

Dear Advisory Council Colleagues:

I have a few questions that I would ask Nate Moulton, Nate Howard, or our VHB consultants to prepare for the next meeting. They all relate to the following diagram, which extracts from the MaineDOT state rail map the ten key rail segments in our region. Our council is evaluating segments SLR-1 and SLR-2, of course, which are the unused rail lines in our region.



1. Of the ten segments shown on this diagram, please confirm for the Council which are actively used by trains now and which are inactive.

MaineDOT response: The state-owned St. Lawrence and Atlantic rail corridor known as the Berlin Subdivision (shown in yellow and labelled SLR-1 and SLR-2) from railroad mile post 1.74 in Portland to railroad mile post 25 is currently inactive with the exception of the RR diamond where the lines cross the CSX Brunswick Branch. The portion of the line labeled SLR-1 on the map from Ocean Gateway to the western end of the old trestle bridge is active and under a lease and operating agreement with the Maine Narrow Gauge. The lines that are inactive are preserved for future rail use under the State Railroad Preservation Act. Trains operate on the remainder of the lines shown on the graphic.

2. On which segments does CSX currently coordinate with Amtrak to provide both freight and passenger service on the same tracks?

MaineDOT response: CSX and the Downeaster both operate on the Freight Main Line from Berwick to Cumberland and the Brunswick Branch between Cumberland and Brunswick. (Labelled as track segments A, B, F and G on the graphic).

3. Based on the 2019 Maine Corridor Assessment by MaineDOT, NNEPRA, VHB, and the cities of Lewiston and Auburn, please confirm which routes remain under consideration for passenger service between Portland and L-A.

Please also explain why the report explicitly rules out SLR-1 from further consideration.

MaineDOT response: The 2019 [Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan, Operating Plans and Corridor Assessments](#) documents the five Preferred Alignments:

- 1A High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland using PAR
- 1B High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland using SLR to Yarmouth Junction
- 2B High-Frequency Service between Lewiston-Auburn and Portland via Back Cove Bridge using SLR Corridor
- 4 Rail Shuttle Connecting Lewiston-Auburn to Downeaster at Yarmouth Junction using SLR Corridor
- 5 Rail Shuttle Connecting Lewiston-Auburn to Downeaster at Royal Junction using Pan Am Corridor

The report does not explicitly rule out SLR-1 from further consideration, however, the Project Committee recommended “eliminating options that require an Ocean Gateway section (section 9.6)”.

4. Can you confirm that these same segments are the only ones that the legislature requested for further consideration in their 2021 study request, LD991 (as the original bill was amended before final enactment to remove SLR-1 from continuing study in that bill, too).

MaineDOT response: LD 991 directed MaineDOT to perform an economic evaluation on two routes from the May 2019 report: Alignments 1A and 1B.

5. Does the use of SLR-2 (rather than C) to get from Portland to L-A in any way avoid the need to negotiate with CSX for incremental passenger train use on CSX-owned segments B, F, and D?

MaineDOT response: No

6. Why does the 2019 Corridor Assessment by MaineDOT, NNEPRA, VHB, and the cities of Lewiston and Auburn conclude that "light rail is not considered an appropriate technology for the corridors being considered"?

MaineDOT response: As documented in the presentation and as detailed the May 2019 report, Inter-Urban Light Rail can be a feasible technology for corridors such as the former Berlin subdivision where there is existing rail infrastructure (as well as the Commuter Rail, Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) and Electrical Multiple Units (EMUs) also identified in the report). However, there are several important distinctions that need to be considered:

Vehicles that do not meet Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) crashworthiness standards require either physical or temporal separation from freight rail (temporal separation means the passenger vehicles have exclusive rights to operate during specified hours of the day, while only freight trains can operate outside of this window) or otherwise require a series of waiver requests from FRA. DMUs/EMUs can likely use the state-owned Berlin Subdivision from Portland to (just shy of) Danville Junction w/o the need for separation due to the lack of freight service along the corridor—other than by the Portland Yacht Club. North of Danville Junction—whether passenger rail heads northwest towards NH and Montreal, or north to Lewiston/Auburn—any passenger rail service will need either the physical or temporal separation from existing freight service along the CSX/Pan Am line.

Due to the potential impacts to safety of simultaneous operation, these waivers can be difficult to achieve and project design teams typically do not develop a project definition assuming acceptance. Achieving these waivers may require additional capital investments, commitments by MaineDOT, or other requirements that could significantly increase the capital cost, and the ambiguity for cost estimates at this stage of the project development process.

Waivers require that the project sponsor and design team to demonstrate that temporal and/or physical separation is not achievable. Temporal separation would require coordination with the railroad owners to agree on which hours are dedicated to passenger rail and which are dedicated to freight while physical separation would result in significantly increase the project capital costs that would be needed to provide dedicated infrastructure for freight and passenger modes.

The alternatives currently being evaluated for the proposed L-A service utilize existing privately-owned freight rail right-of-way between downtown Lewiston/Auburn and Danville Junction as well as Royal Junction (in

Cumberland) to Portland Transportation Center. Additionally, the Berlin subdivision crosses the Pan Am Brunswick Branch (which is used to support freight and Amtrak Downeaster passenger services) at-grade. The ability for MaineDOT to secure agreements required from the privately-owned freight railroad to support temporal separation is considered unlikely based on historical precedent with similar projects.

As stated in the May 2019 report, Inter-Urban Light Rail was not considered an appropriate technology to support the L-A passenger service for these reasons. Like the Commuter Rail and Multiple Units options that were advanced as part of the L-A study, Inter-Urban Light Rail would require upgrades to the existing infrastructure in order to support a passenger service plan that would generate sufficient ridership. It is envisioned that these upgrades would need to be similar in scope and cost to alternatives carried forward in the May 2019 report as well as the June 2022 presentation to support a level of service consistent with was proposed in the L-A study.

7. Related, are both freight trains and light rail trains allowed to use the same tracks on segment D to get from Danville Junction to downtown Lewiston-Auburn, or would a totally separate track need to be constructed anew?

MaineDOT response: See Question 6 response.

8. Will VHB be providing to the Council their independent estimate of what MRTC's light rail project would cost to implement, including any track upgrades needed on SLR-1 and SLR-2, reconstructing the bridge into Portland to get to Ocean Gateway, creating safety barriers for shared use (rail with trail) on the Eastern Prom, and (depending on the answer to question 7) constructing a totally new track from Danville Junction to downtown Lewiston-Auburn?

MaineDOT response: No. The report will provide concept level cost estimates for passenger rail consistent with the Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Service Plan.

9. Is there any realistic routing of passenger train service from Boston to Portland to Montreal that would use segment SLR-1?

MaineDOT response: Unknown. Details of this proposed service have not been provided to MaineDOT...however there is currently no existing rail connection between Ocean Gateway (the southerly extent of the State-owned portion) to points further south (towards Boston).

Finally, I hope we will leave some time at the next meeting to discuss whether train and trail visions can coexist in our area. I know I'm the designated "trail advocate" on the Council, but I'm all in favor of passenger train service between Boston, Portland, Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor, using active segments A, B, C, D, and E. I'm all in favor of passenger train service to Montreal, too, using active segments A, B, C, and H. In my mind, these are exciting and plausible possibilities.

I look forward to our continuing discussions. See you all on the 22nd.

Sincerely,
Dick