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*Testimony of Rep. Tavis Hasenfus introducing*  
**LD 487, Resolve, Directing the Northern New England Passenger Rail  
Authority to Apply for Federal Funding for the Purpose of Identifying the  
Rail Corridor Connecting Portland to Orono as an Intercity Passenger Rail  
Corridor**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation*

Good morning, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Tavis Hasenfus, and I represent House District 57 and the communities of Winthrop and Readfield. I am here today to present **LD 487, Resolve, Directing the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority to Apply for Federal Funding for the Purpose of Identifying the Rail Corridor Connecting Portland to Orono as an Intercity Passenger Rail Corridor**.

This bill is a simple request, directing the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), an entity established by the legislature to oversee passenger rail within the state, to apply to the Federal Rail Administration to determine whether funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law in 2021 and also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, could be used to extend the Amtrak line from Portland to Orono.

This application is the necessary first step in any effort to connect passenger rail from Orono to Boston. The only feasible way to bring passenger rail to northern Maine is with federal help. This bill also specifically identifies the existing CSX freight line that travels from Portland through Lewiston/Auburn to the Winthrop lakes region, Waterville, Pittsfield Bangor and Orono as the specific rail line that should be serviced. This is a very similar bill to the amended version of LD 860 from the last session, sponsored by Sen. Baldacci.

This is the only acting rail line that connects Southern Maine to Northern Maine. Moreover, in the time since LD 860 died between the bodies, CSX has completed substantial investments on this line, bringing the line up to a Class 3 line. A Class 3 line allows freight to travel at up to 40 miles per hour and passenger travel up to 60 miles per hour. For Amtrak to sustain speeds of up to 80 miles per hour, it requires a Class 4 line. This is the classification of the line from Portland to Boston.

It is my understanding that the costlier investments are seen in the transition from a Class 2 line to a Class 3, and that moving from Class 3 to 4 will not be nearly as expensive. This means that any proposal for high speed passenger rail can build on the investments already made instead of “ripping them up and starting over.” I expect this will also significantly reduce any previous cost estimates made by previous studies.

Time is of the essence. The federal money available for rail improvements under the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act is going fast, and we must act now if we want to utilize this funding.

NNEPRA has experience in applying for such funding, most recently applying in 2023 for these federal funds through its Corridor Identification and Development Program Application for the Downeast corridor.

I am requesting NNEPRA take the very same care in applying for this northern Maine corridor as it did on the Downeast corridor.

Additionally, part of the application requires listing the congressional districts served by the plan. Unlike the Downeast corridor, the northern Maine corridor would include CD 2 and connect both of Maine’s congressional districts to the rest of the country. This would be great for our constituents, especially if Boston is successful in its plan to connect north and south station, thereby connecting CD 2 to every rail line in the country.

There is positive engagement on this proposal in communities across the state, as you’ll see with the testimony that has already been submitted on this bill and the folks who are with us today in person. I hope that this committee sees the value and the timeliness of this proposal, and I urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Thank you for your time and attention.