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**Commissioners:**

**Christopher M. Gardner, Chairman  
John B. Crowley, Sr., Commissioner  
Kevin L. Shorey, Commissioner**

**County Manager:**

**Linda Pagels-Wentworth  
Administrative Secretary:  
Gail Popham**

August 7, 2009

Commissioner David Cole  
Maine Department of Transportation  
16 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04330

RE: Eastport Gateway Project

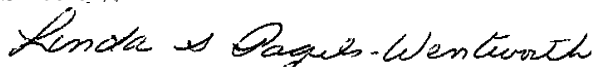
The Washington County Board of Commissioners wishes to express its support of the rail service infrastructure improvements including the trans-load facility proposed in the recent Eastport Freight Rail Study. The Board would also like to take this opportunity to stress that returning and enhancing rail access in Washington County would be a fundamental building block to revitalizing the economy of Washington County. Rail access would bring more opportunity to not only businesses that currently exist in our County, but also those who may choose to develop in our County if only rail were present.

Being that we are a coastal county we certainly have a commodity in deep water access that could be further leveraged if there were greater connectivity from that asset to other markets. Located in Washington County, the Port of Eastport is one of only three international cargo ports in the State. Although a part of Maine's three port strategy, Eastport is the only port not to have had the benefit of rail access.

Rail is a natural and vital infrastructural need for the Port of Eastport as well as Washington County. The short term implications of constructing rail in Washington County could be as profound as the long term implications. Should Domtar's future hold another shutdown or closure (which we hope is not the case) this county could be looking at 25% unemployment which is a horrendous figure by any measure. A public works project of this scope is a mechanism that could actually affect that number in the short term. It could be the employment driver the county needs to get through these economic times and once it is completed the county will have something that will form a foundational base for continued economic stability.

Washington County, one of the poorest counties in the nation, is also affected by the current worldwide economic downturn. Stimulus funding for a project like this is exactly what the framers of the stimulus package intended to address. Although Washington County has high unemployment and poverty levels, due to its low population it does not qualify for many forms of stimulus funds such as EECBG funds from the Department of Energy. This is an infrastructure project that would serve to rebuild an economy for the state and the county.

Sincerely,



Linda S. Pagels-Wentworth  
County Manager

Cc: Washington County Legislative Delegation

“The Sunrise County – where the sun first shines!”