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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, Executive Director of GrowSmart Maine
in support of Public Transportation Components in LD 258, Biennial
Budget for Fiscal Years 2024-2025 and LD 259,
Highway Fund for Fiscal Years 2024-2025**

March 28, 2023

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Honorable Members of the Joint
Standing Committee on Transportation

My name is Nancy Smith and I am the CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes.

We have partnered with Build Maine to guide a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that began a year ago, and has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. [Policy Action 2023](#) has resulted in sixteen proposals from eight working groups, all addressing this goal, “to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.” This committee will be hearing several policy proposals, including [LR 1777, A Transit Expansion Bill](#).

Relevant to today’s hearing, we support Maine Transit Association’s call for a significant increase in State investments in Maine’s public transit systems. Particularly with the end of federal COVID-related funding for public transit later this year, we recognize an urgent need to substantially increase both operating support and capital investments for Maine’s transit systems. While the Federal Transit Administration will continue to fund 50% of operating budgets, a significant increase in state investments is needed to ensure that transit providers can maintain service levels at the very least.

The Climate benefits of ensuring a stable and accessible public transit system are significant, as well as in addressing equity, the fiscal health of our communities, and personal wellness. These are worthy and compatible goals of any State investments.

GrowSmart Maine will assist the committee in any way that is helpful.