



MISSION STATEMENT

ADVOCATE for investments in public transportation improvements throughout the state of Maine, PROMOTE the value of public transportation statewide, and SERVE as a resource for members to help them thrive.

<https://mainetransit.org/>

LD 2062, An Act to Enhance the Safety of Public Transit Bus Operators through the Installation of Vehicle Security Barriers with Amendments

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

January 15, 2026

Good morning, Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

My name is Kirk Bellavance, and I am here today representing the **Maine Transit Association (MTA)**. Our association represents public transit providers across the entire State of Maine—from our busiest urban centers to our most remote rural communities.

The MTA stands in **clear support of the core intent** of LD 2062: protecting our frontline workers. Our drivers are the backbone of Maine's mobility, and their safety is our top priority.

However, as currently drafted, the bill's definitions are too broad. They capture vehicle types and service areas where security barriers are simply not practical or effective. For example, in smaller "cutaway" vehicles—specifically those used for **ADA paratransit**—drivers must frequently exit their seats to interact with and physically assist passengers. In these environments, a physical barrier can actually hinder service rather than help it. Furthermore, many rural transit providers utilize vehicles that exceed the defined passenger capacity definitions of eligible vehicles.

To ensure this legislation is both feasible and focused on the highest-risk environments, the MTA proposes the **following specific refinements** to the bill's language:

1. Limit requirements to "Large Heavy-Duty Buses" We urge the committee to adopt the FTA definition of a Large Heavy-Duty Transit Bus. These are typically 35 to 40 feet long, designed for a 12-year lifespan, and carry 26 to 60 passengers. This ensures barriers are installed where they fit the vehicle's design, rather than forcing them into small vans where they don't belong.

2. Focus on Primary Urban Centers We recommend narrowing the scope to Maine's four largest urban transit providers: **Greater Portland Metro, Community Connector in Bangor, Citylink in Lewiston, and BSOOB Transit in Saco**. These are the high-volume, urban environments where these safety measures are most necessary and effective.

3. Exclude Seasonal Services By limiting the bill to **year-round, fixed-route services**, we can avoid placing an undue burden on Maine's unique seasonal operations—such as the **Island Explorer** in Bar

Harbor, the **Sugarloaf Explorer**, or the seasonal trolleys in southern Maine. These services operate in very different contexts than our year-round urban lines.

4. Eliminate the required Rulemaking Minimum Standards for vehicle safety barriers Due to the diverse engineered designs of large, heavy-duty transit buses, a universal requirement would likely result in standards that are not applicable to all vehicle types. Instead, we support leaving the determination of need to individual transit agencies, in consultation with joint labor-management safety committees where applicable.

5. Installed Barriers in need of Repair/Replacement are eligible for applicable funds for any required replacement and/or repair costs. Excluding this refinement would likely result in failures or damages that would further increase the high operating costs of transit agencies, as previously shared with this committee.

In Closing

By adopting these common-sense amendments, this Legislature can significantly advance operator safety in urban areas without imposing impractical requirements on our rural and specialized providers.

These changes would focus the bill's impact on roughly **70 to 80 vehicles** statewide—the vehicles where these barriers provide the most protection—rather than every single public transit vehicle in Maine. The retrofits required by this bill would require significant funding, so the MTA requests that the mandate be contingent on the funding being provided.

With these amendments applied, the MTA fully supports LD 2062. We respectfully urge the Committee to adopt these changes.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to transit safety. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Kirk Bellavance
President, Maine Transit Association
Senior Transportation Director, Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
kbellavance@kvcap.org | 207-859-1680

TO: Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
FROM: Kirk Bellavance, President, Maine Transit Association
DATE: January 15, 2026
RE: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Designations for Urban Areas and Vehicle Classifications

1. GEOGRAPHIC DESIGNATIONS

The FTA allocates funds based on U.S. Census "Urbanized Area" (UZA) thresholds. Maine is currently divided into three distinct funding categories:

Tier	Population	Maine Locations
Large UZA	200,000+	Portland, Biddeford/Saco
Small UZA	50,000 - 199,999	Bangor, Lewiston-Auburn
Rural	< 50,000	Augusta, Waterville

2. VEHICLE CLASSIFICATION: LARGE HEAVY-DUTY BUSES

The FTA defines "Large Heavy-Duty" buses primarily through their **useful life** and physical dimensions, as outlined in **FTA Circular 5010.1E** (Award Management Requirements).

Physical Characteristics

- **Size:** Generally **35 to 40 feet** in length.
- **Types:** Includes standard transit buses, over-the-road buses (coaches), and **articulated buses** (typically 60 feet).
- **Build:** Constructed with a heavy-duty frame designed for high-frequency, stop-and-go urban service.
- **Service Life:** At least **12 years**
- **Mileage:** At least **500,000 miles**

Comparison with Other Classes

Vehicle Class	Approx. Length	Useful Life (Years)	Useful Life (Miles)
Large Heavy-Duty	35' - 40' / Articulated	12	500,000
Small Heavy-Duty	30'	10	350,000
Medium-Duty	25' - 30'	7	200,000
Light-Duty	Vans / Small Buses	4 - 5	100,000 - 150,000

SOURCES

FTA Circular 5010.1F: Defines vehicle useful life and management.

FTA Circular 9030.1E: Governs Urbanized Area Formula Program.

49 U.S.C. § 5302: The statutory legal definition of urbanized territory.

U.S. Census 2020 Federal Register: Official boundary and population criteria.