



Lydia V. Crafts

P.O. Box 122

Newcastle, ME 04553

Phone: (207) 593-2664

Lydia.Crafts@legislature.maine.gov

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

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Testimony of Rep. Lydia Crafts presenting
**LD 1359, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop
Practices Regarding Public Transit**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Good afternoon, Senator Nangle and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Lydia Crafts, and I represent House District 46, which includes Bristol, Damariscotta, Monhegan Plantation, Newcastle and Nobleboro. Today, I am pleased to present **LD 1359, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit.**

Title 23 MRSA 4209-A established the state's Public Transit Advisory Council, which is tasked with advising the Legislature and the DOT regarding public transit services in the State. "The council shall advise the department on the review and approval of locally coordinated plans for regional transit under section 4209 and shall advise on any statewide strategic transit planning undertaken by the department, including short-term and long-term fiscal, operating and capital investments, and the integration of transit planning with the Sensible Transportation Policy Act." As one of two legislators appointed to the council, I present this bill based on recommendations from the March 1 report from the full council.

Before I outline the bill, it's important to note the key findings from January 2025 John T. Gorman report titled "Transportation Needs in Maine." This is Appendix B in the PTAC report.

Detailed, public information about who needs to go where and when does not exist. There is no public repository of specific information about who in Maine needs to go where and when. Without this, it is hard for transportation providers to efficiently design, operate, and grow public transportation services.

Thousands of Maine households lack a vehicle. In 2018-2022, nearly 40,000 Maine households did not have access to a vehicle. This represents approximately 50,000 individuals of all ages. Many "zero-car" households are renters and people living by themselves. An estimated

15,000 employed workers lack a vehicle and another 52,000 live in households where the number of workers exceeds the number of vehicles.

There are racial and ethnic disparities in vehicle availability. In 2020, about 7% of White non-Hispanic households (38,000 households) lacked a vehicle. They account for the majority of zero-car households, but householders of other races and ethnicities were more likely to lack a vehicle on a percentage basis. This ranged from 10% of Asian householders to 20% of Native American householders.

Thousands of Mainers rely on public transportation. In 2018-2022, approximately 3,000 Mainers regularly commuted using public transportation. National surveys show that “transit passengers are primarily people in the most economically active years of their lives, from 25 to 64.”¹ Workers who take public transportation were the most likely to have long commutes; one in four (25%) spent 60 minutes or more on their one-way journey to work.

Thousands of Mainers do not have a driver’s license. Nearly 90,000 Maine residents do not hold a driver’s license. They include an estimated 15,200 people in their 20s, roughly equal to the 14,600 people aged 75 or older who lack a license.

Cost is a significant barrier to licensure and vehicle ownership. Vehicles are expensive. In addition to their purchase cost and financing charges, they require fuel, oil, maintenance, repairs, and insurance. These expenses are even higher for older cars and households with poor credit. Studies find that transportation budgets for most Maine households exceed \$1,000 per month. The high cost of getting a license is an additional deterrent for some young people and new Mainers.

Maine public transportation providers are currently meeting about 11% of need. A conservative estimate of unmet transportation needs suggests that Maine’s current providers are meeting about 11% of total need (3 million out of 28 million trips per year). Reaching just 20% would mean growing current services by about 75% (an additional 2.4 million trips).

Considering current budgetary constraints, recent increased investments by the DOT in public transit, and a strong desire for bipartisan support, I propose this resolve do the following:

1. Request that the Department publish the funding and allocation information regarding transit projects (both total and individual projects).
2. Remove barriers for rural communities by reducing local match requirements.
3. Increase collaboration and coordination of transit services between the DOT and DHHS.

I believe you will hear from council members with additional recommendations to include in this resolve and I am supportive of the committee’s deliberations on what best serves the transit needs of Maine while balancing financial responsibility with good policy. Thank you for your time and consideration; I am happy to answer any questions.