

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2009

The Honorable Raymond L. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We are writing in support of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant applications submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MeDOT). MeDOT will use these resources to help finance six critically significant infrastructure projects in Maine. All of these projects are vital to Maine's economic viability and stability.

Maine is submitting applications for projects across the state: improvements to a vital bridge linking Maine and New Hampshire, the creation of a new highway connector in northern Maine, three major freight rail investments and critically needed Maine port upgrades.

Bi-State Memorial Bridge Project - \$70 million. This project involves improvements to the Memorial Bridge over the Piscataqua River between Kittery, ME, and Portsmouth, NH. The project will address local and regional multimodal transportation needs and will help ensure the continued economic and cultural vitality of the Seacoast region of Maine and New Hampshire.

Caribou Connector Project (Aroostook North/South Highway) - \$25 million. The Caribou Connector Project is a 4.3-mile, new highway connection between U.S. Route 1, near its intersection with High Street and Route 161 in Caribou. Economic benefits of the project would include removing through-truck traffic from the downtown business district, shortened commuting times for workers traveling to employment and population centers, and reduced travel-times for tourists traveling to and from the region.

Eastport Gateway Rail Project - \$57.7 million. The planned project will rehabilitate the rail line from Calais to Perry to FRA Class II standards (25-mph operations), and will construct a truck-to-rail transload and storage facility in Perry. This will allow shipments to and from the Port of Eastport to be put on rail for shipment so that Eastport can be more competitive in attracting cargoes, and it will give Washington County businesses access to freight rail transportation.

Mountain Division Rail Project - \$28.5 million. This rail project is a 51-mile rail corridor which connects the national rail system in Portland to Maine's Western Mountains. This line has substantial freight potential and future passenger potential, and can be developed in stages. A 2007 study commissioned by the Maine State Legislature's Transportation Committee showed freight potential that would remove significant truck traffic from the Route 113 and Route 302 corridors.

Northern Tier Rail Restoration Project - \$23 million. The 233 mile rail line currently operated by Montreal, Maine and Atlantic is an integral part of northern Maine's economy. Every manufacturer in northern Maine depends in part or in whole on this vital link to the markets in the United States for raw

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products and for finished products.

Revitalize Maine's Ports - \$32 million. TIGER Grant funds would be used for three separate port projects.

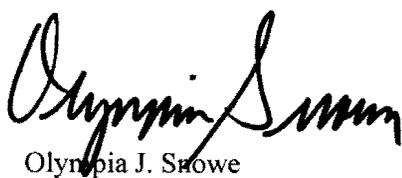
- In Eastport, funds would be used in conjunction with \$4.5 million in bond funds to increase shipping activity flowing through the Port of Eastport.
- In Portland, the funds will be used to construct a lay-down area, to upgrade lighting, and to widen the pier access area, in order to accommodate equipment. The objective is to improve services that provide enhanced shipping options for Maine's paper industry and other sectors of the economy. Funds would also be used for the construction of a Contained Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cell, to be constructed during the upcoming Portland Harbor dredge project. Also in Portland, funds would make it possible to build a new berth for large cruise ships at the recently completed Ocean Gateway terminal. This will help Portland respond to the growing demand by cruise ship lines to visit Portland.
- Finally, in Searsport, funding would be invested at Mack Point for the purchase of a port crane with heavy lift capacity for the dry cargo pier, which would enable the port to further diversify its customer base.

Every corner of Maine has suffered from the severe economic downturn with large layoffs and closures in the ship building, textile, paper, and logging industries. Over the years, Maine has also been targeted by the various Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commissions with the closures of Loring Air Force Base in Limestone and Naval Security Administration in Winterport Harbor, and the pending closure of Brunswick Naval Air Base in 2011. These dramatic events have had a detrimental effect on Maine's economy and have created unemployment in some areas of the state exceeding 12 percent. In order for Maine to rehabilitate its economy, it must create new jobs and provide Maine businesses with a reliable, modern transportation system.

These transportation infrastructure projects are crucial pieces of Maine's economic recovery and, absent this much-needed federal funding, will not be feasible in the short term given the constraints on the state budget. At the present, MeDOT projects a \$3.3 billion structural funding gap over the next 10 years. To optimize its investments, MeDOT has worked with its partners and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, long-range transportation investment strategy. These projects seeking TIGER grant funding are consistent with MeDOT's long-range plan.

The proposals presented by Maine DOT reflect a commitment to job creation and improvements to the economic vitality of the entire state. It is with this in mind that we lend our support to its requests. We ask that you please give Maine's applications every consideration, subject to all applicable laws and regulations.

Sincerely,



Olympia J. Snowe
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator