



**SUSTAINABILITY  
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**Testimony of Cashel Stewart, City of South Portland Sustainable Transportation  
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**In Support of LD 256: An Act to Add Electric Bicycles to the Electric Vehicle Rebate  
Program**

Hearing Date: February 7, 2023

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of LD 256: *An Act to Add Electric Bicycles to the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program*.

I am here today to share three points from a municipal perspective:

**Electric bicycling offers enormous promise for our climate action goals.**

The transportation sector is responsible for over half of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions. In South Portland, it's responsible for 32% of our emissions. While automobiles have an inevitability in Maine and automobile electrification and alternative fuels will play a crucial role in reducing these emissions, the most impactful change we can make is through mode shift. It is well-documented that replacing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) with bicycling leads to substantial decreases in greenhouse gas emissions, essentially eliminating emissions. A majority of automobile trips are under 5 miles, trips that could easily be offset with an electric bicycle.

*One Climate Future*, South Portland's joint climate action plan with Portland, passed in 2020, sets the goal that 26% of trips in the two cities will use public transit or active transportation by 2035. The most recent assessment has it at 12%. The plan also sets the goal of 5% of all trips will be completed by bike by 2040. It is currently at less than 1%.

*Maine Won't Wait*, the state's climate action plan passed in 2020, sets a goal to reduce light-duty VMT by 10% by 2025 and 20% by 2030.

**Electric Bicycles are a game-changer compared to conventional bicycles.**

A common deterrent for prospective bicycle commuters, especially as a commuting option, is the physical exertion required of it. Electric bicycles allow the rider to traverse roads and paths with relative ease, reducing the need to overexert. It also opens up a world of activity for work commuters, the elderly, and mobility-impaired, who would otherwise not be able to confidently and conveniently bicycle. Electric bicycles allow the rider to go further distances, upwards of 40 miles on a single charge, allowing for more vehicle trips to be replaced. Electric bicycles also



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allow for the rider to easily haul cargo such as groceries and even other people, potentially offsetting even more vehicle trips.

Creating a culture of bicycling is a key component of *One Climate Future* and aligned with a number of programs and policies the City is working on. The City is currently developing a Street Design Technical Manual to put into action its complete street policy adopted in 2017 and continues to expand and improve its bicycling network each year. The work we are doing to support bicycling at the municipal level needs to be augmented at the state level in order for us to meet our climate action goals.

**Rebate programs as incentives for green initiatives make all the difference.**

The City of South Portland launched its *Electrify Everything!* program on September 1, 2022. The program gives South Portland residents rebates for electrifying various aspects of their lives, providing direct assistance to those at <100% AMI to replace equipment that is powered by fossil fuels. The program includes electric bikes and electric cargo bikes. In the 5 months since the program launched, the City has awarded 25 electric bike rebates to residents, worth \$300 for an electric bike and \$500 for an electric cargo bike.

A statewide rebate program would expand the reach of our budding program and open up residents of other cities to the benefits of rebates. Financial assistance is often the difference between buying an electric bicycle and not buying one and income-based rebates ensure that our evolving sustainable transportation system is equitable and inclusive for all.

I support LD256 because I believe bicycling is critical to Maine meeting its climate action goals, that electric bicycle technology is particularly transformative and inclusive, and that an electric bicycle incentive program is the best way to jumpstart a vibrant bicycle culture here in Maine.

Thank you,

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