

To: Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, Maine State Legislature.
Senator Ben Chipman, Chair; Representative, Lynn Williams, Chair.

From: Richard H. Rudolph, Ph.D., Chairman, Rail Users' Network; Maine Rail
Group Director.

Re: In Support of LD 860

Date:

April 12, 2023

Dear Senator Ben Chipman and Representative Lynn Williams and other Members
of the Committee.

My name is Richard Rudolph. I am a Portland resident who has served as the chair
of Amtrak's National Customer Advisory Committee, and currently serve on the
Maine Rail Group's Board of Directors and chair the Rail Users Network which
represents long distance, commuter and transit rail riders all across America.

I am here today to ask you to support LD 860. This bill will provide funding for a
feasibility study to restore passenger rail service to Bangor and the other cities in
central Maine. During the preceding legislature session, Senator
Baldacci sponsored a similar bill, LD 227, which called for a feasibility study of
the two passenger rails routes that emanate from Portland to Bangor. During the
work session, the Maine Department of Transportation instead offered to help pay
for a propensity study after concluding a feasibility study would cost too
much. The \$200,000 propensity study, which was funded by MeDOT and the
three principal cities, Bangor, Waterville and Augusta, was a good first
step. However, it, failed to provide sufficient information regarding potential
ridership on either rail line. The propensity study used street light data to
determine current ridership via car or bus to and from Portland. It did not consider
the potential new ridership or the economic benefits to central Maine. It also failed
to address the issues of social and economic equity for seniors and others in
Central Maine who do not have the ability or access to travel by car. This limits
their access to medical care as well as cultural events in other cities. The current
commercial bus system leaves passengers off several miles out of the downtowns
of most cities.

Restoration of passenger service from Brunswick to Waterville and Bangor will
contribute to an array of economic benefits. New jobs will be created from the
construction, restoration and on-going operation of the service. Enhanced

transportation options will also encourage young people to stay and grow the economy and attract families who cannot afford housing in Southern Maine. Passenger rail service with last mile connections will enable state legislators and others who are seeking to testify on bills to attend legislative sessions without using their cars. Thousands of students would have easy access to the nine colleges and universities in central Maine. Restoration of train service will also help reduce carbon emissions, alleviate congestion and reduce accidents on Rt. 95 / 295. The new service will also bring more ridership to the Downeaster and Amtrak's Northeast Corridor service.

Maine hosted 15.3 million visitors last years who spent \$8.6 billion dollars. With last mile connections to museums and Acadia National Park, even more will come. The transportation links would also provide options for tour companies other than mega buses and cruise ships.

We have reached the point of no return. The current MeDOT work plan includes funds to convert the State-owned rail lines including, the "Lower Road", in 2023 into recreational bicycle / walking paths. Large sums have been allocated: \$8,000,000 in 2023 and \$11,000,000 in 2024, yet there is minimal money allocated to expand passenger train services. Maine has an opportunity that other New England States have recognized and acted upon. Two prime examples are the new service from Rutland to Burlington, Vermont and the extension of service to Greenfield and Northampton, Massachusetts.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration has established a new Corridor Identification program which is creating a pipeline of projects ready for funding over the next five years. With our support, passage of LD 860 will enable the state to analyze the viability of restoring passenger rail service to Bangor and the other major cities in central Maine and to apply for federal funds to restore passenger service to that area of the state. Imagine! This would put 90% of the state's population within one hour distance of a railroad station!

Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,
Richard Rudolph

Richard Rudolph, Ph.D.
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Richard Rudolph
Portland
LD 860