



April 22, 2024

The Honorable Amit Bose, Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**SUBJECT: Support for *Driving Maine's Rural Economy through Freight Rail Efficiency*  
CRISI 2024 Grant**

Dear Administrator Bose,

Eastern Maine Development Corporation is pleased to support the Maine Department of Transportation's *Driving Maine's Rural Economy through Freight Rail Efficiency Project* ("Project") application for a 2024 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Grant.

The application outlines MainedOT's important plans to administer needed improvements to the Eastern Maine Railway (EMR) line through Maine via the Project. Rail improvements consist of replacing worn-out and obsolete rail, cross-ties, and turnouts with modern and reliable rail infrastructure along 130 miles of rail line. The Project will do all of the following:

1. Replace key rail infrastructure in northern and eastern Maine, making it safer and more reliable
2. Connect the state's forest products industry to export markets
3. Support the creation of family-wage jobs in rural communities
4. Reduce transportation costs and greenhouse gas emissions
5. Decrease truck traffic and crashes on rural roadways
6. Improve Maine and U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace

Additionally, the Project calls for rehabilitating existing dormant track to serve the sustainable One North Forest Products Campus in the rural Town of Millinocket. Our Katahdin's One North campus, a substantially repurposed former paper mill and brownfield site, requires rail service to connect tenants to national and global markets. A sustainable carbon manufacturer, bio-fuel producer, and land-based aquaculture facility are examples of new businesses intending to locate there that require rail service to source input materials for their operations or ship low-emission, renewably sourced products for global distribution. The reinvigorated campus is designed and marketed to host this type of eco-friendly, sustainable industry.

EMDC is a community-based, nonprofit organization that fosters public-private relationships and provides programmatic services while leveraging resources that help businesses, communities, and individuals reach long-term goals and prosperity. EMDC is responsible for developing, maintaining, and updating Eastern Maine's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)<sup>1</sup>. As one of five regional priorities, the importance of transportation upgrades including rail to accommodate the higher frequency and volume of shipments will be key to the region's ability to efficiently move goods.



Eastern Maine Development Corporation has been a committed partner with Our Katahdin since the closure of the mill site in 2014. Working with local, regional, State and federal stakeholders, we recognize the importance of maintaining and improving the rail system for revitalization of this and other sites in the Katahdin region.

With the implementation of this public-private partnership, we will create new, higher-wage jobs built on sustainable foundations. We respectfully request that FRA give favorable consideration to the *Driving Maine's Rural Economy through Freight Rail Efficiency Project*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Umphrey".

Lee Umphrey  
President & CEO, EMDC

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.emdc.org/resources/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/>