



**Testimony of Jess Maurer on Behalf of
the Maine Council on Aging to the Committee on
Transportation**

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

Submitted on April 25, 2023

Greetings, Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and the members of the Committee on Transportation.

My name is Jess Maurer and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA). The MCOA is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 135 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. I am testifying in favor of LD 1559.

Maine is a state of great beauty and multiple natural wonders. From Kittery to Fort Kent, Eastport to Jackman there are many reasons to travel the state, but it is a privilege to do so. Without a car or the ability to drive, it is difficult to move about the state when one relies on public transportation. A lack of available drivers, a lack of sufficient funding to ensure equitable access to transportation, and a lack of transportation services in Maine's more rural communities impact the folks who are reliant upon this system to meet their basic needs and to stay connected within their communities.

This is a service Mainers need. Please consider the following facts:

- More than 193,000 people in Maine are age 70 or older; more than 66,000 of these people are over 80;
- Although 93% of people in Maine age 65 and older have a driver's license, that number drops to only 72% for people over 80;
- More than a quarter of people over 80 are entirely reliant on someone else for all of their transportation needs; and
- Women over 80 in particular will be challenged to secure transportation for non-essential purposes.

I have proudly served as a member of the Public Transit Advisory Council since its inception and can personally attest to the good work this Council is capable of. The efforts within LD 1559 not only help to support the Public Transit Advisory Council, but they will ultimately help Maine people as this bill has the potential to ensure equity in our transportation options. By reinvigorating the Advisory Council, ensuring timely meetings occur, issuing yearly reports on

findings, and appropriating funding to increase subsidies for bus transit operations and operating costs, LD 1559 breathes new life into our public transit system.

Maintaining convenient access to public transit is good for Maine people. Beyond ensuring that folks can get to the grocery store or to appointments, public transit provides the means necessary to ensure one's connection to community. Accessibility is integral to quality of life. The oversight offered by reestablishing the Public Transit Advisory Council ensures that the continued development of our public transit system will proceed with inclusivity and accessibility.

The MCOA supports all efforts that assist us in living engaged and connected lives as we age in our communities and LD 1559 is a critical step in ensuring that right for all Mainers in need. We urge this Committee to vote in favor.

Thank you.

Jess Maurer