



April 3, 2025

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Senator Tim Nangle, Senate Chair
Representative Lydia Crafts, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony of TrainRiders Northeast in Support of LD 1020, An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham and to Resell Land Taken Under Those Laws to Previous Property Owners

Dear Senator Nangle and Representative Crafts:

I am the President of TrainRiders Northeast. TrainRiders is the grassroots citizens' organization that was the driving force behind the initiation of the Downeaster passenger rail service between Brunswick and Boston and continues to strongly support that service to this day. It also supports improvements and expansion of passenger rail service in Maine and throughout the Northeast, where such expansion is rationally justifiable given current and projected economic and social conditions.

TrainRiders Northeast supports the passage of LD 1020. Passenger rail service between Portland and Gorham could be achieved utilizing an abandoned but existing rail right-of-way between those locations, possibly in combination with the active Mountain Division rail line between Portland and Westbrook. The location of this right of way between Gorham and Westbrook is marked in reddish purple on the map below. In Westbrook, the service could either continue along the rest of the abandoned right of way to Forest Avenue in Portland, marked in purple on the map, or transfer to the Mountain Division through to the location of Portland Transportation Center, marked in green. While past studies have dismissed passenger rail on these routes as a viable alternative to road-based services (such as buses and passenger automobiles), this conclusion must continue to be evaluated taking into consideration changing conditions. These conditions might include, for example, the possible upgrade of the Mountain Division now contemplated by the Conway Scenic Railroad.

TrainRiders does not insist that passenger rail is necessarily the best or "for sure" answer that will eliminate or at least reduce the congestion that the Turnpike Authority sought to avoid with the Gorham Connector.

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Transportation policy decisions, however, are far too often made by paying singular attention to one transportation mode, forgetting that transportation is a system consisting of multiple modes. TrainRiders merely wants to ensure that (1) passenger rail continues to be considered as a possible complete or partial solution to the problems that the Authority sought to address in proposing the Connector and (2) the full costs and benefits of various modes (including not only direct construction and operational expenses but also safety and environmental benefits) are investigated in making any transportation choices, including those dealing with travel between Gorham and Portland.

TrainRiders appreciates this opportunity to provide the Committee with its comments on LD 1020 and stands ready to assist the Committee in its consideration of that bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "F. Bruce Sleeper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

F. Bruce Sleeper, President

TrainRiders Northeast

fbsleeper@trainridersne.org

