

GPCOG THE GREATER PORTLAND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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August 27, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), I am writing to support the application of the Maine Department of Transportation for a TIGER grant to reconstruct the Mountain Division rail line.

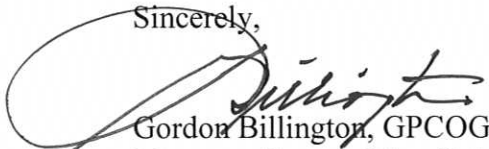
Founded in 1969, GPCOG is a regional planning agency serving 26 municipalities in Greater Portland representing one fifth of Maine's people and one quarter of its jobs. Since the Maine Department of Transportation acquired the Mountain Division corridor in 1997, GPCOG has played an instrumental role in organizing stakeholders to develop a plan for a revived rail line that supports passenger and freight operations, including the following activities:

- Conducting various planning studies, including the *Mountain Division Feasibility Study Phase I Report* in 1999 and the *Mountain Division Rail Freight Study* in 2005.
- Establishing and staffing the Route 113 Corridor Committee, a coalition of towns adjacent to the rail line, including Standish, Baldwin, Hiram, Brownfield, and Fryeburg.
- Developing an economic strategy for the Route 113 corridor in 2008, *Economic Opportunities along the Pequawket Trail*, which states as a goal "to champion the restoration of rail service on the Mountain Division line."
- Including the Mountain Division in the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Cumberland County*, which we submit annually to the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

Running through five of our member communities, the Mountain Division rail line is an asset that is vital for the economic development of our region. Since 2000, the GPCOG region has lost 7,000 jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector. A revived Mountain Division holds great promise for creating jobs throughout the region, including employment in the transportation, warehousing, wholesale, retail, manufacturing, and service sectors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gordon Billington, GPCOG President
Manager, Town of Standish

cc: Commissioner David Cole, Maine Department of Transportation