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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1903

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The Honorable Raymond L. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am writing in strong support of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) II Discretionary Grant Program applications that have been submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MeDOT) to fund the *Aroostook County (Maine) Railroad Preservation and Rehabilitation Project* and the *Aroostook County Rail Corridor Planning & Development Project*.

Undeniably, an effective rail transportation system in Northern Maine is crucial, not only for the companies and communities along the 241 miles of the rail corridor, but for the state's overall economic vitality and health. In recognition of this fact, the MeDOT has proposed the *Aroostook County Railroad Preservation and Rehabilitation Project* to restore the line to a state of good repair and to increase system reliability, speed, and capacity. To underscore its importance, the State of Maine has committed to match the grant funds with over \$19 million. Also, in a show of support, Maine voters, in a referendum election in June, passed a \$7 million bond to assist in the overall effort to preserve the rail line.

Additionally, the MeDOT seeks funding for the companion *Aroostook County Rail Corridor Planning & Development Project* to help identify and overcome challenges that will lead to increased utilization of the railroad line and corresponding improvements to highway safety and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

These transportation infrastructure projects are absolutely crucial pieces of Maine's economic recovery and, absent this much-needed federal funding, will not be feasible in the short term given the constraints on the state budget. This is of foremost concern to me as, according to estimates from economic development officials in Aroostook County, more than 1,700 jobs would be immediately imperiled if the rail line were to cease functioning. At a time when unemployment nationally continues to hover near 10 percent, and with Aroostook County having experienced levels as high as 15.2 percent during the economic downturn, it is imperative that we retain and preserve the vital infrastructure that helps foster job creation and retention. It is with this in mind that I lend my unqualified support to these requests.

I urge your most careful consideration of these applications, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please keep me informed of the status of the review process. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



OLYMPIA J. SNOWE
United States Senator

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