



April 12, 2023

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

In Opposition

LD 860

*An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor
and to Fund a Feasibility Study*

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 respectfully opposes LD 860, *An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor and to Fund a Feasibility Study*. Although this bill is a concept draft, the title suggests a concept NNEPRA cannot support.

NNEPRA was established for the general purpose of promoting passenger rail service and is directed to take all actions that are 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.

NNEPRA participated in the Project Advisory Group that was established to oversee and guide a study conducted by MaineDOT to evaluate the travel propensity and demand for transit service between Portland and Bangor. The Propensity Study, which concluded with a final report in March 2023, determined that the corridor has low population density and low transit demand, therefore a rail alternative would likely not provide equity or climate benefits. The corridor is already served by a high-capacity highway that is not congested and provides a trip time faster than a rail alternative. Further, the investment needed to support passenger rail service between Bangor and Portland is significant, as would be the ongoing operating costs.

The findings of the Propensity Study demonstrate that the characteristics of the Bangor-Portland Corridor would likely not satisfy the evaluation and selection criteria developed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to be considered a candidate for the Corridor ID Program and therefore would not qualify for passenger rail service development at this time. Further study and evaluation of the existing conditions will likely not produce different results.

In many areas of the country, intercity bus service has been used to meet immediate mobility needs and build demand for a higher-capacity rail alternative over time. An intercity bus pilot along this corridor is a logical next step.

NNEPRA appreciates the Sponsor's interest in expanding passenger rail service but, for the reasons stated, recommends that the committee vote "*Ought Not To Pass*" on LD 860.