



## Testimony of Tom Reinauer, Vice President – Maine Transit Association

### Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

*In Support of LD 1559 - An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding*

### **Public Hearing – Tuesday, April 25, 2023**

Good afternoon Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Tom Reinauer and I am the Director of Transportation at York County Community Action Corporation. We are located in Sanford, and provide a variety of public transportation services throughout York County. I am speaking today as Vice President of the Maine Transit Association, which includes 17 public transportation providers in the state. The Association strongly supports LD 1559.

Public transportation provides vital connections for Mainers in both urban and rural areas, allowing them to access employment, medical appointments, grocery shopping and other important services. Many of our riders do not have access to a vehicle or are unable to drive, and our services are often the only option for them. With our aging population, these services are becoming increasingly more important for aging in place and meeting people's needs.

The demand for accessing medical and related appointments has been increasing as well. We are seeing a growth in requests from residents who don't qualify for MaineCare, but still need a ride to access care and have few options. Businesses in our area also rely on our WAVE jobs access service for their employees to get to work in Sanford, Wells and Biddeford.

Public transportation providers do receive Federal funding to help cover operating costs, but these funds typically require a 50% match. The Federal economic recovery funds, which were helpful during the pandemic are also coming to an end. The additional state funding proposed in the Bill would go a long way to help transportation providers meet this match requirement, draw down sufficient Federal dollars and help with the rising costs of fuel, maintenance and labor. MaineDOT is a great partner for transportation providers and the MTA, but they understandably have a lot of demands on what is very limited funding for public transportation. State funding for over-the-road transit services has remained the same for many years.

The Bill also proposes changes to the Public Transit Advisory Council, or "PTAC", which has only been meeting once a year. As a former long serving member and chairperson of the PTAC, I can say it was difficult to provide adequate guidance on public transportation policy when the Council met so infrequently. There was often turnover in membership year-to-year, and limited opportunities between

meetings to adequately review material and provide feedback. The PTAC is a great resource that has so much more potential. The proposed updates in the Bill would enhance its role in providing guidance on public transportation policy, working with MaineDOT more closely and setting goals for statewide rural and urban services.

Providing additional MaineDOT staff to focus on public transportation services and planning would also be a huge help to the providers who do not have the staff capability and resources, and may also not have access to regional planning staff through one of the regional planning agencies.

We urge your support for LD 1559, and I'm happy to answer any questions or provide additional information prior to the work session. Thank you.

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