



Michael Burke, Board of Directors President

Sandy Buchanan, Executive Director

## **Testimony of Sandy Buchanan**

### **To the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

#### **LD 1359 An Act To Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit**

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Transportation, my name is Sandy Buchanan and I am the Executive Director for Western Maine Transportation Services (WMTS). I previously acted as President for Maine Transit Association (MTA), and currently serve on the Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC). I am here today to express my strong support for LD 1359 and share with you the profound impact this bill would have on the people WMTS serves.

One of the most meaningful provisions in this bill is the effort to standardize match requirements across the state and to lower the local match while increasing the state's share. In many parts of Maine, particularly in rural regions like the one WMTS serves, raising the local match is an impossible task that restricts service and expansion. This bill will provide a more equitable and sustainable funding model for public transit across the state and allow us to continue providing critical services.

WMTS assists Mainers in Franklin, Oxford and Androscoggin Counties and the cities of Bath and Brunswick, Maine. Most of the area WMTS serves is rural, with little or no job opportunities, and riders often require travel for everything from medical appointments to grocery shopping. These communities need public transit available more than one or two days a week but cannot support this demand due to the low tax base and prioritization of other public services.

In FY 2024 WMTS provided 28,207 trips to persons commuting to work, this year WMTS projects we will provide over 30,000 workforce trips. These trips by public transit increases roadway safety, provide a consistent means to maintaining employment, benefits the environment, and improve the stability of families in our region. This bill's vision for greater interagency coordination and transparent reporting of fund allocation and distribution will improve public transit operations in all parts of Maine as the demand for these services only continues to grow.

Public transit is not just about moving people. It is about connecting Mainers to jobs, healthcare, education, and community. With this in mind, I urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1359. Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.



