



May 6, 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,

I am writing in support of the Maine Department of Transportation's *Driving Maine's Rural Economy through Freight Rail Efficiency 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, crossties, 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, improving reliability in the supply chain
2. Connect the state's forest products industry to export markets
3. Support the creation of new businesses and 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

The Project also includes the rehabilitation of existing dormant track to serve the sustainable One North industrial park in the rural Town of Millinocket. Our Katahdin's One North campus, a substantially repurposed brownfield site, requires rail service to source input materials for their operations and connect tenants to national and global markets; for example, a sustainable carbon manufacturer, bio-fuel producer and land-based aquaculture facility are examples of new businesses intending to locate at One North. Projects like this one directly support expansions of existing businesses, many of which desire rail freight service, and pave the way for new ventures that support these companies or that start unrelated distribution and manufacturing operations.

Our Katahdin is a volunteer driven non-profit organization working to promote community and economic development in the Katahdin region of northern Maine. We greatly appreciate the continued support of the Maine Department of Transportation in our redevelopment efforts at One North. Since

acquiring the former Great Northern Paper Company site in Millinocket in 2017, Our Katahdin has worked closely with many stakeholders to assess environmental conditions, clean up hazardous building materials, and improve infrastructure at One North. Restoring rail infrastructure is a necessity to create sustainable, family supporting jobs in the Katahdin region. We are on the cusp of success with several companies seeking to develop capital intensive projects that will transform northern Maine for the better. The developments proposed for One North present the opportunities of the next century, will diversify our economy, and our community is eager to seize the moment.

With the implementation of this public-private partnership we can improve existing business operations and position our region for new and sustainable industries. We respectfully request FRA give favorable consideration to the *Driving Maine's Rural Economy through Freight Rail Efficiency Project*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean DeWitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean DeWitt
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