



August 16, 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 and 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.

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,
Chuck Thompson

Logistics Manager

Woodland Pulp / St. Croix Tissue