

Testimony in Support of LD 1451 – An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

Senator Michael Tipping and distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Lisa Smith, and I serve as the Mobility Manager for Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc. (ARTS). I am here today in strong support of LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation.

Aroostook County spans over 6,600 square miles in northern Maine—making it larger than the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined. In a region this rural and vast, access to transportation is not just a convenience; it is a critical lifeline. My role as Mobility Manager is to identify and eliminate the transportation barriers that keep people from accessing healthcare, employment, education, and other essential services.

Mobility Management works because it is rooted in relationships, collaboration, and community knowledge. It starts with understanding what resources already exist, identifying the gaps, and building partnerships across agencies and sectors to close those gaps efficiently and effectively. This is not about duplicating services; it is about connecting the dots and leveraging every available resource to serve the people who need it most.

In a region as rural as Aroostook County, the absence of reliable transportation doesn't just limit opportunity—it threatens basic survival. Many individuals facing life-altering diagnoses who must travel hours for specialized care Without a way to reach food, medical care, or employment, people are left isolated and at risk. These are not isolated cases. They are representative of a larger pattern of need—and an even greater opportunity for coordinated community-based solutions.

ARTS has had the incredible opportunity to bring mobility management to our County through grant funding. LD 1451 would provide the support needed to replicate and expand on these local Mobility Management successes across the state. By investing in regional Mobility Management Hubs and fostering interdepartmental collaboration, Maine can reduce administrative waste, maximize transportation dollars, and increase access for the tens of thousands of Mainers experiencing transportation insecurity.

In 2023 alone, Maine invested over \$200 million in community transportation. We owe it to our taxpayers and to our neighbors to ensure these dollars are used as wisely and impactfully as possible. Coordination isn't just a good idea, it's a proven strategy that leads to better outcomes, more efficient services, and stronger communities.

I urge you to support LD 1451 and help us build a more connected, equitable, and accessible transportation system for all Mainers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your commitment to advancing transportation equity in our state.

Respectfully,
Lisa Smith, Mobility Manager
Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc.