

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2010

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The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am writing in strong support of the TIGER II Discretionary Grant applications that were submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT). Both projects are essential to the long-term viability of freight rail service in northern Maine, the health of the businesses that are served by the line and the viability of future economic development efforts in the region.

The primary application, the *Aroostook County Railroad Preservation and Rehabilitation Project*, would provide the State with the resources necessary to bring more than 230 miles of freight rail in northern Maine back to working condition. These repairs will ensure that freight can be moved on this critical component of the national rail system in a timely and reliable manner, ensuring continued access to and from the businesses at the center of Maine's forest products industry.

To complement these rehabilitations, the State of Maine has submitted a second application. The *Aroostook County Rail Corridor Planning and Development Project* will help MDOT to evaluate the challenges that will be created by the increased use of the railroad and determine the most effective ways to address these issues.

Since the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic (MM&A) first announced that it would seek to abandon 233 miles of track in Aroostook and Penobscot counties, individuals throughout Maine have worked hard to keep the line operational. Maine voters have shown their support by approving a \$7 million bond to help the State purchase the line. MDOT has pledged to match any federal investment in the line with more than \$19 million additional dollars. Now, it is imperative that the federal government do its part to provide support for the transportation infrastructure that is vital to business growth and economic development in northern Maine.

Over the past year, I have had multiple opportunities to meet with officials from the Department of Transportation on this issue. In July, I spoke with President Obama and asked that he do everything he could to make resources available to keep the line operational. Each time, there has been agreement that the continuation of freight rail service is critical to the northern Maine economy. I sincerely hope that you will make the same determination when evaluating this application.

With warmest regards,

Michael H. Michaud  
Member of Congress