

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

We are writing to express our strong support for the application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-Term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) grant program.

The Maine Railroad Bridge Capacity Project (MRBCP) is an ideal candidate for funding as it meets the goals of the FASTLANE program by improving safety, efficiency, and reliability of freight transportation. The total cost of the project is \$15.78 million. The Maine Department of Transportation is seeking \$7.89 million in FASTLANE funds, which will be matched with another \$7.89 million in contributions by non-federal sponsors.

The MRBCP would invest in upgrades and improvements to railroad bridges on the Maine state-owned railroad lines operated by the Maine Northern Railway (MNR) in northern Maine. These improvements would allow the MNR to safely increase the allowable weight for railcars traversing the bridges and rail line to the modern standard weight of 286,000 pounds, which could yield more than a 10 percent increase in capacity per railcar. If funded, this project would improve rail efficiency for regional shippers and businesses and align the MNR's railcar loading operations with its connecting railroad partners in the region. In addition, the project would capitalize on past and pending TIGER grant investments to continue improving Maine's freight rail.

If funded, the MRBCP would have public benefits such as reduced fuel consumption, less congestion on the state's highways, and more efficient rail transportation for industries in northern Maine. The project is critical to the growth and sustainability of this rural region of Maine and many of its forest product-based businesses. The potential upgrades to bridges on the rail line through this project would help keep the region economically competitive and incentivize companies to use the region's freight rail services.

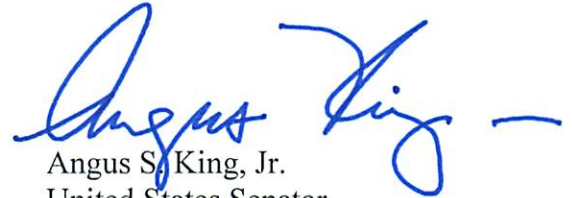
We are confident that the FASTLANE funds would create jobs, increase freight movement efficiency, and improve the economic competitiveness of Maine and the nation. MaineDOT has stated that the MRBCP will be ready to proceed immediately upon receiving funding. As such, we respectfully request that you give this application every appropriate consideration subject to all applicable laws and regulations.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions, please contact us directly or have your staff contact our staff members Jay Lim (Collins) at (202) 224-2523, Sanjay Kane (King) at (202) 224-5344, Joe Marro (Pingree) at (202) 225-6116, and Michael Sinacore (Poliquin) at (202) 225-6306.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress