

Testimony in favor of LD 860 by Edward W. Hanscom of Gardiner on April 12, 2023

Back in September of 2022, the Maine Rail Group crafted a petition to see what kind of support exists for a feasibility study to extend passenger rail service from Brunswick to Augusta, Waterville, and Bangor. After attending a handful of public events with a single clipboard, the Maine Rail Group collected signatures from over 600 individuals in favor of such a study as an important step toward the expansion of passenger rail beyond York and Cumberland Counties. Over 500 of these individuals live in Maine and they represent every region of the state and all 16 of Maine's Counties. Maine's support for passenger rail comes in equal amounts from men and women and cuts across all age groups, from seniors to students, who know that the future depends on making the most of our sustainable transportation options in the face of changing climates. The petition also found passenger rail support from more than 100 out-of-state citizens, showing that visitors to our state want the ability to reach more of Maine by rail. The Maine Rail Group's petition only scratches the surface Maine's support for passenger rail, which is broad-based and on the rise. Do you remember the skepticism that existed when the Downeaster was just an idea? We've come a long way since then. Let's continue Downeast on this journey. Support LD 860.

Testimony in favor of LD 406 by Edward W. Hanscom of Gardiner on April 12, 2023

Over the years, the people of Maine had the foresight to acquire and protect railroad lines in danger of abandonment. The four rail lines identified in this bill as the "covered corridors" have been largely preserved for the day when a vision for their return to productive rail passenger and freight service can take shape. That day is upon us now. As the new Maine State Rail Plan shows, the Downeaster is in full recovery and expansion mode with ridership growth, and more trains and new passenger stations in the planning stages. The Rail Plan also forecasts a tripling of freight movement by rail in Maine, now that the state benefits from service by two Class 1 railroads --- the Canadian Pacific and CSX. With growth in passenger and freight traffic, the value of the four covered corridors also grows. The Berlin Subdivision offers some unique passenger rail opportunities between Portland and Lewiston and along the I-295 corridor. The Lower Road offers passenger rail extension potential for the Kennebec Valley and beyond. An active Lower Road would also add reliability and resilience for passenger and freight services between Portland and Bangor. The Mountain Division is an interstate rail corridor with both passenger and freight potential. The Rockland Branch is already demonstrating increased value as a passenger and freight rail corridor. Let's develop a long-term vision for these rail corridors, and take steps toward making that vision a reality. Support LD 406.