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**Testimony of Jennifer Grant
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

In Opposition

LD 1359

Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Jennifer Grant, and I serve as the Director of the Bureau of Planning at the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). MaineDOT is in opposition to LD 1359 as it is duplicative of ongoing efforts and inconsistent with MaineDOT's local cost share policy.

The concepts outlined in LD 1359 were discussed through the work of the Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC), and the resulting recommendations were included in the PTAC's 2025 biennial report to the Governor and Legislature. The PTAC is a voluntary council established in statute to advise both the Maine Legislature and MaineDOT on public transit services across the state. Council members are appointed by the MaineDOT Commissioner and represent a wide range of stakeholder perspectives. MaineDOT serves as the administrative body for the Council, but the Council's findings and recommendations are its own.

LD 1359 aims to improve transparency around public transit funding by requiring the publication of annual transit distributions. It also proposes reducing the required local match and increasing collaboration among stakeholders. Many of the intentions behind this bill are already reflected in the Maine State Transit Plan, which MaineDOT is actively implementing. That plan was developed collaboratively with input from the Public Transit Advisory Council, the Maine Transit Association, and other state agencies.

MaineDOT fully supports greater transparency and collaboration across all transportation modes, including public transit. We are in the process of implementing the transparency and collaboration elements of LD 1359 administratively, without the need for new legislation, and

will continue to do so regardless of whether LD 1359 is enacted. We also have concerns about the proposed reduction of the local match requirement. MaineDOT has a long history of partnering with local communities to best leverage limited federal, state, and local transportation funding—partnerships that work best when MaineDOT and local partners have a vested interest in seeing projects succeed. For this reason, MaineDOT requires some degree of local match on many different types of projects.

MaineDOT follows a cost-share policy for transit funding that maximizes the use of federal funds from all Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. Non-federal match requirements are set at the federal level and vary by FTA funding program. The non-federal match is made up of state and local contributions. Reducing the local match requirement for federal funds would require a larger portion of the non-federal match to come from state funds without improving or expanding service and leaving less state funding available to support transit services statewide. MaineDOT encourages transit providers throughout the state to explore all potential sources of funding to account for the local share of the non-federal contribution. This cost-sharing approach is essential to ensuring shared investment and responsibility for the success of our public transit systems. MaineDOT continues to engage in productive conversations with stakeholders on funding for public transportation in the state, without the need for this new legislative requirement.

It should be noted that since FY23, MaineDOT has increased state transit funding for operations from \$1.2M to \$4.2M in FY25. This increase does not include the investment of \$1.4M annually for a two-year pilot commuter bus service from Lewiston/Auburn to Portland in FY25 and FY26. Additionally, in FY25, MaineDOT provided \$2M for innovative transit projects for operators statewide which included many projects awarded to our rural operators. This increased funding, an additional \$5 million for operating and innovation, was not a one-time appropriation and was included in the Highway Fund budget that recently garnered nearly unanimous support in the two chambers and was signed by the Governor.

MaineDOT appreciates the committee's consideration of our concerns, and we will be available at the work session to engage in further discussions of Maine's transit system.