

Connecting Maine, Growing Maine: The Case for Extending the Downeaster to Bangor and Orono

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Extending Amtrak's Downeaster service beyond Brunswick to Bangor and Orono — with two daily roundtrips — would deliver substantial benefits for every county in Maine, not just those with train stations. Independent economic modeling by the Rail Passengers Association estimates:

- \$61.7 million in annual economic benefit statewide, driven by 260,000+ new riders in the first year.
- \$15.5 million per year in new visitor spending, supporting 191 new jobs across sectors like lodging, food service, retail, and tourism.
- \$12 million annually in travel cost savings for Maine residents.
- \$9 million in road maintenance savings due to an estimated 5.9 million fewer vehicle-miles traveled.
- \$2.4 million in new state and local tax revenues, with total taxes including federal estimated at \$4.5 million annually.
- \$2 million per year in pollution-reduction value, conservatively modeled using climate impact estimates.

Benefits extend statewide.

Counties without stations — such as Hancock, Franklin, and Piscataquis — still show meaningful benefits due to tourism magnets like Acadia National Park and travelers willing to drive to the nearest station. Urban centers like Portland, Bangor, and Orono benefit directly, while rural areas gain economic stimulus from increased visitation and reduced infrastructure costs.

Capital investment generates even more value.

Constructing new stations in Lewiston, Winthrop, Waterville, Pittsfield, Bangor, and Orono could generate an additional \$11.2 million in short-term construction-related benefits, based on conservative cost assumptions.

Bottom Line:

This isn't just a train. It's a statewide economic development engine — connecting students to universities, patients to healthcare, tourists to Maine's destinations, and workers to opportunity.