

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary  LaHood:

We write in strong support of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant applications submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). Maine's key economic assets – its coast line and natural resources – require substantial Federal investment to reach their potential. We believe Maine's proposed projects will quickly create jobs and dramatically move our State's economic recovery forward.

MaineDOT has submitted applications for critically important statewide projects including a highway connector, three rail corridor projects, a multi-dimensional port initiative, and a bridge project that connects Kittery, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. MaineDOT has already demonstrated its ability to implement stimulus funding quickly and effectively. In a recent report by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Maine was ranked sixth in allocating stimulus funds for highway and bridge projects. MaineDOT earned this ranking by putting 100 percent of these projects out to bid before July 31, 2009.

Over the past two decades, the State of Maine has suffered from the loss of high-paying jobs. The state recognizes that a reliable and modern transportation infrastructure is critical to economic rehabilitation in Maine. However, we are losing ground in the struggle to maintain and improve the transportation system that is so vital to our economic well-being. At present, MaineDOT projects a \$3.3 billion structural funding gap over the next 10 years. Without significant new investment, the transportation system will continue to degrade and add substantially to the cost of goods and services, increase the time spent in automobiles, create an unfavorable climate for economic activity, and negatively impact the environment. To effectively confront these trends, MaineDOT has worked with its partners and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, long-range transportation investment strategy as part of its long-range plan, entitled "Connecting Maine." The plan provides region-specific strategic investment that coordinates transportation policy, planning, and capital investment needs.

The projects MaineDOT has proposed for funding through the TIGER grant applications are consistent with the Maine's long-range plan and are described in the attached document.

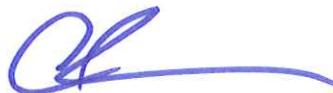
These are very important projects that are needed to meet significant infrastructure needs, to improve quality of life for the citizens of Maine and to promote economic development in this state. I urge your strong consideration of these projects, applications for which have been submitted for funding

under the USDOT TIGER Grant discretionary program. If you need any additional information on any of these proposals, please contact Dustin Hilt on Congressman Michaud's staff at 202-225-6306 or dustin.hilt@mail.house.gov or Erik Hansen on Congresswoman Pingree's staff at 202-225-6116 or erik.hansen@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Enclosure

MAINEDOT TIGER GRANT APPLICATIONS

Caribou Connector Project (Aroostook North/South Highway) - \$25 Million

The Caribou Connector Project is a 4.3-mile, new highway connection between U.S. Route 1, near its intersection with High Street and Route 161 in Caribou. The proposed project will construct a two-lane, controlled-access highway on a four-lane divided highway footprint. The new connector would reduce the number trucks in downtown Caribou by 23% and would reduce the total number of vehicles in downtown Caribou by 22%, reducing vehicle travel-time for through-trips by 310 hours per day. Economic benefits of the project would include shortened commuting times for workers traveling to employment and population centers and reduced travel-times for tourists traveling to and from the region.

Eastport Gateway Rail Project - \$57.7 Million

The Bangor-Calais-Eastport freight corridor is another example of bringing much-needed investment to an area with many assets already in place. The freight corridor includes the Port of Eastport, a new bridge and border crossing in Calais set to open later this year, and the allowance of higher weight Canadian trucks traveling to Baileyville. Rehabilitating the rail corridor from Calais to Perry will add a rail shipment option that the area has not had in more than 30 years. The planned project will rehabilitate the rail line from Calais to Perry to FRA Class II standards (25-mph operations) and will construct a truck-to-rail transload and storage facility in Perry. This will allow shipments to and from the Port of Eastport to be put on rail for shipment so that Eastport can be more competitive in attracting cargoes, and it will give Washington County businesses access to freight rail transportation.

Northern Tier Rail Restoration Project - \$23 Million

The Bangor & Aroostook Trade Corridor runs along the Interstate-95 right-of-way and the rail line of the old Bangor & Aroostook Railroad, now operated by the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic (MMA) Railroad. This important corridor connects Aroostook County with the Bangor Freight Hub, the Port of Searsport, and Pan Am Railways to the south, and to the Province of Quebec to the west, also on the MMA Railroad. This corridor is the most important north/south logistical link in this region of northern Maine. It will benefit greatly from improved rail conditions. The project will purchase and improve 240 miles of rail corridor in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties.

Mountain Division Rail Project - \$28.5 Million

The Mountain Division is a 51-mile rail corridor connecting the national rail system in Portland to Maine's Western Mountains. This line, which can be developed in stages, has substantial freight potential and future passenger potential. A 2007 study commissioned by the Maine State Legislature's Transportation Committee showed freight potential that would remove significant truck traffic from the Route 113 and Route 302 corridors. The project's first stage would be a \$22 million track rehabilitation, which would support freight rail operations and excursion passenger rail to Fryeburg, Maine.

Revitalize Maine's Ports - \$32 Million *(submitted as a package of projects)*

➤ Port of Eastport - \$2 Million

TIGER Grant funds would be used in conjunction with \$4.5 million in bond funds to increase shipping activity flowing through the Port of Eastport. The funding would be for a warehouse and storage pad. These facilities would accommodate storage of bulk materials, which would help the port adapt to new opportunities and to diversify its customer base.

➤ **Port of Portland - \$23 Million**

Freight operations at the International Marine Terminal (IMT) in Portland have been recently expanded into the area within the terminal that was formerly used for ferry operations. These funds will be used to construct a lay-down area, upgrade lighting and to widen the pier access area in order to accommodate equipment. The objective is to improve services that provide enhanced shipping options for Maine's paper industry and other sectors of the economy. Funds would also be used for the construction of a Contained Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cell, to be constructed during the upcoming Portland Harbor dredge project. Utilizing a practice similar to one that has recently been used in harbors in Boston and Providence with similar challenges, this project would excavate a cell on the edge of the federal channel, where dredge spoils could be deposited and then capped with clean fill. Such a project will help to ensure the future of a number of water-dependent businesses and municipal facilities along the Portland Harbor waterfront, which otherwise would not be able to afford other disposal methods. Finally, this project would fund completion of the Ocean Gateway Megaberth. Cruise ship traffic into the Port of Portland continues to expand, but for larger ships, Portland remains dependent on its cruise ship berth at the 87-year-old Maine State Pier. Funds would make it possible to build a new berth for large cruise ships at the recently completed Ocean Gateway terminal.

➤ **Port of Searsport/Mack Point - \$7 Million**

Funding would be invested at Mack Point in Searsport for the purchase of a port crane with heavy lift capacity for the dry cargo pier, which would enable the port to further diversify its customer base.

Bi-State Memorial Bridge Project - \$70 Million

This project involves improvements to the Memorial Bridge over the Piscataqua River between Kittery, ME and Portsmouth, NH. Maine is co-applicant on \$70 million of the \$80 million application, with the remainder to be used for a NH-sponsored project. The project will address local and regional multimodal transportation needs and will help ensure the continued economic and cultural vitality of the Seacoast region of Maine and New Hampshire.

At its opening in 1923, this vertical-lift steel-truss bridge was dedicated as the official state memorial to World War I servicemen. At that time, it served as the only local connection between the downtown areas of Portsmouth, NH and Kittery, ME. It has since become a principal connection between the downtown areas of the two communities. It is structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. Its load capacity was recently reduced to 10 tons.

This application requests TIGER Discretionary Grants program funds for the rehabilitation of this structure, which is in danger of being closed due to its potential impacts on the significant number of commercial shipping that crosses beneath it. It is the only pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the Piscataqua River in the Kittery-Portsmouth area, seeing over 600 pedestrians and 300 bicyclists on a recent summer day. Contract plans for the work have already been developed, and while 2009 inspection reports will likely require modifications to those plans, they are essentially ready to advertise for construction bids.

MaineDOT and NHDOT are also committed to addressing the needs of the nearby Sarah Mildred Long Bridge, now posted at 20 tons, and agree to seek funding through their respective Highway/Bridge programs after completion of the Memorial Bridge construction effort (summer 2012), pending the outcome of the ME-NH Connection Study, scheduled for completion by June 2010.