

Joseph Leonard  
Bangor  
LD 1450

Members of the Committee,

I address you today to express my deep concern regarding the proposed allocation of funds from the State's Multi-Modal fund towards an ACT that involves tearing up Maine state railroads. I must assert that if the committee were to vote in favor of such a measure, it would demonstrate a severe negligence on your part.

Allow me to remind you of the significant effort undertaken by rail advocates and supporters from across the state to pass a bill that ensured funding for passenger train operations and capital investment. This was achieved by shifting the tax on rental cars to the Multi-Modal fund at the Department of Transportation, as outlined in the 2007 Legislative Blue Ribbon Committee report on how to fund passenger rail.

The success of this approach was evident as the tax grew from a modest \$2 million annually to an impressive \$9 million annually. These funds have been crucial in expanding the Downeaster to Brunswick and have been utilized to address the annual operational shortfall of the Downeaster itself. It is clear that the State's Multi-Modal fund heavily relies on this tax as a primary source of revenue.

In light of these achievements, it is utterly disheartening to learn that these hard-earned funds, specifically intended for multi-modal services and passenger train expansion, are now being proposed for the purpose of dismantling the very infrastructure assets we worked tirelessly to establish and utilize. This is an unacceptable and baffling misappropriation of resources.

Furthermore, I implore this committee to thoroughly investigate the collection and utilization of this tax. It is essential to ascertain why it is not being used in accordance with its intended legislative resolve, which is to support passenger train operations. We need transparency and accountability in understanding why funds allocated for the expansion and improvement of passenger rail services are being diverted elsewhere.

In conclusion, I cannot emphasize enough the gravity of this situation. Voting in favor of diverting funds from the State's Multi-Modal fund towards the act of tearing up Maine state railroads would be an act of grave negligence. It would not only undermine the hard work and dedication of rail advocates, but it would also hinder the potential for future passenger train operations and expansion.

I implore each member of this committee to carefully consider the consequences of such a decision and to act in the best interest of the state and its residents. The integrity of the funding system, the future of passenger rail, and the trust of the people are at stake.

Thank you for your attention.