



April 12, 2023

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

LD 1170

*Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters*

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Good afternoon Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and 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 1170, *a Resolve to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters*.

The NNEPRA Board of Directors, at its March meeting, agreed that NNEPRA was created for the very purposes outlined in this resolve, has demonstrated success in carrying out its duties, and continually plans for and implements passenger rail service improvements. The Board voted to oppose this Resolve because it is unnecessary and could negatively impact the planning processes and projects underway.

NNEPRA, as created in Maine statute, was established for the general purpose of promoting passenger rail service. Further, NNEPRA is directed to take all actions that are reasonably necessary to initiate, establish or reinstate regularly scheduled passenger rail service between points within this State and points within and outside this State.

NNEPRA managed the construction and service development activities necessary 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 staff works in cooperation with its Board of Directors to set annual goals and performance metrics related to Downeaster ridership, revenue, reliability, customer satisfaction and cost recovery which are monitored daily and reported monthly. Passenger feedback received through electronic channels and personal interaction is evaluated regularly, and staff collaborates with host railroads, Amtrak and station community leaders routinely to identify opportunities for changes or improvements related to schedule, frequency, fares and passenger services.

In addition, NNEPRA actively participates with MaineDOT and transportation organizations on planning efforts at the local, state, regional and national level to understand and monitor transportation, economic, social and environmental trends and opportunities. NNEPRA staff actively participated in the recent Transit Tomorrow and Connect 2045 plans that help guide transportation goals for the PACTS (Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System) Region from Freeport to Arundel. These plans identified Rapid Transit Corridors for further evaluation. NNEPRA participated in the first evaluation, the Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Study, and will participate in the next study of the corridor between Brunswick and Saco/Biddeford as well. These efforts will inform NNEPRA decisions and plans related to the Downeaster and passenger rail services within Maine and between Maine and Boston.

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 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.

NNEPRA completed a Service Development Plan (SDP) for the Downeaster in 2016 and plans to begin an update to the SDP later this year to align with the State Rail Plan. 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. Both CSX Transportation, owner of the rail lines in ME and NH, and Amtrak have 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. The SDP process will lead to the development of operating, capital improvement, financial and implementation plans to improve, enhance or expand service.

NNEPRA has submitted an application for the Downeaster Corridor 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 the SDP update. In addition, Downeaster Corridor projects identified in 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 a passenger rail service 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. This Resolve is unnecessary and could impede the plans and projects being pursued, in partnership with MaineDOT, our operating partners and our federal funding partners, to meet the economic, social and environmental goals of our riders, our stakeholders and our State.

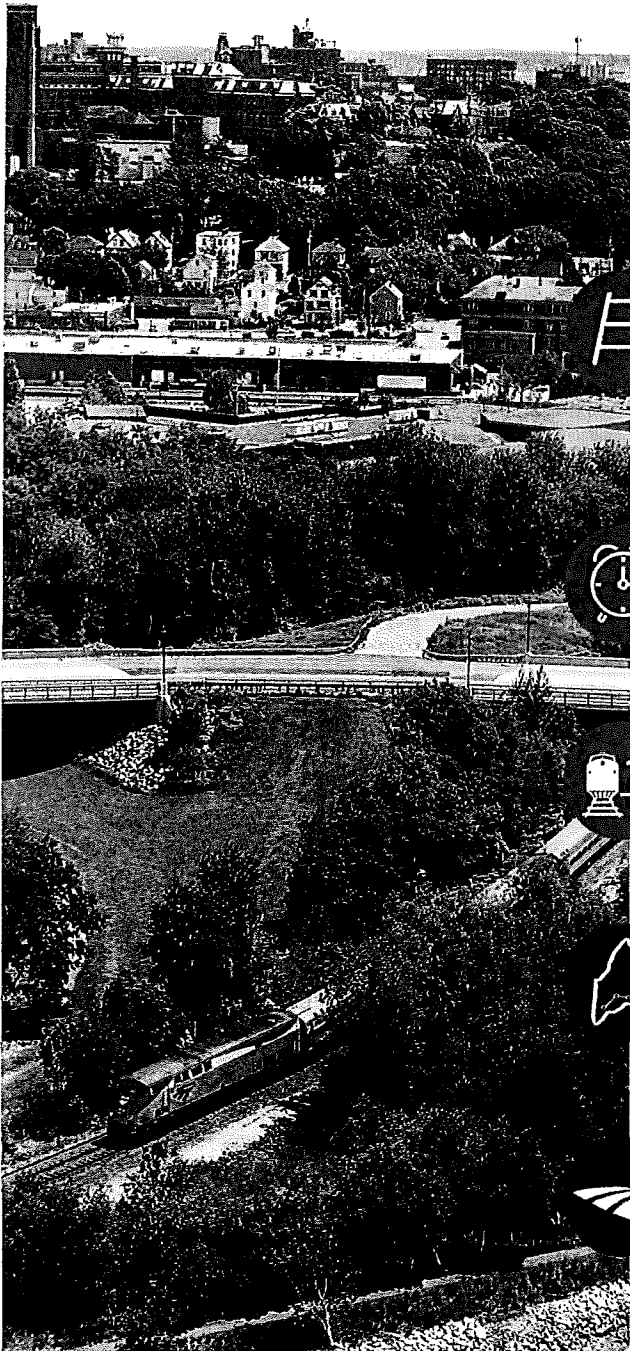
NNEPRA appreciates and shares the Sponsor's interest in improving passenger rail service, but for the reasons stated recommends that the committee vote LD 1170 *"Ought Not to Pass"*.

# NNEPRA Strategic Initiatives

Projects to Support and Enhance the Downeaster Corridor



NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND  
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY



The NNEPRA team is committed to the sustained growth of the Amtrak Downeaster and is exploring innovative ways to improve mobility, advance safety, support a growing economy and provide value for the people of Maine and Northern New England.

## More Trains; Better Reliability

Capacity improvements to improve reliability are underway. The Wells Area Improvement Project will support a new morning inbound Downeaster train between Wells and Brunswick making the Downeaster a car-free commuter option for workers in Maine.

## Portland Station Relocation

NNEPRA is exploring mainline station alternatives which will improve Downeaster connectivity to and within the greater Portland region by reducing overall travel time and decreasing bottlenecks.

## West Falmouth/Exit 53 Station Development

NNEPRA is exploring an additional Downeaster stop in West Falmouth at Exit 53, which provides improved connectivity from the I-95 corridor.

## Rockland Pilot Program

A pilot service operating 3 daily round-trips between Brunswick and Rockland is being pursued.

## National Connections

Efforts are underway to simplify multi-modal transfers to the Amtrak Northeast Corridor and National Network.

To learn more please visit: [www.NNEPRA.com](http://www.NNEPRA.com).

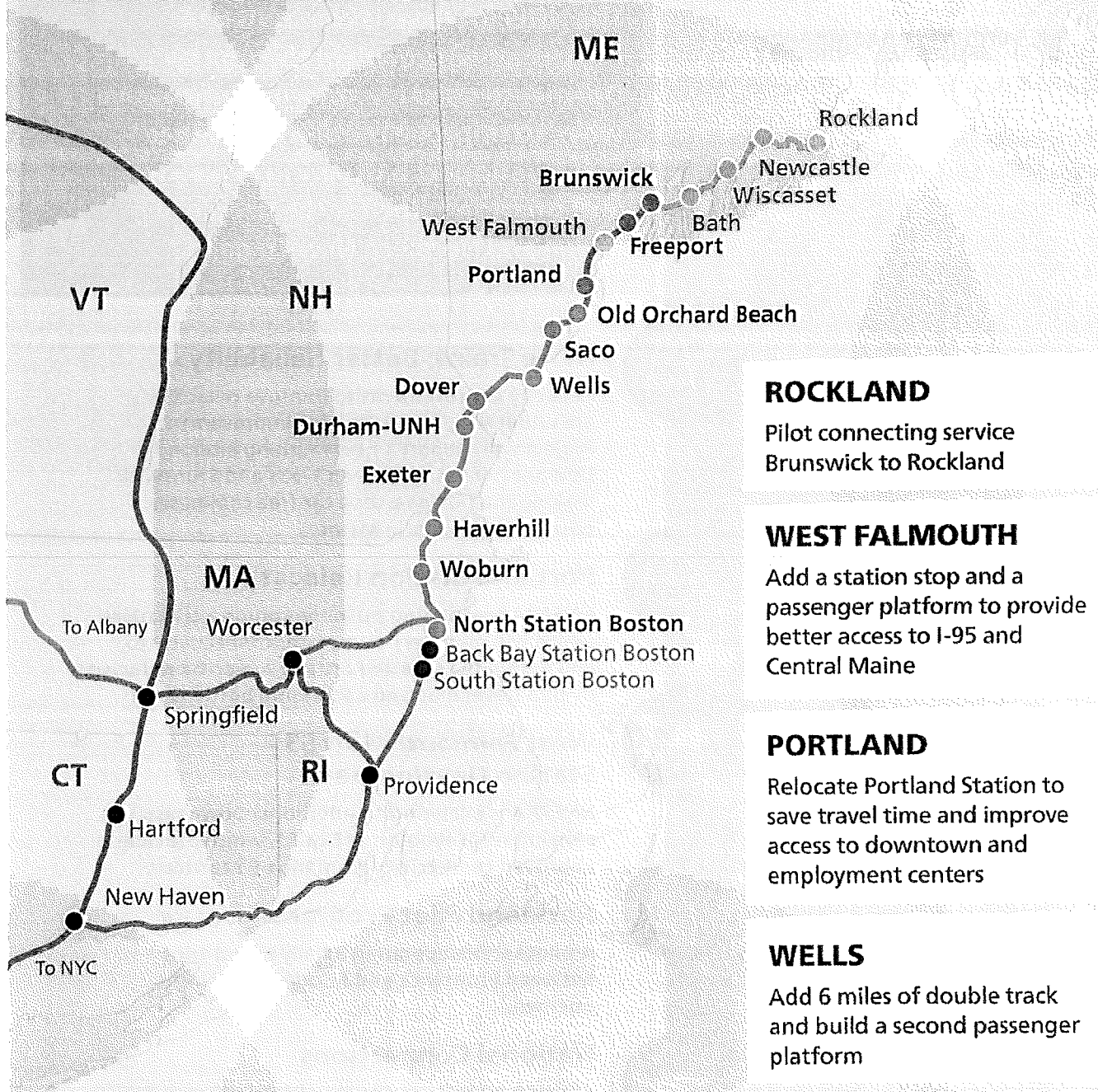


NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND  
PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

# NNEPRA Strategic Initiatives

Projects to Support and Enhance the Downeaster Corridor

For illustrative purposes only



**RAIL  
MAP  
KEY**

Amtrak Downeaster  
Route

Potential Passenger  
Service Expansion

Amtrak NEC and  
National Network

To learn more please visit: [www.NNEPRA.com](http://www.NNEPRA.com).



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