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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 10, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in strong support of the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) application for funding through the 2022 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements ("CRISI") Grant. The *Maine Woods to Water Rail Connection Project* will significantly improve infrastructure in a rural area of Maine that has been economically disadvantaged since the closure of the Great Northern Paper Mill in Millinocket in 2008, once the largest paper mill in the country that employed over 2,000 people at its peak.

MaineDOT's project will rehabilitate existing dormant track, that once serviced the Great Northern Paper Mill, and will construct a loop track that will serve the new anchor tenant in the *One North* Industrial Park that now occupies the old mill location. The businesses that have signed lease agreements at *One North* require rail service to connect to global markets. These investments will also serve to entice new businesses to locate to the area and contribute to ongoing economic development opportunities.

One such company to recently locate to *One North*, Highland Carbon Solutions LLC, manufactures sustainable wood pellets. Much of Highland's success depends on reliable rail service in order to ship their product to Searsport on Maine's Atlantic coast for global distribution. MaineDOT's project will improve capacity and reliability of the rail corridor between Millinocket and Searsport and additionally will make improvements to the rail infrastructure at Mack Point terminal in the Port of Searsport.

I strongly support MaineDOT's application for funding through CRISI and commend the Department's efforts to invest in a region of Maine in need of economic revitalization. Without reliable rail service, the ability to locate the largest employer to the Millinocket area in decades could be jeopardized, therefore threatening economic revitalization of Maine's rural communities. This is one of my highest infrastructure priorities and critical to advancing economic development and future prosperity in the state.

Thank you for your consideration of MaineDOT's proposal. I urge USDOT's careful review, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you contact Adam Lachman in my office at (202) 224-5344 when a final decision is made.

Sincerely,



Angus King, Jr.
United States Senator

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