Application Narrative

Royal Junction Siding Project
FY2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant Program

June 3, 2015

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
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Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority  
FY2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant Application

Royal Junction Siding Project

Project Title: Royal Junction Siding Project  
Project Location: Cumberland County, Maine; 1st Congressional District  
Project Type: Rural Capitol Project  
Project Applicant: Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority,  
POV DUNS #: 876964227  
Project Period: Through September 30, 2019  
Total Project Cost: $8,500,000  
TIGER Funding Request: $7,564,138

Project Elements:
Construction of a four mile passing siding to provide capacity to support the operation of five daily round-trips between Brunswick and Boston.

Project Description:
The Royal Junction Siding Project will allow the Amtrak Downeaster to efficiently operate five round-trips daily between Brunswick, Maine and Boston, Massachusetts, optimizing its frequency, financial efficiency and operating performance. The project can be completed by September 2019.

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Project Description</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Project Parties</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Project Financing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Project Alignment with Selection Criteria</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Benefit Cost Analysis</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Project Readiness &amp; NEPA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Material Changes from Pre-Application</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Application Attachments</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Federal Wage Rate Certification</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Project Description

Background

The Amtrak Downeaster began operating daily service between Portland, ME and Boston, MA on December 15, 2001 serving eight intermediate communities in three states, on its two and a half hour journey along the 116-mile corridor. This state-supported Amtrak service, which resulted from a citizens’ initiative to restore passenger rail to Maine, is managed by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA). The Downeaster carries more than half a million passengers annually including commuters, business travelers, college students traveling to and from school, youths on educational trips, patients receiving medical treatments, citizens who would not venture to Boston by car, families attending sports and theatre events, shoppers, visitors to Maine and more. The Downeaster has proven itself to be much more than a train ride, however. To date, hundreds of millions of dollars in public and private investment has occurred or is planned near stations, creating jobs and stimulating the economy.

Maine’s long range plan for passenger rail indicated that significant mobility and economic benefits would be realized if passenger service were expanded to include the communities of Freeport and Brunswick, ME, located approximately 28 miles north of Portland. A $38.3 million High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) Grant was awarded to NNEPRA in 2010 to upgrade track infrastructure between Portland and Brunswick, and the Downeaster expanded two of its five daily round-trips to serve Freeport and Brunswick on November 1, 2012.

The response to the limited Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick has been overwhelmingly positive, exceeding daily average ridership projections by 50% in the first eighteen months of operation and generating millions of dollars in economic impact. Municipalities, tourism organizations, private businesses, developers and others along the entire Downeaster corridor are encouraging NNEPRA to add more trips to meet growing demand.

Current Service Challenges

The rail line between Portland and Brunswick is mostly single track, which is why passenger train trips are limited to six, compared to ten one-way trips between Portland and Boston. To further constrain the operation, layover facilities for Downeaster trains are currently located in Portland, which requires Amtrak to use two of those trips just to position equipment for a Brunswick-Boston run.

These constraints restrict ridership and revenue and prohibit the expansion of additional Downeaster frequencies to Brunswick. Ten daily trips (five round-trips) between Brunswick and Boston can be operated with the existing crew and equipment resources in place. Therefore,
maximum ridership/revenue growth and cost effectiveness can be achieved when all five daily round-trips operate between Brunswick and Boston daily. Construction of a new layover facility in Brunswick is expected to begin in the summer of 2015 and be completed by Fall 2016. The Brunswick layover facility is fully designed and funded, and has received a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) decision from the Federal Railroad Administration. Once completed, Downeaster train sets will be serviced and stored overnight in Brunswick instead of Portland, eliminating the current deadhead trips and enabling all six trains (three round-trips) to/from Freeport and Brunswick to be operated as part of Downeaster revenue trips to/from Boston. Even so, constraints in track capacity between Portland and Brunswick limit the number of trips to six until another passing siding can be built.

**Royal Junction Siding Project**

Schedule string-lines indicate that if all five round-trips were operated between Brunswick and Boston daily, passenger train meets would take place west of Royal Junction, where the Brunswick Branch separates from the freight main line. This TIGER Grant Application seeks funding to complete the construction of a second main track, extending approximately four miles west from Royal Junction, and will provide the capacity necessary to allow all five daily Downeaster round-trips to operate on that segment. The two additional round-trips are expected to generate approximately 36,787 more Downeaster riders and $735,734 in revenue annually by 2019. These trips will reduce net system operating costs by $.59 per train mile. The short term economic impacts of this project include almost $9.8 million in regional economic output during the construction period, including the creation of 59 jobs resulting in $4.45 million in labor earnings.

Pan Am Railways has provided engineering plans for a passing siding at Royal Junction and has agreed to permit the operation of five daily round-trip Downeaster trains between Portland and Brunswick upon its completion. All work for this element will be performed by Pan Am Railways within their railroad right-of-way with no additional environmental impacts anticipated.

The new second track, or passing siding, will begin east of CPF-185 (Royal Junction) and extend 21,700 feet west to a point approximately 1,000 feet east of MP-189. Royal Junction Siding will mitigate freight and passenger train conflicts, allowing for reliable movement of both types of rail traffic.

Royal Junction Siding will be constructed as a double block passing siding to allow “at-speed” meets of passenger trains, meaning that both passenger and freight trains can move through Royal Junction concurrently, and without conflict. In addition to new track, which will require upgrades to five public grade crossings, one farm crossing and a bridge span, the new siding will require communication and signal upgrades such as a new mainline control point (CP-Cemetery), modification of an existing control point (CPF-185), new mainline automatic signals and three grade crossing AHCP conversions for double track. The Communication and Signal upgrades required of these types of infrastructure improvements will be designed and installed by Pan Am.
Project Elements

Track Improvements

- Construction of 21,700 LF of new track;
- Relocation of approximately 7,000 LF of existing track;
- Installation of two #20 equilateral turnouts at each end of siding, capable of supporting passenger train speeds of 79 MPH;
- Installation of one #20 crossover at Royal Junction;
- Addition of a second track through five grade crossings, and one farm crossing;
- Reconstruction of the bridge span at BR # 11.19.

Signal Improvements

- New mainline control point at Fields Rd. (CP – Cemetery) including AHCP & interlocking design & installation;
- Mainline control point modification at Royal Junction (CPF-185) including addition of crossover;
- New mainline automatic signals at Main St. in Cumberland (MP 186.90) including 2x back-to-back distance signals w/joint AHCP & wayside signal facilities;
- Three grade crossing AHCP conversions for double track including Dunham Rd. & Muirfield Rd. in Falmouth, along with Tuttle Rd. in Cumberland.

The Brunswick Branch separates from the freight main line at Royal Junction and continues east toward Freeport and Brunswick.
Royal Junction Siding Project Map

Proposed Improvements between Royal Junction and Field Road

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
Royal Junction Siding Project

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
Royal Junction Improvements

2,500 1,250 0 2,500

Feet
Project Results

The Royal Junction Siding Project will result in tangible results and benefits which will have a significant positive impact on Downeaster service in the predominantly rural areas between Portland and Brunswick and the entire operation between Brunswick and Boston.

Collectively, by 2019, the Project improvements will:

**Improve the financial and operational efficiency of the Downeaster.**
- Increases Downeaster ridership by 36,787 riders;
- Increases cost recovery 2%;
- Reduces net operating costs by 9% overall;
- Improves reliability of passenger and freight trains by reducing delays due to conflicting movements.

**Stimulate the economy.**
- Creates more than 59 short-term construction jobs;
- Generates $9.8 million in near-term regional economic activity (output);
- Generates $1.7 million annually in new tourism spending in Maine;
- Contributes to the success of more than $150 million in private transportation-related development projects between Brunswick and Portland.

**Preserve the Environment.**
- Diverts more than 2.5 million passenger miles from the region’s road network annually;
- Reduces annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by nearly 1 million miles;
- Reduces approximately 21,000 tons of emissions;
- Reduces fuel consumption by approximately 2.1 million gallons annually.
II. Project Parties

About NNEPRA

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) is the lead agency for this Project. NNEPRA is a State of Maine public transportation authority created in 1995 to develop and provide passenger rail service between Maine and Boston.

NNEPRA Project Management Experience:

1999 – 2001: $70m FTA funded Passenger Rail Project required to upgrade track between Plaistow, NH and Portland, ME to support the operation of the Downeaster was managed by NNEPRA. The Project included the rehabilitation of 78 miles of track, upgrades to 31 public grade crossings, and the construction of 7 passenger platforms in Maine and New Hampshire.

2004: $1m project to remove clay under the track bed in Kennebunk, ME to increase speeds.

2006-2007: $6m capacity project to support an additional Downeaster frequency.

2009-2011: $1.3m Portland Area Infrastructure Improvement Project partnership with the FRA.

2010-2015: $38.35m Downeaster Expansion Project, funded with an ARRA/HSIPR Grant, is substantially complete and service to Brunswick began in 2012. Remaining elements are scheduled to be completed in 2015. NNEPRA has met all requirements of the FRA/USDOT in the management and reporting of these funds.

2011-Present: $26m Haverhill Line Project to construct additional track capacity, funded with an ARRA/HSIPR Grant, is underway.

2015: $12m Brunswick Layover design/build project funded with a combination of State of Maine and federal funds is expected to start construction late summer 2015.

NNEPRA manages the $20 million annual budget and holds a 20-year agreement with Amtrak to operate the Downeaster rail service between Brunswick and Boston. NNEPRA is also party to operating and capital agreements with host railroads.

NNEPRA has significant experience managing construction projects within guidelines and specifications required by federal funding partners.

To assure the continued maintenance of the rail line, NNEPRA, through an agreement with Pan Am Railways, funds annual Capital Maintenance Projects, beyond routine maintenance, to address infrastructure needs that could impact Downeaster performance, Pan Am Railways has designed and will construct the Royal Junction Siding.
III. Project Financing

NNEPRA has purchased the continuously welded rail for the Royal Junction Siding Project, valued at $935,862. Therefore, the grant request is $7,564,138.

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<th>Royal Junction Siding Project Budget</th>
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<td>43,488 TF CWR</td>
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<td>Track Installation</td>
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IV. Project Alignment with Selection Criteria

The Downeaster has enjoyed more than a decade of growing ridership between Portland and Boston. The expansion of two daily round-trips to Freeport and Brunswick in 2012 is exceeding expectations, but does not provide the level of service required to meet the growing demand in the region. The Royal Junction Siding Project will help to resolve those challenges and address nearly all TIGER Program selection criteria.

Long Term Outcomes

State of Good Repair
The Royal Junction Siding Project will provide essential mobility options for residents, and improve the overall reliability of Downeaster passenger service while supporting and enhancing Maine’s freight rail infrastructure as well.

Economic Competitiveness
Connectivity to urban economic centers (Portland and Boston) is critical to Maine’s competitiveness. Maine enjoys an image of being charming yet, rural, cold, snowy, and remote. The lack of transportation options is a detriment to attracting workers, residents and investors from other locations. Fully expanded service will provide more frequent, efficient, and reliable passenger rail service that will increase mobility to and within Maine. Additional service to Brunswick and Freeport specifically is expected to generate many new tourists, contributing to the Maine economy without adding to the burden of additional traffic. A robust Downeaster service will help attract new businesses and workers to support the development of Brunswick Landing, site of the former Brunswick Naval Air Station (BNAS).

This Project will also protect and enhance the movement of freight goods supporting Maine’s northern industries and will improve the exposure of and access to the public/private development projects currently occurring or planned along the corridor. All of these initiatives will create jobs and stimulate the regional economy.
Livability
This Project not only delivers transportation benefits, but will preserve the quality of life treasured so much in Maine and further the livability principles developed by the US Department of Transportation with the departments of Housing and Urban Development and the Environmental Protection Agency.

- Additional round-trips and reduced travel time will result in more frequent and cost effective transportation options for residents, business owners and visitors. Downeaster station communities have emerged into multi-modal transportation hubs, increasing availability of and access to many modes of public transportation. Fully expanded Downeaster service will help support local transit services as well, improving connectivity and increasing options for all residents.

- Project improvements will enhance revitalization efforts. Brunswick Landing, the site of the former Brunswick Naval Air Station, is being redeveloped to include both businesses and educational institutions. Developers are investing more than $100 million in Portland’s Forefront at Thompson’s Point project to transform the area from a defunct industrial site into a world-class business, residential and entertainment complex. The availability of time competitive, frequent and reliable passenger rail service is a critical aspect of each of these developments.

- Fully expanded Downeaster service will enhance the access to and appeal of affordable housing, particularly in Brunswick where hundreds of homes became vacant as a result of the closing of BNAS.

- Faster, more frequent Downeaster service will increase the economic competitiveness of the region by providing better access to tourism hubs including Freeport, mid-coast Maine and downtown Portland as well as business centers such as Brunswick Landing and the Forefront at Thompson’s Point. The Project improvements will also protect the
reliability of freight rail movement and improve freight access to potential industrial sites on the Mountain Branch.

- Project improvements have been developed cooperatively with the communities and complement transportation and strategic development policies. This project has the support of the municipalities and the improved service will help leverage private development in Portland, Freeport and Brunswick.
- Improved connectivity will increase the value of communities and neighborhoods served by the Downeaster by encouraging new development and providing more transportation options.

**Environmental Sustainability**
The Royal Junction Siding Project will enable the full expansion of Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick. This will enhance the sustainability of the region, increasing the efficiency of the rail corridor to provide mobility while concurrently reducing fuel consumption and protecting the environment. Further, increased service will divert more than 2.5 million passenger miles from the highways along the Brunswick to Boston corridor, reducing the consumption of approximately 2.1 million gallons annually and the emissions by almost 21,000 tons annually.

**Safety**
Royal Junction Siding will contribute to the safety of the operation. Increased train frequency will increase the diversion of highway traffic to rail and will reduce the overall vehicle miles traveled in the region contributing to a decline in roadway accidents.

**Job Creation & Near-Term Economic Activity**
In the short term, 59 jobs will be created or retained in association with the construction of the Project elements, generating $9.8 million in economic activity including $4.45 million in labor earnings.

The associated improvements will direct permanent jobs to areas of the state which are more economically challenged such as Brunswick, while supporting new opportunities in more urban areas such as Portland. The result is a net increase of over 50 jobs to the State. Increased tourism will also create or sustain jobs, and result in additional sales tax revenues.

In the past two years, a once barren Brownfield site located between downtown Brunswick and Bowdoin

Pan Am crews avoid lay-offs by working through the winter on the Downeaster Expansion project.
College has been transformed into the bustling Brunswick Station. The complex includes restaurants, medical offices, retail shops, a visitors’ center and a 52-room hotel along with the train station adjacent to the train platform. The success of the project has exceeded expectations as this area has become a transportation hub providing local and intercity bus services, rental cars and excursion train service to mid-coast Maine. Municipal offices are relocating to the site and plans are already underway to create further development in association with Downeaster service.

Tourism is among Maine’s largest industries, contributing $10 billion in sales, 45% of total tax revenues and sustaining 140,000 jobs. Freeport is one of Maine’s most popular tourist areas attracting more than 3.5 million visitors who spend $300 million annually. Freeport Village Station, a 120,000 square foot state-of-the-art shopping complex located between L.L. Bean and the Freeport train platform, opened in May 2009. The thriving multi-level complex is home to more than 20 retail businesses and the Nordica Theatre which opened in November 2011. This added attraction has further enhanced the appeal of traveling to Freeport by train and increased the economic potential for tourism development.

The Forefront at Thompson’s Point will transform the defunct industrial area surrounding the Downeaster’s Portland Station. This mixed use commercial and entertainment complex will include a sport and concert arena, conference center, a full service hotel, office space, restaurants, parking garage and a nature trail. The City of Portland designated the area as a Transit TIF district and plans to work cooperatively with the developers, the State and others to redevelop the existing Portland Transportation Center and layover facility into a new expanded multi-modal transportation center adjacent to the train tracks which will include intercity and local transit busses, rental cars, bicycle rentals and a water taxi as well as an expanded Downeaster train station.
Innovation

The Downeaster service has always been a model for creativity and innovation. On-board WiFi was available more than three years before a national solution was introduced by Amtrak, and the Downeaster was the first route in the nation to test and introduce Amtrak’s e-Ticketing technology.

Partnership

Developing, sustaining and growing partnerships with and between transportation providers, communities, planning agencies, development groups and other stakeholders is one of NNEPRA’s core principles. NNEPRA communicates regularly with these groups and will continue to partner with all communities and stakeholder groups along the corridor to inspire new opportunities for the region. Additionally, specific stakeholder groups have been established to collaborate on specific Project components.

The full expansion of Downeaster service enjoys broad support because it builds upon the success of the existing Downeaster service, the success of the limited service currently offered to Freeport and Brunswick and an appreciation for its current and potential impact on the regional economy. The following individuals and entities provided letters of support for the previous grant applications which include the Royal Junction Siding Project, the letters of support are again included in this request:

Maine Department of Transportation
Amtrak
Biddeford, ME (City of)
Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce
Brunswick Downtown Association
Dover, NH (City of)
Dover, NH Chamber of Commerce
Durham, NH (Town of)
Freeport USA
Freeport, ME (Town of)
Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau
Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Bureau
JHR Development, Brunswick Station
L.L.Bean
Maine Development Foundation
Maine Eastern Railroad
Maine State Chamber of Commerce
Old Orchard Beach (Town of)
Rockland, ME (Town of)
Saco, ME (City of)
Thompson’s Point Development Company, Inc.
TrainRiders Northeast
University of New Hampshire, Durham
Wells, ME (Town of)
Wells Chamber of Commerce
V. Benefit Cost Analysis

A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) was conducted by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the June 2013 submission of a TIGER Grant Application for the Downeaster Service Optimization Project and is included with this request as well. The BCA was completed in accordance with the methodology recommended by the U.S. DOT in the Federal Register (77 Fed. Reg. 4863) and conducted for a 30 year analysis period.

Costs
The overall capital cost of the project is expected to be $25 million in undiscounted 2011 dollars. Operations and maintenance costs are projected to increase annually by $866,097 (in undiscounted 2011 dollars) compared with the no build scenario. Over the 30 year period these costs accumulate to $25.6 million in 2011 dollars, or $16.4 million when discounted at 3%. This is an average of $545,700 per year on a 3% discounted basis.

Benefits
The project creates benefits of $101.1 million in 2011 dollars ($55.9 million when discounted at 3%). It does so, generally by decreasing travel times and shifting trips previously taken by automobile to train. At a 3% discount rate the Project yields a benefit-cost ratio of 1.39 over a 30 year period.

Benefits by Category for Downeaster Service Optimization Project, Cumulative 2014-2043
Over the entire analysis period, the Project exhibits decreases in both VMT and in VHT. Given the distribution, the project benefits are anticipated to exceed its costs (at a 3% discount rate) between 2032 and 2033.

Substantial additional secondary benefits such as economic output associated with construction material and labor payments, tourism spending and impacts resulting from associated private developments are not factored into the calculation but contribute significantly to the Project value.
VI. Project Readiness and NEPA

Project Schedule

The Royal Junction Siding Project can move forward almost immediately upon notification of award. NNEPRA is prepared to begin procurement and some construction within calendar year 2016 and expects that construction of all project elements can be completed by the end of 2019.

Preliminary Engineering

Pan Am Railways has completed preliminary design of track and signal configurations to complete the Royal Junction Siding and procurements could begin in Spring 2016.

NEPA Status

NNEPRA and the FRA prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Downeaster Portland North Expansion Project, for which the FRA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in July 2009. The EA evaluated the overall program of improvements necessary to extend Downeaster Service from Portland to Brunswick.

The Project elements detailed in this application are within the study area that was previously analyzed for the Portland North Expansion Project, and are integral parts of Portland North Expansion Project and the program of current Federally supported actions which, when considered individually and collectively, would not result in a significant adverse impact to the natural and human environment.

As a subsequent action, a Categorical Exclusion worksheet has been completed and will be submitted to FRA for the Project if funding is awarded.

Other environmental actions needed:

Drainage improvements for the Royal Junction Siding qualifies for the State of Maine, Permit-by-Rule (PBR) issued by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in accordance with Chapter 305 of the Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA). The PBR is issued for placement and maintenance of outfall pipes and ditches in or adjacent to wetlands and water bodies that should not significantly affect the environment, if carried out according to the standards contained in the regulations. The NRPA permit constitutes the state permit and the 401 Water Quality Certification. The PBR notification form must be submitted to the DEP at least 14 days prior to construction. The drainage improvements would qualify for the New England District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE) Programmatic General Permit (PGP) process, which expedites review of minimal impact work in waters and wetlands within the State of Maine. The PGP process has two levels: Category 1, Non-reporting, and Category 2, Reporting. Regardless of the category, the drainage improvements would qualify for authorization from the USACE and is typically issued in less than 60 days.
Legislative Approval

The extension of Downeaster service to Freeport and Brunswick has long been a part of Maine’s transportation strategy. Goal #4 of the Maine State Rail Plan (draft December 2010) is to “Implement capacity improvements in the Boston-Portland-Brunswick corridor to enable added frequency, increased speed and reliability.” Maine’s 123rd Legislature passed a Joint Resolution in Support of the Expansion of Downeaster Rail Service. One month later, the Governor signed into law the “Rail Improvement Act” (23 MRSA section 4210-B, subsection 7), to create a dedicated funding mechanism to support passenger rail. NNEPRA and MaineDOT entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in August 2010 which states that the first priority for those funds is “to provide the required non-federal match for the extension of rail service to Brunswick, Maine and to pay capital and operating costs of the Downeaster service as set forth in the budget as approved by MaineDOT or as otherwise approved by MaineDOT on an as-needed basis. This Project will clearly improve the operational efficiency, transportation impacts and public benefits of the Downeaster service.

VII. Material Changes from Pre-Application

The total TIGER grant request has increased from $7,064,138 to $7,564,138. Since the pre-application was submitted the budget has been updated and refined.

VIII. Application Attachments

- Legislative Approvals
- Benefit Cost Analysis
- NEPA Documentation
- Letters of Support

To view attachments; click HERE or visit: www.amtrakdowneaster.com/tiger-7-grant-application
IX. Federal Wage Rate Certification

Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority certifies that it will comply with the requirements of subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code (Federal wage rate requirements). These requirements will be included in all contracts related to this grant request.

Patricia G. Quinn  
Executive Director

Date

6-1-15