

**Testimony before the Committee on Transportation
in support of L.D. 1138, *An Act to Reduce Pollution Associated with Transportation in
Alignment with the State's Climate Action Plan***

May 1, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Emily K. Green, and I am the Director of Clean Mobility for the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 1138, *An Act to Reduce Pollution Associated with Transportation in Alignment with the State's Climate Action Plan*.

CLF, founded in 1966, is a public interest advocacy group that works to solve the environmental and energy challenges threatening the people, natural resources and communities in Maine and across New England. In Maine for almost four decades, CLF is a member-supported organization that works to ensure that laws and policies are developed, implemented and enforced that protect and restore our natural resources; are good for Maine's economy and environment; and equitably address the climate crisis.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled is critical to compliance with Maine's Climate Law

The 129th Legislature adopted Maine's mandatory climate limits with bipartisan support in 2019.¹ The state is required to reduce gross annual greenhouse gas emissions at least 45% below 1990 levels by 2030 and at least 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045.² The Legislature also adopted a framework for achievement. It created the Maine Climate Council to advise on climate strategies including mitigation.³ It directed the Council to develop a climate action plan, updated every four years, with recommendations for meeting the emissions targets.⁴ And it bestowed the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with a central role, including by directing it to "ensure compliance" with the climate limits by adopting rules to implement the climate action plan.⁵

DEP reports that transportation produces nearly half of all CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion in Maine,⁶ and has been the leading contributor for over three decades.⁷ It follows

¹ P.L. 2019, ch. 476.

² 38 M.R.S. § 576-A (1)-(3).

³ *Id.* § 577-A.

⁴ *Id.* § 577 (1).

⁵ *Id.* § 576-A(4).

⁶ Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Air Quality, [Tenth Biennial Report on Progress Toward Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals](#) (June 2024) at 2.

⁷ *Id.* at 12.

that the Climate Action Plan’s first endorsed strategy is reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.⁸ The Plan includes an array of implementing transportation recommendations, generally falling within one of two categories: (1) transitioning to zero-emission vehicles, and (2) helping people drive less by investing in public, active, and shared transportation.⁹

On the “zero-emission” side, the Climate Council set bold targets for light-, medium- and heavy-duty electrification in 2020.¹⁰ But after DEP rejected the strongest possible regulatory levers—despite Maine endorsing the rules in its Clean Transportation Roadmap¹¹—the Climate Council backpedaled on its short-term electrification targets, striving to ramp up in later years instead.¹² Meanwhile, the federal government is targeting clean vehicles from every angle—attempting to undermine state’s authority to regulate emissions,¹³ considering special fees for electric vehicles,¹⁴ and unwinding tax credits.¹⁵

On the “drive less” front, the Climate Council called for a 20% reduction in light-duty vehicle miles traveled and a 4% reduction in heavy-duty vehicle miles traveled by 2030.¹⁶ An emissions calculator by RMI projects that a 20% reduction in vehicle miles traveled in Maine would result in total emissions savings between now and 2050 of 13 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.¹⁷ Maine’s Climate Action Plan highlights numerous approaches for doing so, including by “increase[ing] access, performance, funding, and use of shared and public transportation systems in Maine,” “fund[ing] and support[ing] expanded opportunities for safe bicycle and pedestrian travel,” and “invest[ing] in clean transportation programs and projects that offer low-carbon alternatives to help offset emissions.”¹⁸ The Plan repeatedly identifies the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) as the relevant agency for “support[ing] the use of public and active transportation” to achieve these reductions.¹⁹

Yet, despite the recognized need to reduce vehicle miles traveled to comply with Maine’s mandatory climate limits, and despite MDOT’s acknowledged role in doing so, MDOT—the agency with primary responsibility for statewide transportation—has no legislative directive to

⁸ Maine Climate Council, [Maine Won’t Wait, A Four-year Plan for Climate Action](#) (Nov. 2024) at 13.

⁹ *Id.* at 13, 38-55.

¹⁰ Maine Climate Council, [Maine Won’t Wait, A Four-year Plan for Climate Action](#) (Dec. 2020) at 107.

¹¹ Maine Governor’s Energy Office, Maine Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, Cadmus, [Maine Clean Transportation Roadmap](#) (Dec. 2021) at 2 (recommending adoption of the Advanced Clean Cars II and Advanced Clean Trucks regulations).

¹² *Compare* Maine Won’t Wait (Dec. 2020) at 107 with Maine Won’t Wait (Nov. 2024) at 172.

¹³ Legal Planet, [The Trump Administration Is Trying an End Run Around Revoking California’s Car and Truck Rules](#) (Feb. 17, 2025).

¹⁴ L. Irwin, The Hill, [Republicans propose fees on EVs, other passenger vehicles to fund transportation programs](#) (Apr. 29, 2025).

¹⁵ K. Taylor, Kiplinger, [Is Trump Taking the EV Tax Credit Away? What You Need to Know](#) (Feb. 13, 2025).

¹⁶ Maine Won’t Wait (Dec. 2020) at 107; Maine Won’t Wait (Nov. 2024) at 172.

¹⁷ RMI, [States Can Quantify the Benefits of Climate-Friendly Transportation Options with RMI’s Smarter MODES Calculator](#) (Feb. 15, 2024), last visited Apr. 30, 2025.

¹⁸ Maine Climate Council, [Maine Won’t Wait, A Four-year Plan for Climate Action](#) (Nov. 2024) at 48.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 50, 52.

do so. This gaping disconnect between Maine’s mandatory climate limits and the agency primarily charged with overseeing the greatest contributing sector of climate-damaging emissions leaves too much to chance at a time when aggressive climate action is imperative.

CLF supports L.D. 1138 because it would address this weakness in Maine’s climate emission reduction framework, ensuring that MDOT’s planning and investment processes adequately advance Maine’s climate mandates. Without a statutory requirement for MDOT, there is nobody legally responsible for implementing a significant portion of the Climate Action Plan, rendering impotent the state’s planning efforts in that category.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled offers a host of additional benefits

Reducing vehicle miles traveled goes hand-in-hand with providing non-car transportation alternatives, which is of critical importance in Maine, where our transportation system is failing to meet basic needs: 3 in 5 adults in Maine experience transportation insecurity, meaning they are unable to “access needed services or destinations comfortably, conveniently, and affordably.”²⁰ 40,000 Maine households lack reliable access to a vehicle.²¹ Meanwhile, public transportation meets only 11% of the need in Maine.²² A recent U.S. Census Bureau survey suggested that lack of transportation was at fault for unemployment of roughly 10,500 Mainers, with 31,500 having insufficient access to food due to a “transportation, mobility, or health limitation.”²³

The benefits of reducing vehicle miles traveled go well beyond reducing emissions of climate-damaging greenhouse gases. As RMI points out, “When people can access non-car modes of transportation, they can save money, find and keep jobs, access quality healthcare and education, and more.”²⁴ Their calculator projects that, if Maine achieved 20% per capita reduction in vehicle miles traveled, it would result in: 229 lives saved per year thanks to improved air quality and physical activity; an additional 32 fewer deaths per year thanks to avoided auto crash fatalities; \$2,402 per year in average household savings thanks to avoided fuel, maintenance and depreciation costs; and total energy savings (2024-2050) of 12 TWh.²⁵

²⁰ Public Transit Advisory Council, *Biennial Report to Governor and Legislature* (Feb. 2025), Appendix B: Moving Maine Network, *Try to Imagine it’s You, How Transportation Barriers are Hurting Maine and How We Move Forward* (2024), at 5-6.

²¹ Public Transit Advisory Council, *Biennial Report to Governor and Legislature* (Feb. 2025), at 14.

²² *Id.*

²³ Maine Applied Research, *Transportation Needs in Maine, Data Brief* (Jan. 2025) at 12 (citing U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Cycle 09, 24 September 2024).

²⁴ RMI, [States Can Quantify the Benefits of Climate-Friendly Transportation Options with RMI’s Smarter MODES Calculator](#) (Feb. 15, 2024), last visited Apr. 30, 2025.

²⁵ *Id.*

The Legislature should require DOT to align its activities with state climate limits

CLF strongly supports the provisions of L.D. 1138 that would convert plans and objectives into mandates and directives: namely, section 5, directing that MDOT “shall” adopt rules to ensure compliance with Maine’s binding climate limits; and section 6, directing DEP to adopt rules establishing limits on greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.

The legislative directives to DEP and MDOT would build on and improve Maine’s approach to tackling climate change by introducing greater specificity, clarity, and accountability. DEP’s transportation-specific greenhouse gas emission limits would provide a useful metric to itself, MDOT, and other state entities such as the Efficiency Maine Trust as they implement their responsibilities and strive for compliance with various state mandates including the climate limits. The more granular limit would help agencies better understand how to oversee emission reductions from regulated entities, enabling them to ensure that Maine entities each do their fair share.

MDOT may testify about its current initiatives to reduce climate-damaging emissions. These efforts do not undermine the need for a legislative directive; rather, a legislative directive would protect and preserve that work by providing a legally defensible justification. Moreover, L.D. 1138 would ensure those efforts are calibrated appropriately to achieving MDOT’s share of the state’s overarching climate limits. And it would hold MDOT accountable should their efforts fall short of the state’s aggressive climate mandates.

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Thank you for your attention. CLF appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of L.D. 1138 to align Maine’s transportation systems with our mandatory climate limits while creating economic, health, safety, and equity benefits across the state.