

Ben Algeo
Portland, Maine

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and honorable members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Ben Algeo, I am a law student in Portland, Maine, submitting this written testimony **in support** of:

- LD 406, “An Act to Expand Passenger Rail Service”;
- LD 605, “An Act to Enhance Commuter-oriented Rail Service”;
- LD 842, “An Act to Strengthen the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority by Inviting Participation on the Board of Directors by and Negotiating for Funding from the State of New Hampshire and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts”;
- LD 880, “Resolve, Directing the Department of Transportation to Initiate a Service Development Plan for Commuter and Passenger Train Service Between Portland and the Lewiston and Auburn Area; and
- LD 1170, “Resolve, to Promote Passenger Rail for Commuters.”

I support these bills because they all present opportunities to grow and strengthen passenger rail service in the Greater Portland Area, which will ensure more sustainable, affordable, and convenient transportation options in Maine’s most populous region.

When Maine spends money on new transportation infrastructure, it’s almost always on roads and highways.¹ For example, while a [2012 report](#) prepared for the Maine Department of Transportation identified “expansions to existing [transit] service as well as new service and modal connection opportunities” as a viable way to address issues of traffic congestion between Portland, Gorham and Westbrook; the Department has instead focused its efforts on [constructing a highway](#) between those communities.

We need to rethink this status quo. Looking at strategies to grow passenger rail in the Greater Portland Area is a good place to start, for a few reasons:

First, Maine’s single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions comes from the transportation sector.² Prioritizing new transportation infrastructure that caters to passenger vehicles, one of the [most polluting forms of transportation](#), is inconsistent with the emissions reductions targets [established in Maine law](#) and [supported by the current administration](#). Emissions from passenger rail are [comparably lower](#).

Second, the cost of owning and maintaining a personal vehicle is [high and rising](#) (especially given Maine’s heavy use of road salt!). And other household costs are [rising as well](#), particularly

¹ See, e.g., Maine DOT, *MaineDOT Uses of All Funds, FY 22-23* (2021)

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/about/docs/funding/fy22-23/22-23%20Uses%20high%20level.pdf>;

² See Maine DEP, *Ninth Biennial Report on Progress toward Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals* at 11 (2022)

<https://www.maine.gov/dep/news/news.html?id=8474333>.

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[in and around Portland](#). Access to reliable and affordable forms of public transportation including passenger rail can help keep household budgets in check.

Third, passenger rail is an easy and convenient way to get around, and we all benefit from having more options. Being able to hop on a train and go a few towns over makes everyday activities like commuting, shopping, visiting a friend, or going out on the town easier and more fun. And it's better for drivers too: more people riding trains means less cars on the road, which means less traffic and [less accidents](#).

Therefore, I urge the committee to support LD 406, 605, 842, 880, and 1170. Thank you for your consideration.