



**MAINE
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March 6, 2025

Senator Tim Nangle, Senate Chair
Representative Lydia Crafts, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Re: Support of LD 487

Southern Maine is part of the Northeast Corridor with rail connections to Boston and the beginning of the rail corridor that is now extending beyond DC to Virginia and North Carolina.

Northern Maine is not as fortunate since rail service stops in Brunswick. Saco, Freeport, and Brunswick have all benefited from rail connections to southern Maine, New Hampshire, and Boston. Transit oriented development has occurred around the train stations, and with-it economic development.

The logical extension of the Downeaster would be to Augusta, Waterville and Bangor. Presently the CSX main line branching from the Downeaster-served line just north from Falmouth has been improved to class 3 all the way to Bangor. Unfortunately, the State-owned line from Brunswick to Augusta has been neglected and is below class 1.

The CSX main line, through improved crossing gates and added sidings, could be easily improved to the class 4 status of the existing Downeaster line. It also means that the three largest metropolitan areas in Maine (Portland, Lewiston/Auburn, and Bangor) would all be served. An added advantage is the opportunity to bring together major institutions of higher education.

- Bangor could become a major hub for tourists wanting to visit Bar Harbor and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument with connecting bus service, thus reducing traffic on the state's roads and highways.
- College students would be more attracted to come to Maine knowing that they could easily and affordably visit friends and family. College students will quickly become enamored with Maine and remain adding to the economic development of our state.

- A fixed rail station leads to the revitalization of downtowns and compact high demand housing. There would be less pressure for everyone to own a car, decreasing land now used for parking and roads resulting in less sprawl and the preservation of open land.
- The 30 percent of Mainers who cannot drive due to income, age or handicapped conditions could visit friends, family, and get to medical appointments in Portland or Boston. I know my brother, who has major back issues, could never travel on a bus for those distances, but on a train he can travel comfortably. For those individuals, the choice is not just “it would be nice” it becomes a necessity.
- The July 2010 Long-range Transportation Plan 2008-2030 states “The demand for passenger services is growing” and talks about service to Lewiston-Auburn. Fifteen years later housing prices have pushed many in the Portland area out, and Maine needs to take advantage of the residents in the northern part of the State.

LD 487 is the first step to restoring passenger service. It is not just a “count cars on the road between Bangor and Portland” study, rather a feasibility study would get real numbers of potential riders and genuine costs.

Over the last three decades, the US has spent \$1.5 trillion on roads attempting to improve safety, reduce congestion reduction, revitalize cities, and create environmental sustainability. In achieving those goals, we have failed.

Maine DOT works hard maintaining our roads, but at a cost we are not sustaining. We need to try something new. Trains are booming nationwide, and Maine needs to get aboard.

Sincerely,

Peter Cole, President
Maine Rail Group
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EXPAND MAINE PASSENGER RAIL

AND SAVE STATE-OWNED RAILROADS

New legislation will study extending Amtrak service north from Portland through Lewiston, Waterville, and Bangor to Orono.

However: Maine DOT wants to remove critical sections of three state-owned railroads, crippling Maine's ability to offer 21st century transportation incorporating rail and other public transit.

Please **support** expanded rail and **oppose** removal of state-owned lines. Rail *with* trail is the answer.

This will:

- Stimulate Housing & Development
- Deliver Accessible Transit
- Combat Climate Change

Area of detail

