

## **Testimony from Bruce White for LD 487**

**Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Bruce White and I served on this committee from 2019 - 2024. In fact I had the pleasure of serving with many of you and I greatly appreciate your service to the state and to your communities.**

- This is a new proposal to access federal funding under the bipartisan infrastructure act to expand and extend passenger rail service to new corridors in underserved markets, which include all of Maine's major cities north of Portland.
- It will not repeat previous studies, but take a fresh look at the demographics, economics and viability of rail as an alternative to other travel modes.
- Train stations are a magnet for economic development wherever they're added or reopened. The Brunswick Amtrak station began boosting housing, shops, inns and restaurants as soon as it opened a decade ago.
- Many young people do not own cars, and overwhelmingly favor the return of passenger rail. If we don't begin studying the prospects soon, Maine will be left behind.
- The Senate passed LD 860 last year with a strong bipartisan vote of 22-11
- This bill only directs the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), which runs the Amtrak Downeaster train service, to apply for a \$500,000 grant from the federal government infrastructure funds
- This route has never been studied before. Those supporting this bill are confident that this study will show ridership sufficient to qualify for federal implementation funding.
- Vermont and other states more rural than Maine have applied for and received some of the same funding to expand passenger rail in their states.