



**Testimony of Maria Fuentes, Maine Better Transportation Association
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
Neither for Nor Against**

L.D. 1451 - An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation

April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Maria Fuentes, a resident of Hallowell and testify today on behalf of the Maine Better Transportation Association neither for nor against *L.D. 1451 - An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation*, because we don't believe it is needed.

MBTA represents over 700 members who plan, design, build, maintain, or use our transportation system including transportation contractors, engineers and suppliers, bus and rail companies, airports, marine and port interests, municipalities and others committed to investing in our multimodal transportation infrastructure to boost the state's economy and quality of life.

This Committee recently received a report and presentation from the Public Transit Advisory Council (PTAC) with recommendations to the Legislature. We understand that many of the ideas in this bill are already being implemented by MaineDOT, who had an exhaustive planning process in collaboration with the PTAC, the Maine Transit Association, and others to draft a Maine State Transit Plan.

MBTA supports the considerable increase in transit operating funds – along with innovation funds to promote transit in rural areas - included in the MaineDOT budget last session. We appreciate that this was not a one-time appropriation during good budget times, since the Committee and Legislature endorsed it again in the most recent biennial budget. We hope and expect that this is ongoing, as it shows a growing commitment to transit as we work to find ways to better move our aging population and other citizens who don't want to or are unable to drive.

MBTA also appreciates the numerous matching programs that MaineDOT has with municipalities, regions, and private entities. These include the Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP), the Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP), the Municipal Partnership Initiative (MPI), the Village Partnership (VPI) and the Business Partnership

Initiative (BPI), to name several. These are all very successful programs in terms of the number and the quality of applications received. We are confident that when public, private or other partners have a stake in the results, they contribute to the successful outcomes of the diversity of projects funded through these matching programs.

We are not convinced there is a need to change the matching portion of the partners' match, especially since project costs will continue to rise with inflation and for other reasons.

Again, MBTA doesn't believe that LD 1451 is needed. Thank you for your time and for listening to our testimony.