

Joseph Thomas
ATU Local 714
LD 373

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 714. ATU 714 members work at the Greater Portland Transit District, the Regional Transit Program in Portland, the Community Connector in Bangor, Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit and Lewiston-Auburn Transit's citylink service that is provided by Western Maine Transportation Services. ATU is the largest labor organization representing transit workers in the United States and Canada and is comprised of nearly 200,000 members in 267 local unions spread across 46 states and nine provinces. Composed of bus drivers, light rail and subway operators, maintenance and clerical personnel, and other transit, intercity, and municipal employees, the ATU works to promote transit issues and fights for the interests of its hard-working members.

ATU fully supports LD 373. This bill requires recipients of certain state transit funds and awardees of state transportation contracts to agree to Employer and Employee Harmony Agreements. We strongly urge the Maine Legislature to pass LD 373.

This legislation would ensure that the transportation contractors that Maine funds or contracts with provide essential transportation services without disruption to passengers. The Employer/Employee Harmony Agreements will ensure that Maine residents and visitors are able to fully rely on public transportation to get to school, work, medical appointments and back home.

This is especially important as Maine strives to meet its ambitious climate commitments through unprecedented transportation planning and investment. For the transportation sector, this means reducing vehicle miles traveled through the expansion of safe and reliable public and school transportation while simultaneously reducing greenhouse gas emissions by converting to zero-emission fleets and related infrastructure. The achievement of these twin goals, above all else, depends not only growing the transportation workforce through the creation of good, family sustaining jobs, but also equipping that workforce with the skills to take on the unique operational and safety challenges that electrification poses.

We at ATU Local 714 believe all of this is only possible with robust labor and management collaboration. We have found that such collaboration allows our members to address safety issues confronted by the transportation workforce and users alike. What's more, labor and management collaboration has been essential for addressing the transit staffing shortage by working together to establish apprenticeships and training programs to attract and retain personnel. ATU Local 714 urges the Maine Legislature to pass LD 373 as it offers the state the tools to build out the transportation sector at the speed and scale required with full participation of the current and future transportation workforce. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on LD 373.