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*Testimony of Rep. Ann Matlack in support of*

## **LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation*

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Ann Matlack and I represent House District 43, which includes the communities of Cushing, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston and Owls Head. I am here today to testify in support of **LD 1451, An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation**.

In the rural and coastal communities I represent, transportation challenges are both real and growing; access to reliable transportation is not just a convenience, it is a necessity. Many of my constituents are older adults, working families or individuals with disabilities who face significant barriers getting to and from medical appointments, grocery shopping, jobs or social connections. While St. George has our wonderful Neighbor to Neighbor program, it's an all-volunteer staff, and not every community is lucky enough to have such a program.

Knox County alone has over 1,000 households without access to a reliable vehicle. These families collectively experience more than 500,000 unmet trips per year – often just for basic needs. With the growing percentage of older residents in our region, the need for dependable, coordinated transportation will only increase.

LD 1451 is a thoughtful step forward. It improves how our state agencies work together and supports regional mobility management hubs so communities can shape solutions that reflect their unique geography. This is especially important in coastal areas, where services like the State Ferry and rural transit need better integration to ensure year-round access to care and opportunity for island and mainland residents alike.

With my background in municipal and county budgeting and my past work with Penquis, I understand how important it is to make every dollar count. LD 1451 creates a structure that respects local expertise while supporting broader collaboration. By coordinating across agencies and communities, Maine can reduce operating costs per trip and stretch each transportation dollar further. Coordination helps eliminate administrative overlap and unlocks new federal investments that we are currently leaving on the table. These shared-cost models are already working in other states, and LD 1451 will allow us to apply those proven strategies here in Maine.

District 43: Cushing, Thomaston, South Thomaston, St. George and part of Owls Head

Establishing the Maine Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Management isn't about building something new; it's about making sure what we already have works better, especially for those most affected by isolation and limited transportation options. LD 1451 ensures local flexibility, coordination and access, particularly for those who want to age in place or stay connected to community life.

I urge the committee to support this important legislation. Thank you for considering the voices of rural and coastal Mainers. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.