

Testimony of Irv Smith  
On Behalf of  
Maine Better Transportation Association  
In Opposition to  
*LD 1532 - An Act to Protect Maine's Air Quality by Strengthening Requirements for Air  
Emissions Licensing*  
Joint Standing Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
May 3, 2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and Members of the ENR Committee. My name is Irv Smith, and I am Traffic Manager for H.O. Bouchard in Hampden and currently president of the Maine Better Transportation Association. I am testifying today on behalf of MBTA.

MBTA is a statewide coalition of members who plan, design, build, maintain, operate, and use Maine's transportation infrastructure network. Our members include engineers, transportation contractors and equipment dealers, airports, shipping and bus companies, public works officials and others committed to our mission of advocating for long-term funding for the state's transportation network to improve the quality of life for Maine people and enhance the state's economy.

MBTA is opposed to this bill because it is unnecessarily burdensome, will create economic hardship and frankly, it is not needed. It does nothing to improve the environment but would create costs that would be passed on to families across the state who, in many cases, are already struggling. It would impact citizens, businesses, and municipalities, not to mention other organizations such as hospitals and colleges.

Why would we add unnecessary costs to products like fuel, asphalt, and other construction materials when Maine is getting further and further behind in maintaining its transportation infrastructure? There is much data to support the fact that we are not paying adequate attention to our roads and bridges. The Maine Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers gave Maine roads a D on their most recent report card. The Washington-based group TRIP released a study in February indicating that Maine drivers spend a total of \$1.3 billion per year in vehicle operating costs, delays from congestion and crashes – talk about a public health emergency! In the Portland area, drivers spend an average of \$531 per year just in repairs to their vehicles due to bad roads, while Bangor residents pay \$522 and Lewiston-Auburn residents pay an additional \$374 annually.

Maine's bridges are rated 7<sup>th</sup> worst in the country, and 13% of our bridges are structurally deficient, meaning at least one key component is in poor or worse condition. The state's roads are ranked 10<sup>th</sup> worst in the country. Meanwhile, the state is spending less and less money on its road and bridge system. In the 1970's, the state spent 26% of its revenues on transportation; today that number is less than 10%.

And MaineDOT has a shortfall of \$330 million per year to maintain the system we have; the number drops to \$230 million if you assume a \$100 million bond per year – every single year – for transportation. We are not talking about building new roads here; we are just talking about the cost to maintain our existing system.

At a time when we have these huge shortfalls, the cost of construction is going up, like everything else. The cost of products and trucking costs are escalating. On top of that, the trucking industry has a severe driver shortage. This is not the time to raise costs.

And finally, this bill, if passed, will not have the environmental benefits that have been claimed. MBTA was pleased to be part of the Transportation Working Group for the Maine Climate Council. There is much interest today in clean energy and green energy infrastructure to reduce carbon emissions, the majority of which come from the transportation sector in Maine. The Council spent time looking at cleaner energy, including things like renewable biofuels, and this bill does not help us get there.

Liquid fuel terminals are essential to the green energy infrastructure, and this is just one of the sectors that this bill would add huge costs to. Asphalt pavements require about 20 percent less energy to produce and construct than other pavements. And speaking of that - what do you suppose is the most recycled product in North America? It is not steel, plastic or cardboard. It is asphalt.

It is clear to us that even with the most aggressive carbon reduction actions, the state and the entire country will be using liquid fuels for years to come. Instead of trying to eliminate liquid fuel infrastructure, our goal should be to enhance it - by increasing the number of renewable biofuels - while other technologies come online, and while investments are made to improve the electric grid. In the meantime, technology will continue to make liquid fuel cleaner and greener.

To close, this bill is an overreach, costly and overly burdensome to Maine people and businesses, and we hope Committee members reject LD 1532. Thank you for your attention, and for your service to the state.