

## Testimony in favor of LD 1231

The biggest ferry news this year on North Haven and every single other island served by the Maine State Ferry Service, is the DOT's proposal to have the ferries spend the night on the mainland to theoretically save money...a radical idea which would mark the end of decades (from the beginning) of the ferries overnighing on their respective islands. It would change island life dramatically for the worse, beginning with the schedule. It would negatively affect all parts of island life and every facet of our town, from the school which sends students to Region 8 on a tight schedule, the store with tightly scheduled freight runs, construction crews, town office, post office, boatyards, auto repairs, and simply going to Rockland for the day or afternoon to pick up medicine or supplies, or maybe have fun.

The single most dangerous outcome to having the ferry overnight on the mainland would be removing it as our 'emergency medical boat', capable of taking a patient in the ambulance at night to Pen-Bay Hospital, a function it has served since the inception of the Ferry Service. There are times when it is medically necessary to keep a patient in the ambulance and not trundling them down a steep ramp to an icy float. The alternatives offered by the ferry service fall far short compared to having the ferry ready to sail, berthed on island overnight, most crucially the alternative emergence transport boats are not able to accommodate the ambulance. North Haven's EMS crew made a terrific short video documenting the risks of taking a patient down the ramp to the

town float to a waiting lobster boat for transport. It's on You-tube listed as 'EMS Transport Movie', directed by Courtney Naliboff.

We have, again, been extremely fortunate in our captains and crews being very willing to make these late night trips. If we lose this emergency transport by ambulance as part of the Ferry Service, our lives will be placed at risk.

Crew work-life balance is also touted as an advantage for ferry crew by basing our boat in Rockland, though not a concept universally shared by the crew. More than half of those questioned would not be able to continue in their job if required to commute daily to Rockland to serve on the 'North Haven route'. Presently, crew members are fine with a weekly commute from over an hour away for many. To make the same commute daily would not be practical or safe, or perhaps even allowed.

It's hard to believe that overnighting on the mainland would save the DOT money in today's real estate market with having to build/buy crew housing at every mainland ferry destination (Rockland, Lincolnville, Mount Desert). For our route, requiring crew to live near Rockland for commuting purposes would potentially make it harder to find enough crew than it is now.

In order to have a ferry safely overnight in Lincolnville, it's thought that a breakwater would need to be built, at a cost likely in the millions of dollars. The seas can build dangerously high at that ferry landing in a southerly blow, placing both the ferry and the ferry pen at risk.


There are so many problems with this proposal that they won't all fit here, but chief among them is what it would do to every island's schedule. In our case, we would have to wait for the boat to arrive from Rockland every morning before we could leave North Haven for the mainland. Our day would be delayed by well over an hour, making it impossible to get to a Portland medical appointment and back in time for the late boat (at whatever time that might be). For that matter, would we arrive in Rockland in time to have a useful day there? Alternatively, the Ferry Service has floated one idea of having the Vinalhaven morning boat come up here to pick up passengers and vehicles before heading to Rockland...a real non-starter for both North Haven and Vinalhaven. We would be asked to rely upon our neighboring island which has experienced the most difficulty in fully crewing their boats, resulting in the worst reliability percentage of all the islands. Vinalhaven would probably not want to give up space on its already full morning boat. At the end of the day, would there be time for the return trip with the crew to Rockland and still keep within the Coast Guard's 12 hour work limit? Would we still have three trips per day? So far, no answers to these questions.

More than at any other time, all the islands are organized and together in opposing this ill conceived and damaging idea. There have been numerous Zoom call meetings by island representatives among the islands served by the MSFS and a number of bills are being presented to the Legislature to counter this proposal. There is hope that we may avoid this poorly thought out concept.

Please vote in favor of LD 1231.

Respectfully,

Jon Emerson  
North Haven Island  
Maine

 EMS Transport Movie

Jon Emerson  
North Haven  
LD 1231

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/12eR-HXq5iMIVYPdEF341PEQl4HoyKdvSgi3KOU3fR0k/edit?tab=t.0>