



Joseph Baldacci
Senator, District 9

THE MAINE SENATE
131st Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Joe Baldacci introducing LD 860 “An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor and to Fund a Feasibility Study”

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

April 12, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. I am Senator Joe Baldacci, and I proudly represent Senate District 9, which is made up of *Bangor and Hermon*. I am here today to present LD 860, “An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a Major Corridor and to Fund a Feasibility Study.”

LD 860 addresses the demands for residents and taxpayers for passenger train service to Bangor, and beyond to Orono.

The success of the Amtrak Downeaster passenger train service is one the state of Maine is very proud of. It proves there is demand, and it shows once more that Maine Leads. We lead in moving people to places without needing a car.

We lead in showing that Maine serves the transportation needs of all people who may not be able to afford a car, or who may not be able to drive, or be able to afford a car. We lead in showing the economic value and returns to station towns with passenger train investments.

The Maine State Rail authority NNEPRA has shown its success in leveraging limited local resources, with substantial federal and private matching funds. Just last month NNEPRA submitted a very strong application for Federal Transit money to do a Service Development Plan for expansion of the Downeaster from Brunswick to Rockland. Again, we applaud this work.

However, it is time to consider the inland routes.

LD 860 directs the State rail authority NNEPRA to also seek Federal Funding for a service development plan to expand passenger train service to, not just Bangor, but Auburn, Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville and Orono. The demand for passenger train service to these cities is evident in the numerous legislative directives for more than a decade. And from what I am hearing consistently from constituents and businesses. Just as the coastal communities are being served, it is time to actually plan for a train to Maine’s inland population.

LD 860 positions the State of Maine to apply for future funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, a key step toward completing a Service Development Plan (SDP) and other steps necessary for federal funding eligibility to establishing an expansion of the existing Downeaster passenger rail service.

LD 860 goes one step further in directing the state to consider both routes to Bangor, one the mainline “Backroad” through Lewiston and the other going from the Downeaster station in Brunswick to



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and through the State Capital of Augusta to Waterville and Bangor. Not one or the other, LD 860 considers both routes.

Combining LD 860 with Senator Rotundo's LD 880 for a service plan on the mainline to Lewiston is a natural progression for expanding passenger trains to all of Maine.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT “ ” to S.P. 357, L.D. 860, “An Act to Identify the Railroad Lines from Portland to Bangor as a major corridor and to fund a feasibility study”.

By this amendment, S.P. 377, L.D. 880, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Initiate a Service Development Plan for Commuter and Passenger Train Service Between Portland and the Lewiston and Auburn Area” is withdrawn and sponsorship combined.

Sec. 1. Service Development Plan for Passenger Train Operations on the Rail Corridor between Portland, Auburn, Lewiston, Waterville and Bangor

Resolve, To Provide Funding to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority To Complete a Corridor Development Initiation and Scope, Schedule, and Cost Estimate for Preparing a Service Development Plan for the Development of Passenger Rail Service Between Boston and Portland to Auburn, Lewiston, Waterville, and Bangor.

Preamble

The Maine Department of Transportation, as directed by the 130th Maine State Legislature conducted a study of passenger rail service to Bangor as part of a feasibility analysis for service. The current Maine State Rail Plan references passenger train service from Portland to Bangor, as well as to the cities of Auburn-Lewiston. Legislation has been introduced in the 131st session by the Senator from Lewiston, Peggy Rotundo for service to Lewiston/Auburn. The freight Mainline corridor, currently owned by the private railroad company CSX offers the opportunity to provide passenger rail service between the largest cities in south, central and eastern Maine, while improving the railroad for freight service.

In 2021 Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The BIL provided an historic, unprecedented level of funding for the improvement and expansion of intercity passenger rail service. The Federal Railroad Administration Corridor Identification and Development Program is intended to become the primary means for directing Federal financial support and technical assistance toward the development of proposals for new or improved intercity passenger rail services throughout the United States.

This Resolve, while not an application for BIL funding, positions the State of Maine to apply for future funding under the BIL, a key step toward completing a Service Development Plan (SDP) and other steps necessary for federal funding eligibility to establishing an expansion of the existing Downeaster passenger rail service.

Study. Resolved: That the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, develop a scope, schedule, and cost estimate to determine the level of effort required to successfully prepare or update an Service Development Plan (SDP) for passenger train service on the CSX Mainline between Portland, Lewiston, Waterville, and Bangor. The scope, schedule, and cost estimate will also identify the work product and deliverables and the sequence for preparing those documents; the appropriate level and timing of public and agency involvement in developing the SDP; and the process to ensure logical decision-making and appropriate engagement.

The study will also describe at a programmatic level the necessary steps, requirements, and costs involved in providing passenger rail service in the corridor. Additionally, it summarizes the existing conditions along the corridor, describes connectivity with surrounding communities, provides a rationale for the service, and summarizes the challenges, opportunities, and regional effects of corridor development. The study will identify train station locations for the purpose of encouraging transit-oriented development to the extent it

is applicable, enhancing the economic vitality and competitiveness of a neighborhood and region and providing new spaces and opportunities for commercial activity and housing.

The host railroad CSX Transportation will be informed and invited to participate in all phases of the study with an emphasis on state-supported improvements to the CSX line to support a minimum of 3 roundtrips daily and the analysis required to improve track conditions for shared freight and passenger use.

Task force established. Resolved: That the Department of Transportation, referred to in this resolve as "the department," working with the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, referred to in this Act as "the authority," shall establish and convene the a Corridor Development Initiation Advisory Task Force, referred to in this resolve as "the task force," to facilitate discussion, gather information and provide advice to the Authority regarding preparing a scope, schedule, and cost estimate for developing an SDP, or updating any NNEPRA existing SDP. The Authority is required to seek competitive bids for the study. The task force will vote on whether to approve the accepted study provider.

Membership. Resolved: Membership. The Commissioner of Transportation shall invite at least 11 and not more than 15 persons representing transportation and economic development interests to serve on an advisory committee **to be appointed no later than August 1, 2023**. The advisory committee must include representatives of

1. Executive Director or designee from the Androscoggin Regional Chamber of Commerce.
2. Executive Director or designee of the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce.
3. Executive Director or designee of the Bangor Chamber of Commerce.
4. The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG)
5. The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC).
6. The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development or designee.
7. One member representing other state agencies.
8. One Member representing an organization advocating for rail use.
9. The Commissioner may invite other interests with expertise in rail logistics and/or infrastructure.

Report. Resolved: That the department shall report the findings and the plan of the task force to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation no later than February 28, 2014. The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation may submit a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature on the subject matter of the report.

Sec. 2. Standard Gauge Railroad Operations Feasibility on the Lower Roads Rail line

Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Conduct a Corridor Feasibility design and plan for passenger train use of the State-owned Augusta Lower Rails Railroad corridor between Brunswick and Augusta through to Bangor.

SUMMARY

Sec 1. This resolve directs the Maine State Rail Passenger Authority NNEPRA to Complete a Corridor Development Initiation and Scope, Schedule, and Cost Estimate for Preparing a Service Development Plan for the Development of Passenger Rail Service Between Boston and Portland to Auburn, Lewiston, Waterville, and Bangor

Sec 2. This resolve directs the Maine Department of Transportation to Complete a Feasibility design and plan for passenger train use of the State-owned Augusta Lower Rails Railroad corridor between Brunswick and Augusta through to Bangor.

Appropriations and allocations. Resolved: That the following appropriations and allocations are made.

FISCAL NOTE REQUIRED 23

TRANSPORTATION, DEPARTMENT OF

Multimodal – Passenger Rail

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for to the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority To Complete a Corridor Development Initiation and Scope, Schedule, and Cost Estimate for Preparing a Service Development Plan for the Development of Passenger Rail Service Between Boston and Portland to Auburn, Lewiston, Waterville, and Bangor.

Initiative: Provides one-time funding for to the Department of Transportation to Complete a feasibility study for the Development of Passenger Rail Service on the Stated owned rail line between Brunswick and Augusta, through to Bangor.