

August 28, 2009

Mr. David A. Cole, Commissioner  
Maine Department of Transportation  
16 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**RE: TIGER Discretionary Grant Application  
Madawaska Subdivision Project**

Dear Commissioner Cole:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of *LEADers Encouraging Aroostook Development*, I am writing to express support for the Transportation Investment Generating Economy Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant application entitled "Madawaska Subdivision Project," which impacts communities from Millinocket to Madawaska in Aroostook and Penobscot counties.

The Madawaska subdivision of the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railroad (former Bangor & Aroostook Railroad) is a critical 233-mile rail corridor that connects northern Maine to the rest of the regional and national rail network. Although rail traffic volumes have significantly decreased over the years, the remaining rail customers are dependent on the cost effectiveness of rail to remain competitive in their markets. Without direct rail service, these firms will face higher costs for inbound transportation of materials required for production and higher outbound costs of moving products to national markets. Those firms that are able will convert rail shipments to truck, further exacerbating the already serious problems on the state and local roadway network in the region.

We are pleased to provide this letter of support to ensure continuation of necessary rail services along the line segment and branches, in order to enhance the economic competitiveness (and survival) of the region and its communities. Restoration of rail service will provide immediate jobs during construction and will increase economic opportunities for existing and new industries using freight service for many years afterwards.

Sincerely,



Virginia R. Joles, President  
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**Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development (LEAD)**, a non-profit corporation comprised of approximately one hundred business and community members, was established in 1986 for the purpose of fostering and encouraging the balanced development of Aroostook County. This group of volunteers focuses on the economy, jobs, image, partnerships, promoting new and existing businesses, natural resources, and legislation. Today, LEAD is proud to celebrate over two decades of achievement with the continued support of individuals and businesses committing their valuable time to improve the future of Aroostook County.