



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 there. 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.

Tanbark Molded Fiber Products has experienced rapid growth and success at our sustainable, molded fiber packaging production facility in Saco, Maine since operations began in 2022. As we look to the future, Tanbark is planning for a mothership facility that would employ over 100 workers and require significant resources including connections to rail, affordable electrical power, and a welcoming community. One North in Millinocket is on our short-list of possible Maine expansion locations as it offers a unique blend of assets prime for redevelopment and job creation.

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,

DocuSigned by:
Melissa LaCasse
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Melissa LaCasse
CEO & Co-founder