



# CUMBERLAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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June 8, 2026

Dear Ms. Quinn,

I am writing to provide additional context regarding the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority's (NNEPRA) proposal to construct a train station and loading dock adjacent to St. John Street. Based on recent discussions I have had with staff and attorneys of NNEPRA I understand that the City's preferred location is what is described as site #2, which is situated on or immediately adjacent to the Cumberland County Jail.

While I won't speak on behalf of the Cumberland County Commissioners regarding sale of property, or potential use of county-owned property, I will speak as the Sheriff on behalf of public safety. For the past 33 years, the current Cumberland County Jail has been located on County Way in Portland. One of the most frequent comments and concerns made by community members has been the close proximity of the facility to the railroad corridor. Although the jail's location is a now longstanding reality, intentionally introducing a public transportation hub a mere 54 feet from the largest county jail has a high level of operational safety concerns for both law enforcement and corrections. It would create an entirely new set of challenges that warrant serious consideration.

Unfortunately, when the Cumberland County Jail was built in 1993, it was built as an open campus. Meaning, individuals have access to the property from multiple directions, including County Way, Congress Street, The Fore River Parkway, and the railroad tracks. This open campus concept may have reflected the security environment of the time; however, today's public safety realities are considerably different.

In the past 33 years, the Sheriff's Office campus has managed a number of incidents that show just how vulnerable unrestricted access to the campus is.

- We have had the father of a sexual assault victim attempt to run down their daughter's assailant with a Hummer upon release from the jail, and when the individual got into the awaiting vehicle, the Hummer repeatedly rammed the vehicle to the point of being pushed up against the jail. It wasn't until the police took the operator of the Hummer down at gunpoint did the ramming stop.
- There have been several incidences of vehicles speeding into the parking lot of the Cumberland County Jail complex and driving up to the entry doors of the jail and law enforcement center, as if they were going to drive through the entry doors. As a result, we have had to place large



granite blocks in front of the doors of the jail, law enforcement center and community corrections building to discourage any future breach to our buildings.

- In recent years, a police pursuit came onto our campus and drove around the back of the jail which is supposed to be prohibited to anyone not an employee of the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office.
- There have been a number of occasions whereby pedestrians and homeless individuals have been caught walking behind the jail and are asked to leave.
- With an increase in the homeless population within the city, we are constantly evicting homeless individuals who are setting up camp on the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office campus.
- Last year, we had a protest at the jail. I had to schedule a large number of staff members to make sure that the safety and security of the jail remained intact.

If resources permitted, I would have a security fence installed, including a gatehouse so that the Sheriff's Office property would not be open to anyone who wanted to come on to the property.

Given all these incidences on our currently open campus, constructing a passenger rail would be counter to security for this property.

In addition to public safety implications, there are also operations concerns to consider. The area being considered sits adjacent to what are critical jail service functions, including food deliveries, waste removal, recycling collection and loading dock access. The proposed new station/ramp would make it difficult and maybe impossible for tractor trailers to access the loading dock to deliver supplies and various dumpsters that need to be serviced regularly.

I strongly believe Option #2 is an inappropriate location for such a facility, given its close proximity to the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office campus. Options #1 and #3 are further way from the jail and do not create the issues that Option #2 presents.

I respectfully urge the City of Portland to reconsider the location for this project, and I am willing to answer any questions that the council or NNEPRA may have in regards to the public safety risk this poses to this campus.

Respectfully,



Kevin J. Joyce, Sheriff  
Cumberland County.

