant opportunities offered by the US Department of Transportation.

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority works every day to provide the leadership and support to deliver passenger rail services that meets and exceeds the expectations of our customers, delivers value and benefit to the public and to contributes to a safe, efficient and integrated transportation system.