

John Clark
Portland
LD 1170

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

My name is John Clark and I currently live in Portland. I am asking the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1170, to begin the necessary steps to make commuting and traveling via rail feasible for more Mainers.

Transportation is one of the largest expenses for many Mainers, my family included. Earlier this year, we made the decision to sell one of our two cars to make some breathing room in our budget. While this has helped save money, we frequently face the challenges associated with inadequate public transportation, such as significantly limiting our schedule flexibility, inability to travel to some locations, and inability to consider some jobs due to lack of public transportation to these locations. Increasing service on the Downeaster would allow greater access to mobility without a car in Southern Maine (and hopefully points north in the future!), creating a more equitable transportation network for families who do not own a car, either by choice or out of necessity. With the greater Portland area experiencing a housing crisis that prices many working families out to the suburbs and beyond, creating a more usable Downeaster experience opens the economic opportunities of the region to so many more working class Maine families.

In addition to increasing transportation equity, improving the Downeaster service for commuters can also lead to reducing our state's emissions caused by transportation, which currently accounts for over 50% of the state's total emissions. To reach our state's climate goals outlined in "Maine Won't Wait," we need to make drastic changes to our transportation infrastructure, and fast. Giving Maine families a dignified alternative to driving to work will reduce the number of people who choose to drive, resulting in fewer emissions.

Commuter rail is the future of transportation if we wish to accomplish our state's climate and economic goals, and this study is a necessary step to begin to make the Downeaster more useful as a commuter rail rather than something used solely for special events. Please support this LD. Thank you!