



Troy D. Jackson
President of the Senate

THE MAINE SENATE
130th Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony in Support of LD 410
An Act To Provide Funding for the Reconstruction of Route 161 from Fort Kent to Caribou
Presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
February 25, 2021

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Troy Jackson and I have the great honor of serving as President of the Maine Senate. I proudly represent District 1, which is northern Aroostook County stretching roughly from Caribou north to the St. John Valley. I am here today to testify in support of LD 410 "An Act to Provide Funding for the Reconstruction of Route 161 from Fort Kent to Caribou".

As many of you know, Route 161 is a major road in northern Aroostook County that stretches from Fort Fairfield northwest to Fort Kent then west to Allagash, spanning a number of towns in Aroostook, including Caribou, Stockholm, New Sweden, New Canada, St. Francis and more. For years, both Representative Martin and I have heard from constituents constantly about the condition of the road for several years.

In 2018, residents and town officials in St. Francis came to me with a number of complaints about the condition of the road, and I worked with them to bring then-Commissioner David Bernhardt up to the area for a public forum to hear directly from residents on the condition of the road.¹ That effort led to the department announcing a new comprehensive work plan for the maintenance and continued improvement of the Route 161 corridor from Fort Kent to Allagash. At the time, the department had already placed an estimated 800 tons of shimming along the route — more than what was originally planned — and had repaved the road to keep it serviceable in the short term. The Department also agreed to re-engineer several problem areas and add a three-foot shoulder.

This bill will aim to fund the reconstruction of a separate section of the road from Fort Kent to Caribou, which has been in desperate need of repair for a long time. The staff at Maine DOT do a great job with finite resources at their disposal. However, there is no doubt that Route 161 is a major rural road in northern Maine — one that so many residents rely on to get to and from work, send their kids to school and more. It's time we took a serious look at putting money into reconstruction of the road that serves so many residents in central Aroostook and the St. John Valley.

Thank you so much for your time, and I would be happy to take any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Troy Jackson
President of the Maine Senate
Senate District 1

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¹ <https://thecounty.me/2018/10/10/state-national-and-world-news/state/maine-dot-plans-route-161-upgrades/>