



Natural Resources Council of Maine

3 Wade Street • Augusta, Maine 04330 • (207) 622-3101 • Fax: (207) 622-4343 • www.nrcm.org

Testimony in Support of LD 1242, An Act to Incentivize the Construction of Solar Carport Canopies and Solar Chargers at Highway Picnic Areas

To the Committee on Transportation

by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in support of LD 1242, An Act to Incentivize the Construction of Solar Carport Canopies and Solar Chargers at Highway Picnic Areas. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

This bill incentivizes the collocation of solar and electric vehicle (EV) charging along Maine's most trafficked corridors, increasing the amount of sensibly sited clean energy while addressing the growing demand for EV charging availability. Highway picnic areas and rest stops are ideal locations for solar as they are often cleared land with high sun exposure. Solar-powered EV charging offers a sustainable and cost-effective way to power EVs using clean energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and lowering electricity costs for host sites. Similarly, incentivizing solar carport canopies at residences and businesses encourages clean energy development on utilitarian structures while expanding EV charging access.

EVs are a critical part of our climate response. Transportation is Maine's most polluting sector by far, contributing about half of our annual greenhouse gas emissions. As such, reducing climate pollution from transportation is Plan A in Maine's Climate Action Plan, and that strategy hinges on reducing barriers to more rapid EV adoption.¹ More Mainers than ever are saving money on fuel and reducing pollution by driving EVs, but we have much more progress to make to reach the Climate Action Plan goal of 150,000 EVs on the road by 2030.

In addition to the climate imperative, EVs have several other benefits, including lower costs and benefits to the electric grid. EVs are set to reach upfront cost parity with internal combustion engine vehicles by next year,² and Mainers who drive EVs now already save \$19-\$30 every time

¹ Maine Climate Council, *Maine Won't Wait: A Four-Year Climate Action Plan for Maine*, December 2024, <https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/the-plan>

² Kelley Blue Book, *Study: EVs Could Reach Price Parity in 2026*, December 2024, <https://www.kbb.com/car-news/study-evs-could-reach-price-parity-in-2026/>

they charge an EV instead of filling up a tank of gas.³ Further, EV batteries can act as grid assets distributed across the state, which is why Maine’s Energy Plan published this year by the Governor’s Energy Office finds that EVs offer a “significant opportunity for flexible load management” and are a critical tool for achieving lower electricity rates in the coming years.⁴

Every four years, NRCM conducts the only survey of all Maine EV drivers so we can hear directly from the source about the EV ownership experience in Maine. Our most recent report found that 98% of EV owners would recommend an EV to a friend or family member, but it also found that charging availability is a primary concern when considering an EV purchase.⁵ This finding is borne out by other studies here in Maine and beyond as well – DEP’s 2024 report⁶ identifies charging infrastructure as one of the top five barriers to adoption and similarly recommends “increasing access to EV charging” as one of the top five ways to increase EV adoption in Maine.

There are a few ways that we believe the bill as printed could be improved. For the work session, we suggest consideration of the following items:

- Include authorization of energy storage in addition to solar panels at rest areas, which would enable installation of batteries collocated with the solar EV chargers to ensure availability of power when the solar panels are not generating energy, and to allow charging operators to mitigate utility demand charges.
- Reduce the requirement for amortization of taxes for construction of a solar carport canopy to one EV charger rather than two to increase eligibility, particularly for private residences.
- Expand the language under the picnic area section to read “the department shall enter into a lease with a person *or entity*...”
- Similarly, consider including “a person, *business, or entity*” as eligible to amortize taxes for the solar carport canopies to broaden the applicability of the law.

Expanding EV charging is good for Maine drivers and Maine’s environment, and this bill offers sensible steps to do so. For these reasons, we urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1242. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

³ Washington Post, *Is it cheaper to refuel your EV battery or gas tank? We did the math in all 50 states*, August 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interactive/2023/electric-vehicle-charging-price-vs-gasoline/>

⁴ Governor’s Energy Office, *Maine Energy Plan 2025*, January 2025, <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/2025-01/Maine%20Energy%20Plan%20January%202025.pdf>

⁵ NRCM, *2022 Maine Electric Vehicle Owner Survey*, 2022, <https://www.nrcm.org/programs/climate/cleaner-transportation/2022-maine-electric-vehicle-survey/>

⁶ Maine DEP, *The Status of Light-Duty Motor Vehicle Regulatory Programs in the United States, Zero-Emission Vehicle Adoption Rates, and Barriers to Greater Zero-Emission Vehicle Adoption*, delivered to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, December 2024