



16/August/2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation (“MaineDOT”) and NBM Railways’ (“NBM”) grant application for a 2023 U.S. Department of Transportation *Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highways Projects* (“INFRA”) grant under the *Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity* (MPDG) program. The application outlines MaineDOT’s important plans to administer needed improvements to the Eastern Maine Railway’s (“EMR”) line through Maine via the *Eastern Maine Railway Freight Resiliency and Efficiency Project* (“Project”). Improvements consist of replacing worn-out and obsolete rail, crossties and turnouts with modern & reliable rail infrastructure along 130 miles of rail line. The Project will:

1. Replace key rail infrastructure in 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
5. Decrease truck traffic, potential crashes and CO₂ emissions on rural roadways
6. Improve Maine and U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace

The improvements will create safe and reliable infrastructure necessary to support a significant resurgence of jobs in the forest products industry following decades of decline due to foreign competition. The line is the only safe, efficient and environmentally-friendly connection allowing Maine’s forest products to reach manufacturing points within Maine and be exported to Saint John, New Brunswick. The Project will also greatly improve rural road safety by reducing truck traffic.

Our Katahdin is a community based Not for Profit and owner of One North, formerly the Great Northern Paper mill site in Millinocket. One North is the third largest Industrial Park in Maine and is connected to EMR’s rail line via a .6-mile rail spur from Millinocket rail yard. In the past four years, One North, supported by Our Katahdin has attracted several large domestic and international companies to the region, one of the most effective selling tools to such companies is access to rail for supply of feedstock (in particular, wood fiber) and to allow cost effective, sustainable delivery of finished products to North American customers and to overseas export markets via direct rail links to ports. Safety and efficiency improvements to the rail line will eliminate risk of future disruption of supply or delivery and will facilitate expansion of business opportunities and employment in a region requiring economic revitalization.

We are pleased that MaineDOT and NBM are seeking assistance from USDOT for this very important project. We hope USDOT is able to supplement private funding by assisting with these improvements, which cover all aspects of USDOT’s merit criteria for a successful application.

Sincerely,

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