

131st Legislature
Senate of Maine
Senate District 28

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Testimony of Senator Ben Chipman introducing
LD 406, "An Act to Expand Passenger Rail Service"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
April 12, 2023

Representative Williams, and Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Ben Chipman, and I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of Portland in Cumberland County. I am before you today to introduce LD 406, "An Act to Expand Passenger Rail Service."

This legislation would establish an advisory committee in order to develop a Rail Corridor Use Vision Plan for constructing specific rail lines throughout the state. The rail lines that this vision plan would cover are the Berlin Subdivision, also known as the St. Lawrence and Atlantic rail corridor from Portland to Auburn, the Lower Road rail corridor from Brunswick to Augusta, the Mountain Division Line from Portland to Standish, and the Rockland Branch rail corridor from Brunswick to Rockland. As part of the study, the advisory committee would prioritize the use of compatible multimodal uses, such as passenger train service and freight train service.

The core of the Industrial Revolution was the implementation of rail throughout the United States. The ability to transport goods across thousands of miles played a large role in the incredible growth of the American economy during this period. Railways remain to be important to the transportation infrastructure in the United States, and in Maine. Establishing this advisory committee would ensure that we are prioritizing our focus on upgrading and innovating existing rail corridors in the state.

Investing in railways directly addresses the current climate crisis. Rail reduces the individual carbon emissions, which would directly help our environment in a state where the use of cars is the main mode of transportation. For the transportation of goods, rail would greatly improve how the environmental impact of transporting freight. A single train can carry the freight of hundreds of trucks, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75%. In a time when the fate of the planet is in our hands, we must prioritize rail corridors.

Additionally, rail connects communities all over the state. This legislation specifies that the advisory committee identify locations for train stations along each corridor, building a network that brings communities together. In a driving-heavy state, building new rail corridors and updating existing ones would increase access for low-income communities. Buying a vehicle is a

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huge barrier for someone without financial stability and constructing railways between major hubs in Maine would provide larger access to necessary resources.

Ultimately, this bill ensures that rail remains a priority when considering ways to innovate Maine's infrastructure. As a rural state, rail would be transformative for many communities and our economy. Now is the time that we ensure the future of Maine by investing in rail.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer questions.