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May 13, 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,

As the largest employer in Down East, Washington County, Maine, I have been asked to contact you 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*.

As you have already been made aware, the application outlines *Maine DOT's* important plans to administer dire improvements to the 130 miles of *Eastern Maine Railway (EMR)* line. Some of the improvements consist of replacing worn-out, failing and obsolete rail. It also includes replacing crossties, ballast and turnouts/sidings with modern and reliable rail infrastructure.

The Project will do all of the following:

1. Replace key rail infrastructure in 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

You have heard the proposed improvements to the Katahdin Region and all of our rail traffic is directed through that region as well. 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.

Here in Baileyville, we own and operate *Woodland Pulp LLC, St. Croix Tissue, Inc., and St. Croix Tissue LLC*. We also have two other manufacturing facilities, once operated as a Georgia Pacific Stud Mill and Oriented Strand Board (OSB) Mills, which can be repurposed under the appropriate circumstances. We currently ship our products all over the world and we rely heavily on rail service, to not only ship to customers in the North America, but it allows us to ship via rail to Canadian Ports in Montreal, PQ, Saint John, NB and Halifax, NS, where ocean vessels can be

loaded. We receive many of our raw materials such as round wood via rail. We also receive chemicals such as Chlorate that would be cost-prohibitive to receive via any other mode.

We own 11 miles of short-line that we contract with *EMR* to operate. Our line, traverses the international St. Croix River border with New Brunswick, Canada in three different locations. We are currently in the permitting process of either repairing or replacing the bridges. This is a significant investment of time and resources on our behalf and once complete, will allow us to more than double our rail volume the very first day upon completion. The current infrastructure has weight and speed restrictions, causing us to buffer loaded cars with an empty car, in order to span the live-loading of the tracks. However, we are only as a strong, as our weakest link and for us to invest \$5M in replacing our *Salmon Falls Bridge* to double capacity, only makes sense, if it does not then fall victim to other substandard areas on the line. We could spend hours, testifying to the necessity of these improvements.

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,

*Darren A. Briggs*

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