



March 28, 2025

Testimony of Erin Courtney, Maine Turnpike Authority
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Neither for Nor Against LD 164

**"An Act to Exempt Authorized Emergency Vehicles from
Tolls When Operating in an Official Capacity"**

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Erin Courtney, Director of Communications and Government Relations for the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA). MTA is neither for nor against LD 164, "An Act to Exempt Authorized Emergency Vehicles from Tolls When Operating in an Official Capacity."

We support the concept of assisting local emergency responders. The MTA currently funds 100 percent of the operations of Troop G of the Maine State Police—an annual investment of over \$7 million. These officers are dedicated solely to patrolling the Maine Turnpike. Additionally, emergency vehicles responding to incidents on the Turnpike are already exempt from tolls.

We respect and value the essential work performed by emergency personnel, and we appreciate the sponsor's intent behind this bill. However, as currently drafted, we have serious concerns that prevent us from supporting LD 164 in its current form.

The definition of "authorized emergency vehicles" includes 23 separate categories of vehicles operated by a wide range of state, federal, municipal, and even university agencies. This includes not only ambulances, fire trucks, and police cruisers—but also correctional transport vehicles, railroad police, federal law enforcement vehicles, and others.

First, the MTA's tolling system is not currently designed to automatically identify or differentiate all these various types of vehicles, especially those that are not clearly marked as emergency vehicles. There is no single data source or tag identifier that universally captures this entire category of vehicles. As such, determining the scope of toll usage across all of these entities would require writing special code that would allow us to run a query for this information. This is a labor intensive task that would require more time in order for us to know what the impact to toll revenue would be.

Second, because the MTA is a toll-funded entity with no state funding, any loss in toll revenue will have implications for our operations, maintenance, and capital improvement projects. We don't know what that amount would be right now and we would need some time to determine what it could be. We would also need to bring in the representatives of the bond holders -- the

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Mainers and others who lend us their money -- to ensure that any changes are acceptable and do not leave us and the State open to lawsuits. We believe the Committee would be well-served by having that information available.

We are encouraged by our conversations with Representative McIntyre, the sponsor of LD 164, who has expressed a willingness to amend the bill to a resolve. We believe this is a productive and reasonable way forward. A resolve would provide us the time needed to collect the necessary data, estimate potential revenue impacts, discuss which authorized emergency vehicles are to be exempted, and seek legal and financial guidance. Our goal would be to report back to this committee before the Second Regular Session begins in January, allowing for a fully informed and responsible policy decision at that time.

In summary, while we oppose LD 164 as currently written due to the financial, technical, and legal uncertainties it presents, we support the concept and are committed to doing the work necessary to better understand its implications. With the proposed amendment to a resolve, we are amenable to moving forward in a collaborative and thoughtful way.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'd be happy to answer any questions.