

LD 1359

“LD 1359: Maine Department of Transportation Progress Report on Public Transit Advisory Council Recommendations”


REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE’S JOINT STANDING
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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MaineDOT

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LD 1359, “Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit” Progress Report on Recommendations

LD 1359, a resolve passed by the 132nd Legislature and approved by the Governor on June 20, 2025, directs the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) to report to the Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Transportation on progress on implementing the recommendations from the Public Transit Advisory Council’s (PTAC) 2025 biennial report. As directed by the resolve, this progress report must include, but is not limited to, a summary of actions taken toward implementing each recommendation to the department from the PTAC report, including:

- **Specific dates on which those actions were taken**
- **A list of specific dates on which the department plans to take additional actions toward implementing each recommendation, and**
- **A list of actions not yet implemented**

As the resolve did not provide additional funding for this effort, the staff time required for this report is funded through existing MaineDOT funding sources.

The Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC)


The **Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC)** is a voluntary board established in statute to advise the State Legislature and MaineDOT on public transit services in the state. Legislation passed in 2023 added additional required seats to the Council. Members occupying the statutorily required seats, as well as other “optional knowledgeable party” members representing a broad range of constituencies and perspectives, are appointed by the Commissioner of MaineDOT. The Council is administered by MaineDOT.

The Council is required by statute to report on its deliberations and recommendations in each odd-numbered year to the Governor and the Legislature’s Transportation and Health and Human Services committees. As required by the statute, the report must include:

- A. An assessment of the level of public transportation services and infrastructure provided to the public in each geographic region;**
- B. Recommendations for the level of service and supporting infrastructure that should be provided, an estimate of the cost of providing those services and supporting infrastructure and a recommendation for any necessary additional funding; and**
- C. A progress report on the implementation of the most recent statewide strategic transit plan for the department as well as the quinquennial locally coordinated plan for regional transit under section 4209, subsection 2.**

● Summary of the Recommendations from the **Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC)**

● MaineDOT’s response



The Council's 2025 biennial report was presented to the Legislature's Transportation and Health and Human Services Committees in February 2025.

The report is available on the MaineDOT website at <https://www.maine.gov/dot/programs-services/transit/advisory-council>. The report includes recommended priority actions and assigned action steps for 2025 and 2026. Grouped as “**priority recommendations**” and “**other recommendations**”, each assigns the lead role in implementing the recommendation to a party or parties.



Priority Recommendations

Priority Recommendations focus on increasing state funding for transit, led by the Maine State Legislature and MaineDOT. The report recommends that the state contribute at least \$8.9M annually, or 11% of current operating expenses, to match the reported amount provided by local transit operators. The report also recommends that, following the success of FY2025's awards to innovative transit projects, the state continue to provide an additional \$2M annually in funding for innovative projects, with project selection clearly tied to specific goals, priorities, or recommendations in the [Maine State Transit Plan](#).

For state fiscal year 2024, MaineDOT provided an additional \$2M on top of the historic annual contribution of \$1.1M. This was increased to \$5M for fiscal years 2025 and 2026. For state fiscal year 2025, MaineDOT provided additional funds to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds and support other initiatives as noted below.

FTA 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants	\$570,000
FTA 5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula Grants	\$570,000
FTA 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities	\$300,000
FTA 5339 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities	\$750,000
Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority Downeaster	\$2M
Maine State Ferry Service	\$9M
Casco Bay Lines	\$500,000

In fiscal years 2025 and 2026, MaineDOT was able to distribute an additional \$5M annually, with \$3M allocated each year to transit operations and \$2M distributed via a competitive application and scoring process for innovative transit projects that support the broad initiatives of the Maine State Transit Plan, the 2023 Locally Coordinated Plan, and other planning and policy priorities.

The PTAC report also recommends the establishment of a dedicated source for this funding that is permanent, long-term, and not subject to non-transit allocations, and identifies three potential strategies to consider for increasing funding for transit.

The state budget for state fiscal years 2025, 2026, and 2027 transfers \$5M annually from the Multimodal Highway Transportation fund to the Multimodal Transit fund. Barring any action by the legislature, MaineDOT anticipates continuing to provide \$3M annually for operating expenses and \$2M annually for innovative projects.

MaineDOT looks forward to continuing to work with elected officials and other stakeholders to identify appropriate mechanisms for sustaining appropriate funding for public transportation in Maine.

The report lists MaineDOT as the lead for ensuring transparency in decision making and funding allocations by:

- Publishing annual transit distributions, including the total amount made available for operations and innovative project support, and the amounts allocated to each agency.

In August, MaineDOT shared the [FY2025 transit funding allocation package](#) with transit providers and posted a summary document on the MaineDOT website. The allocation package included all funds allocated by all federal and state programs by region and by transit provider as applicable.

- For operations funding, publishing the formulas and data inputs used to determine funding amounts and engaging stakeholders to ensure formulas and data inputs effectively and equitably advance agency, statewide, and other stakeholder goals.

As noted, the funding amounts were included in the allocation package shared with transit providers and posted on the MaineDOT website. MaineDOT worked with the Maine Transit Association over several months to review the current and potential metrics and data used to allocate state transit funding. MaineDOT staff also reviewed the model by which federal and state funds are distributed, including data inputs and formulas. MaineDOT looks forward to continuing to work with transit operators and other stakeholders on the current and potential metrics, criteria, and data, to ensure that transit funds are allocated as equitably and predictably as possible.

- For innovative projects, publishing all projects submitted, all projects selected for funding, requested and awarded funding amounts, and the criteria by which selections are made, and engaging stakeholders to ensure project selection criteria effectively and equitably advance agency, statewide, and other stakeholder goals.

In 2024, MaineDOT developed a competitive application and scoring process to distribute FY2024 funds for innovative transit projects. Based on the Transit Plan strategies, the scoring criteria included:

- Increase transit service as warranted, using the Maine State Transit Plan framework
- Provide better information about transit to customers
- Remove barriers to riding transit and make transit easier to use
- Explore, pilot, and implement programs to address the needs of underserved populations in rural Maine
- Improve transit customer facilities statewide
- Address driver and labor shortage issues
- Continue transition to electric, hybrid, and other low- and zero-emission vehicles
- Purchase new or used vehicles to address vehicle shortage concerns

MaineDOT staff scored eligible applications for FY2025 with those same metrics, as well as two additional criteria:

- An agency's past performance in meeting outlined project scope, milestones, and budget
- The extent to which projects represent an efficient use of state funds

In July 2025, the application and scoring criteria were shared with all transit operators. MaineDOT communicated to agencies individually in September regarding which of their projects were selected for funding and which were not. MaineDOT issued a [press release](#) on October 1 highlighting several awards and posted the [scoring summary](#) (including scores, requested amounts, and funded amounts for all projects) to the MaineDOT website shortly after.



Other Recommendations

Other Recommendations include several key themes.

- MaineDOT implementing a reporting system for transit projects that provides analysis of outcomes, by working with transit providers to measure and report ridership trends, obstacles, demographics of populations serviced and accessibility measures implemented, and by releasing an annual report identifying statewide transit improvements and outcomes.

MaineDOT began an internal analysis of existing data, trends, and outcomes in public transportation in Maine during the summer of 2025. MaineDOT anticipates continuing this discussion with transit operators and stakeholders in 2026.

- MaineDOT designating funds for transportation programs that support mobility for older adults and people with mobility challenges.

The FTA Section 5310 program provides formula funding to states and designated recipients to meet the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. MaineDOT manages this program for those transit providers who are subrecipients of federal funds. MaineDOT contributes approximately \$300,000 annually to match the 5310 federal funds designated for transportation needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the initiatives and projects that other transit funds support help improve the public transportation system for all riders, including older adults and those with mobility challenges. Older adults and people with mobility challenges may benefit particularly from efforts to provide better information about transit to customers, to remove barriers and make transit easier to use, and to improve facilities for transit customers.

- MaineDOT reducing the local match for transit operators to leverage federal dollars, in part by convening a stakeholder group including transit operators that identifies appropriate allocations.

MaineDOT received approximately \$50M in FTA formula program funds in fiscal year 2025. The FTA programs all require various levels of non-federal match, made up of state and local funds, as noted below.

FTA Program	Federal Share	Non-Federal Match
5303 Metropolitan Planning	80%	20%
5304 Statewide Planning	80%	20%
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants – Capital	80%	20%
5307 Urbanized Area Formula Grants - Operations	50%	50%
5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities – Capital	80%	20%
5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities – Operations	50%	50%
5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula Grants for Rural Areas - Capital	80%	20%
5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula Grants for Rural Areas - Operating	50%	50%
5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula Grants for Rural Areas – Administration	80%	20%
5337 State of Good Repair Grants	80%	20%

MaineDOT updated its match policy in December 2024. The updated policy, which is available on the [MaineDOT website](#), notes that “MaineDOT has a long history of partnering with local communities to best leverage limited federal, state, and local transportation funding – partnerships that work best when MaineDOT and local partners have a vested interest in seeing projects succeed.” The policy sets out a general approach for MaineDOT while maintaining flexibility.

The policy notes that every effort will be made to maximize the use of federal funds from FTA grants. The federal contribution for an FTA-funded project should be as close as possible to the maximum share allowed by the program. Per the policy, for FTA 5339 formula funds for which the federal share is typically 80%, MaineDOT will provide a 15% state match, with a 5% local match. This higher state match reflects the need to provide equitable access to public transit in rural and urban Maine, even when securing sufficient local matching funds may be difficult. While the policy affords MaineDOT flexibility in adjusting the state contribution to transit projects based on circumstances, the local contribution demonstrates the community support and commitment critical to any successful project.

MaineDOT appreciates the importance of state and local contributions to maximize the use of available federal funds for public transportation and will continue to work with transit operators and stakeholders to identify sources of non-federal funding. MaineDOT also encourages transit providers to use creativity and best practices from transit providers in Maine and elsewhere in seeking sources of local funds for public transportation.

- MaineDOT and other state agencies adopting a Mobility Management approach to strengthen efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability of transportation in regions across the state, including appointing a state Director of Mobility Management within state government tasked with coordinating all efforts.
- The Maine Department of Health and Human Services developing an action plan for health systems and healthcare providers to collaborate with community transit services and volunteer transportation programs.
- MaineDOT and other state agencies that fund transportation (including the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Justice) building strong coordination by establishing an interagency compact and coordinating council.

LD 1451, a resolve which became law in June 2025, directs MaineDOT to establish the Coordinating Working Group on Access and Mobility. With members representing several state agencies and a diverse range of perspectives and interests, the Working Group is tasked with developing an implementation plan for a mobility management approach among state agencies to increase efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability of transportation across the State. Specifically, the Working Group will examine the creation of mobility management hubs and improving transportation for populations experiencing transportation insecurity. The Working Group is also tasked with building interagency coordination between MaineDOT and the state departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Labor, as well as other relevant state agencies.

The Working Group will review federal guidance and best practices in developing an implementation plan for Maine, including necessary funding amounts and mechanisms. MaineDOT, on behalf of the Working Group, will submit a report with the implementation plan in early 2026.

It is expected that the findings and recommendations of the Working Group will address the three recommendations noted above. MaineDOT anticipates working with other state departments and agencies and other stakeholders to implement the Working Group's recommendations in 2026 and beyond.

- MaineDOT creating a transit service coverage map that outlines all transit routes with their varying headways.

[MaineDOT's website](#) includes a static statewide map of transit regions and a listing of providers by region, as well as a search feature that lists transit providers by municipality. MaineDOT staff is developing a statewide map of transit regions and routes by provider for posting to the MaineDOT website.

- **MaineDOT enhancing and resourcing GO MAINE and associated outreach and education efforts. Specific tasks under this recommendation include:**

- Developing GO MAINE into a one-call, one-click service for all transportation options across the state.

MaineDOT and the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) administer the GO MAINE ride planning and trip sharing program, with MaineDOT providing 75% of program funding and MTA 25%. MaineDOT and MTA contract the day-to-day operations of the GO MAINE program to consultant AECOM, which began its fifth year of operating the program in October 2025.

GO MAINE is engaged with a range of stakeholders throughout the state with an interest in addressing transportation-related challenges. AECOM staff conduct a mix of in-person and virtual coverage to promote statewide participation and serve as a connector for transportation programs in the state. AECOM staff handle inquiries related to the GO MAINE program as well as other general transportation issues, directing travelers to resources as appropriate, including transit operators and volunteer driver networks.

- Incorporating GTFS and GTFS Flex mapping of services and routes into the GO MAINE trip planner.
- Incorporating automated fare payment systems in the GO MAINE trip planning platform, including single payment options across multiple providers.

Agile Mile is the contracted provider for GO MAINE's software and trip planning platform. An ongoing goal of the GO MAINE program is to work with transit providers to

incorporate General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) and GTFS Flex (which enable provider staff and riders to track vehicles in real time) and automated fare payment systems into the GO MAINE trip planner. GO MAINE and Agile Mile will continue to work with transit operators, who are at various stages in their planning for and implementation of GTFS, GTFS Flex, and automated fare payment platforms, to incorporate these technologies into the GO MAINE trip planner as they become operational.

- **Expanding GO MAINE capacity to include regional support staff for regions of the state north of Bangor.**

GO MAINE is engaged with travelers and stakeholders in all sixteen Maine counties. Funding has increased to support this expanded outreach effort, with an additional \$46,000 added to AECOM's original contract of \$336,000 for the fourth year of GO MAINE operations and \$429,000 allocated for year five. AECOM's scope of work has been expanded to include additional outreach to state employees and large employers throughout the state.

MaineDOT, MTA, and AECOM will consider these recommendations in the strategic planning process for GO MAINE. Beginning in December, this process will map out a 5-year plan for program goals and objectives.

- **MaineDOT supporting volunteer driver needs, including:**
 - **Establishing a scope of work and hiring a consultant using federal funds.**
 - **Following the consultant report, proposing a budget to maintain service into the future.**

While volunteer driver networks help fill gaps in the existing transportation network, many volunteer driver networks face challenges in recruiting drivers, coordinating services, and navigating administrative details such as insurance and licensing. In 2020, MaineDOT worked with stakeholders to prepare a Request for Proposals for a consultant to provide technical assistance to Maine's volunteer driver networks. The initiative was put on hold due to issues with timing and competition from other priorities for limited resources.

The 2023 Maine State Transit Plan includes a goal of strengthening volunteer driver programs through sharing

resources, improving coordination, and expanding programs as appropriate. MaineDOT staff have participated in several efforts related to volunteer drivers, including the Maine Council on Aging's Transportation Equity for Healthy Aging initiative to bring volunteer driver programs and transit providers together to share resources. ITN America also helps to connect volunteer drivers with networks, including through America's Volunteer Driver Center. Efforts to support volunteer driver networks in Maine are hindered by the lack of a true central coordinating body.

Where there is no plan to hire a consultant in the immediate future, MaineDOT will continue to explore opportunities to support shared learning and best practices across programs, as funding and capacity allow. Additionally, in 2023, GO MAINE began working with a variety of volunteer driving initiatives and organizations, including the Maine Council on Aging, Age-Friendly Communities in Maine, local veteran's groups, medical centers, and more. GO MAINE is able to assist with volunteer driver recruitment by connecting potential drivers with local networks; assist in messaging; connect GO MAINE members and others to resources via the app and website; field basic questions and connect people to resources through the GO MAINE customer service phone line and email; and work with volunteer groups on specific outreach and relationship building to support programming.

After discussions with volunteer driver organizations, GO MAINE identified certain tasks which are appropriate to its mission:

- With permission, indicating that a GO MAINE member is a member of a volunteer driver organization
- Showing in the GO MAINE platform background checks or other vetting of riders or drivers that has been performed by another entity
- Providing training on the Agile Mile trip planning platform to networks or agencies who can then educate their members and clients
- Listing in the GO MAINE app and website volunteer driver organizations by service area and directing rider requests to appropriate organizations

Tasks which are beyond the scope of GO MAINE's mission include:

- Facilitating rides by acting as a dispatch service for volunteer networks
 - Performing background checks or other vetting of riders or drivers
 - Providing volunteer driver training directly to GO MAINE members
 - Storing anyone's protected health information
- Establishing an incentive program for volunteer drivers, including mileage reimbursement and rebates for efficient and electric vehicle purchases.

MaineDOT does not currently have a plan to establish an incentive program for volunteer drivers but would be open to discussions on this topic as funding and capacity allow.

- MaineDOT and the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) conducting robust education and outreach with local partners pertaining to transit availability and the means by which to use service.

The Maine State Transit Plan also identifies improved marketing and communication of transit services as part of the strategy to provide better information about transit to customers. While the PTAC report lists MaineDOT and Maine's MPOs as the leads, Maine's transit operators, individually, regionally, and through the Maine Transit Association, have an important role to play in this effort, as do employers and other stakeholders. As an example, based on the criteria from the Maine State Transit Plan used to distribute the FY2026 discretionary funds, Greater Portland Metro was awarded \$50,000 for marketing services and promotional material and encouraged to work with other regional providers and stakeholders on the project.



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