



CITY OF BANGOR

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Testimony 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”

April 26, 2023

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Courtney O’Donnell, Assistant City Manager of The City of Bangor, and I’m providing testimony on behalf of the Bangor City Council 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. The City of Bangor operates fixed route and ADA paratransit services in the communities of Bangor, Brewer, Hampden, Old Town, Orono, Veazie, and Hampden, along with providing transportation services for the University of Maine.

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. With proper investment and funding support, public transportation services also generate economic activity and provide a broader recruitment base for employers. In areas of ongoing development and population growth, public transit can also serve to reduce the impacts of traffic congestion and the costly infrastructure enhancements required with increasing vehicle miles travelled.

Public transportation providers have opportunities to receive federal funding to support 50% of the costs to operate services, but these funding obligations require a 50% local match. Given the increasing costs of labor, fuel, and other essential activities, it is vital that additional funds be defined to support existing transit services. The proposed \$13.6 million defined in LD 1559 to support transit operations would be a step in the right direction.

This Bill also proposes additional MaineDOT staff to focus on public transportation planning and enhancing the statewide mobility efforts. Given the dedicated work MaineDOT undertook to complete the “Family of Plans – Transit Plan,” allocating additional resources to the further development and implementation of these types of plans seems a natural next step.

Lastly, this bill proposes adjustments to the form and function of the Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC), with a specific set of objectives to achieve in the next calendar year. As the Assistant City Manager, I am involved in our public transit system, and I strongly believe having a more engaged and deliberate statewide council on transit would be quite beneficial in advancing initiatives.

For the reasons outlined above, and with the full support of the Bangor City Council, I urge you to pass LD 1559.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

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