

April 29, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

My name is Eva Murray. I am the Representative from Matinicus Island to the Maine State Ferry Advisory Board, and in the past have served as Chair of that Board. I am a year-round resident of Matinicus Island, having joined the community of working islanders as teacher at the one-room school 38 years ago. Presently I serve as the Municipal Clerk, Emergency Management Director, EMT, and Recycling and Solid Waste Coordinator for Matinicus.

The people of Matinicus Isle Plantation, usually known as Matinicus Island, urge the support of this Committee and all of our Legislators for **LD 447, HP 301, “An Act to Expand Ferry Service to Matinicus Isle.”**

LD447 would permit the Maine Department of Transportation/State Ferry Service a bit of flexibility in the provision of service to Matinicus Island. Matinicus is one of the six island municipalities which have relied on the State Ferry for many decades. As of now, Maine statute caps scheduled state ferry service to Matinicus at 36 trips per year. This number is an example of outdated language which no longer reflects reality. Experience has proven that the option of running an occasional additional ferry trip, scheduled by ferry service management on an as-needed basis when crew is available, would solve a list of problems.

No other island served by the State Ferry Service has any enumeration of trips mentioned in statute. We request the removal of this obsolete language—the arbitrary number 36—from the statute that references ferry service to Matinicus. We recommend the legislature allow the MDOT to decide the number of ferry trips to Matinicus each year based on demonstrated need and resource availability.

Only the smallest ferry vessel in the state’s fleet, the new *Charles Norman Shay*, can physically fit into our harbor and access the state wharf. The *Shay* can only carry four or five vehicles on its center line (the *Shay*’s two side spaces only fit small cars, and small cars are rarely used on Matinicus because we require vehicles primarily to move freight). Vehicle reservations are typically swept up quickly, early the first morning they become available, which is generally three months prior to the scheduled sailing date. Short-notice reservations for vehicles are almost impossible to get except in mid-winter, meaning that should an island homeowner need a contractor, such as a roofer or furnace technician, and that contractor needs their work truck, the Matinicus customer is probably out of luck.

Matinicus is a small, remote community. Tourism is light and nobody attempts a daily commute to the mainland. Reliable, scheduled State ferries allow islanders access to important services that require vehicles, often trucks. These include but are not limited to:

- Our municipal recycling and solid waste system, a program initiated by islanders in 2003. Prior to that, all island trash, whether it was a tissue to blow your nose or a 200-pound refrigerator, was typically either burned in the dooryard or tossed overboard. For the past few years, the 26' rented box truck which carries the recyclables, scrap metal, busted electronics, and certain other rubbish off the island for proper disposal has been on just about every other ferry, round-trip, year-round, and always full. That box truck also carries physically large freight items such as new appliances or palletized equipment to the island, things that would not fit into the small airplanes that routinely deliver freight and mail;
- An annual, professionally operated Household Hazardous Waste collection event, where islanders can safely get rid of pesticides, chemicals, marine paint, used oil, and other common consumer poisons, rather than those toxic liquids ending up on the ground and potentially in our drinking water, or in our lobstering harbor;
- Safe, properly handled delivery of propane to the island. This community uses 150 to 200 100-pound exchange cylinders of propane per year;
- Truckloads of building materials from lumberyards to repair, upgrade, and maintain the island's aging housing stock, and occasionally to build a new home, and to repair the fishermen's wharves. Lobstering is the basis of this island's economy;
- Wood pellets by the ton for heat, hardwood firewood, and (rarely) home heating oil;
- Gravel and similar materials, and earthmoving equipment, for road repair and site preparation including repairs as response to last year's declared disaster coastal storms;
- Islanders hauling their own groceries and other supplies for home and business, usually in pickup trucks, as Matinicus has no store of any kind anymore.

Please recognize that the citizens of Matinicus are only seeking a reasonable and sensible update of statute language. 36 trips per year may have sounded like a lot many decades ago, but of course, it isn't a lot. Matinicus residents will not go back to the "old days" of burning trash, manhandling propane tanks off a small boat, or digging road surface material out of somebody's back yard. Every mainland town, no matter how small, has a road and can access a truck when they need one. We are essentially asking for that.

Thank you.