



Nicole Bucich
Vice President, Network Development & State Supported Service

August 5, 2025

Patricia Quinn
Executive Director
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
75 West Commercial St., Suite 104
Portland, ME 04104

Dear Patricia Quinn:

Both Amtrak and the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) share the goal of relocating Portland Station from its current location on the Mountain Branch stub line to a new location on the CSX mainline. This relocation will bring significant customer benefits, as well as improving the operational, ridership, and financial performance of the Amtrak *Downeaster* service. NNEPRA has been working in partnership with Amtrak, the Maine Department of Transportation, and CSX for several years to relocate Portland station, and we are therefore all excited to see this project move forward and to realize the associated benefits.

The current station location and the train movements required for the *Downeaster* to stop at that location add additional travel time to the five daily roundtrips between Boston, MA and Brunswick, ME, totaling 130 minutes per day. These movements also create risks of potential delays when passenger service is impacted by freight rail traffic, require additional crew time and fuel costs, and decrease the competitiveness of the *Downeaster* with other travel options serving the Northern New England market. This extra travel time and potential delays impact Portland Station's 190,000 annual rail customers, as well as the *Downeaster*'s 550,000-plus annual customers.

Moving this station to the mainline not only saves time and money for the *Downeaster* service but will also optimize passenger and freight rail operations and increase the *Downeaster*'s competitiveness. Locating the station closer to Downtown Portland will also improve connectivity to Portland's thriving business district and provide better opportunities for station area development. As ridership on the *Downeaster* continues to grow and is on track to surpass the FY24 record, the importance of relocating the Portland station only grows.

Amtrak reiterates our support—as stated in previous discussions and correspondence—for the recommended option (Site 3) identified in NNEPRA's 2024 *Portland Train Station Relocation Planning Report*. As outlined in the report and as discussed previously with NNEPRA, Site 3 has several advantages compared to the other options considered:

- **Strategic Location** – Site 3's location, south of the existing Mountain Branch switch, provides several key advantages with respect to optimizing train movements, reducing delays, and future-proofing potential passenger rail extensions, including:



- Maintaining fluid movement to access the Mountain Branch line from points south and easily move trains into the Portland Layover Facility (PLF) without requiring additional switching movements.
- Reducing travel delays, saving passengers at least 13 minutes of travel time as trains will not need to back in and out of the station or stop at the platform longer than necessary to change cab direction (as illustrated in the attachment below). This will also mitigate any potential delays incurred by concurrent mainline freight and passenger rail traffic.
- Keeping the station clear of nearby at-grade crossings will mitigate risk of rail or vehicular delays incurred at the crossing.
- Allowing for future passenger rail expansion towards Westbrook that includes the new station as part of both the existing and future rail routes.

Comparatively, Site 2's location, north of the Mountain Branch switch, is less strategic for train movements wishing to access the Mountain Branch or PLF from the station directly.

Furthermore, this location does not mitigate delay risk incurred by concurrent mainline freight traffic (since only one track at this location may be used to access the Mountain Branch by reversing south towards the switch) or potential delays from the nearby at-grade crossing, and does not allow for the new station to be included on future rail extensions that include the Mountain Branch line.

- **Increasing Passenger Safety** – Site 3 provides a safer location for passengers to board and alight trains, away from nearby at-grade crossings. Access to the station is provided from adjacent pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and features a nearby grade separated roadway crossing to keep drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists away from the tracks. In comparison, Site 2, which is located much closer to the Congress Street at-grade crossing, creates an additional risk for passengers accessing the station from the crossing, as well as vehicles crossing the tracks close to the station.
- **Improving Multimodal Connectivity** – Site 3 offers maximal multimodal connectivity to existing pathways that abut the station site and its adjacent lots. The location benefits from easy access to the Fore River Parkway and St. John Street for both vehicles and bicycles and sits next to the existing pedestrian pathway that encircles the Northern Light Mercy Hospital. A new station at this site would have the opportunity to join the pedestrian and bicycle networks on both sides of the tracks, allowing pedestrians on the east side of the station easier access to the Fore River and Mercy Hospital via a new bridge. Comparatively, Site 2's multimodal access is limited, as the site's west side abuts the County Jail and does not offer an opportunity to expand pedestrian or bicycle access beyond the current network.
- **Optimizing Station Area Development** – Site 3 has the benefit of being adjacent to high density commercial and residential development areas on both sides of the track, existing bus routes and employer shuttles, and nearby anchoring institutions that are open to future development conversations and possibilities. Combined with the existing pedestrian and bicycle networks, as well as possible expansion of future service along the Mountain Branch, Site 3 would maximize the potential train services that could enable increased commercial and residential development nearby, spanning both sides of the track with limited physical impediments. Site 2, which could only spur development potential on the east side of the tracks, has more limited land available for station area development, additionally hampered by neighboring institutions that have indicated that they are not interested in working with area stakeholders to realize a station-oriented development vision.



Given these advantages that benefit all stakeholders, Site 3 provides a preferred solution that improves existing train operations and minimizes travel delays while benefitting from adjacent access pathways and multimodal links to best position the site for new station area development. This creates the opportunity to generate additional *Downeaster* ridership, thereby increasing market share in Northern New England and increasing the ability to spur station area development that will increase real estate investment in Portland.

Like any project of this complexity, there may be additional challenges that will need to be addressed in the design phase to ensure project feasibility. However, Amtrak remains confident that Site 3 will create the most successful station location, in terms of safety, operations, ridership, revenue, station area development, multimodal connectivity, and public perception of the *Downeaster* service.

Amtrak is excited to continue working with you and your colleagues at NNEPRA, as well as CSX, MaineDOT, and the City of Portland, to create a new Portland station location that meets the needs of all stakeholders and supports the ongoing success of the *Downeaster* service.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicole Bucich".

Nicole Bucich

Vice President, Network Development and State Supported Service

cc:

Jeff Mann, Senior Director, State Supported Services

Chris Natale, Director, State Supported Services

Joseph Barr, Director, Network Development - East

Margaret Clark, Manager, Government Affairs - Northeast

Kevin Chittenden, Superintendent Operations II

Luke Irvine, Assistant Superintendent Operations



ATTACHMENT A: MOVEMENTS AND TIME REQUIRED FOR EXISTING DOWNEASTER PORTLAND SERVICE

