

*131st Legislature*  
**Senate of Maine**  
*Senate District 28*

*Senator Benjamin M. Chipman*  
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*Transportation Committee, Chair*  
*Taxation Committee, Member*

**Testimony of Senator Ben Chipman introducing LD 408, “An Act to Establish a “No Fare for Cleaner Air” Law in Maine”**  
**Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**  
**May 11, 2023**

Representative Williams, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Senator Ben Chipman I represent Senate District 28, which includes a part of Portland I am here to present LD 408, “An Act to Establish a “No Fare for Cleaner Air” Law in Maine ”

This legislation would provide free bus fares across the state to incentivize residents to use public transportation Within the limits of available funding, the Department would cover the cost of all public bus service fares for transportation providers under locally coordinated plans for regional transit

In order to address the current climate crisis, we need to incentivize methods of travel that are less harmful for the environment As of February 2022, the U S Department of Transportation reported that about 49 percent of men and 51 percent of women are licensed drivers in Maine About 77.8 percent of the total population of our state—just over one million people—are drivers 54 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Maine come from transportation In simple terms, we are a driving state To protect the environment, it is important that we work to improve accessibility for public transit

A similar initiative was signed into law in Colorado launching “Zero Fare for Better Air” during the month of August which is the month they have the highest ozone levels Regional Transport District (RTD) in Denver participated in this program with great success Ridership increased by 22 percent in July 2022 and increased by 36 percent in August 2022 when there were no fares compared to the year before

In Maine, bus service has expanded greatly over the last decade Much of Greater Portland is connected by various bus routes, including much of Westbrook and Falmouth Express services also connect the communities of Gorham, Yarmouth, Freeport, and Brunswick When more residents use bus service rather than personal vehicles, we are cutting our carbon emissions

Public transit is not just good for the environment, but it is also good for our communities Many Mainers can’t drive, whether it be that they don’t have a license or they can’t afford to buy and maintain a vehicle Public transit is a critical part of improving the lives of every member of our

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community. However, the fare for bus service can be a barrier for many. In Maine, we are already working to expand accessibility. Bus fares of the Metro public transit system have been halved for the rest of the year. This bill would establish a permanent, statewide, and more accessible version of this program that already exists. Let's ensure that every Mainer has access to public transit.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer questions.

Committee Transportation

LA JM

File Name G \COMMITTEES\TRA\Amendments\131st R1\219602

LR (item)# 2196 (02)

Date 5-10-2023

**LD 408**  
**Sponsor Amendment**

**New Title: An Act to Establish the No Fare for Cleaner Air Program**

**Strike everything after the enacting clause and before the summary and replace with the following:**

**Sec. 1. 23 MRSA § 4209 sub-§ 8, is enacted to read:**

**8 No Fare for Cleaner Air program established. Within the limits of available funding, the Department shall cover the cost of all in state public bus service fares for transportation providers under locally coordinated plans for regional transit. The department shall adopt rules to establish a process for providing the reimbursement in an efficient, equitable and effective manner. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.**

#### **Summary**

This amendment replaces the concept draft. It provides free bus fare in the state of Maine for cleaner air. Within the limits of available funding, the Department shall cover the cost of all in state public bus service fares for transportation providers under locally coordinated plans for regional transit. The department shall adopt rules to establish a process for providing the reimbursement in an efficient, equitable and effective manner.

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