



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0016

Bruce A. Van Note
COMMISSIONER

April 25, 2023

**Testimony of Meghan Russo
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 131st Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

In Opposition to 1559

An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Meghan Russo, Manager of Legislative and Constituent Services for MaineDOT. MaineDOT respectfully opposes LD 1559, *An Act to Advance the State's Public Transit Systems by Reinvigorating the Public Transit Advisory Council and Increasing Funding*.

While we applaud the goals of the bill's sponsor, many of the requirements set forth in LD 1559 are already standard practice and currently being done. The Public Transit Advisory Council, or PTAC's, current membership represents a broad group of stakeholders, interests, and perspectives. These broad perspectives of the Council members are instrumental to the process, and they provide valuable input when needed. MaineDOT currently strives to ensure that the Council meets as needed, regularly enough to provide meaningful input on key issues affecting public transportation, and that Council meetings are valuable to members and the Council as a whole.

LD 1559 would also direct the PTAC to develop a statewide transit plan and a statewide mobility management program. These elements have been addressed in the just-completed Maine State Transit Plan. The newly drafted Plan provides the foundation for MaineDOT's efforts on public transportation in coming years. The Plan represents the culmination of a year-long effort, which included a review of past studies, plans, and initiatives; a public survey; public meetings; a review of best practices within the transit industry and in other states in terms of coordination among agencies, departments, and stakeholders and in the delivery of services; and meetings with key stakeholders. The Plan includes an existing conditions assessment and a needs assessment, a framework for determining appropriate transit options based on local and regional circumstances, and eleven key strategies for improving public transportation in Maine. The Plan

identifies the PTAC as one of several key partners MaineDOT intends to work with to refine, prioritize, implement, and fund these key strategies. MaineDOT is also beginning work on an updated Locally Coordinated Plan, due at the end of 2023, that will build on the Transit Plan's findings and recommendations for public transportation in Maine.

The amount of funding proposed in this bill is significant. A funding increase of this extreme amount has not been identified by the current PTAC as a priority. This funding is counter to the Governor's budget proposal. A key strategy of the Transit Plan is to pursue appropriate funding levels to support the strategies and vision for Maine's public transportation system. Municipalities, employers, other private sector partners, and non-governmental entities also have a role to play in funding the level of transit service needed by the community, and the amount requested here would undermine the importance of these other sources.

Together with our partners, we are continuously looking at ways to make better use of resources and improve efficiency and effectiveness of the transit system. Some of these methods certainly include better coordination amongst providers and exploring alternate models for public transportation, such as micro transit. The current structure of the PTAC is well equipped to review these issues and provide their much-valued input.

It is for these reasons that we oppose LD 1559. Thank you and I am happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

###