

March 31, 2023

Senator Ben Chipman  
Representative Lynne Williams  
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation  
State House Room 126  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re: Public Transportation Funding in LD 258, Biennial Budget for Fiscal Years 2024-2025 and LD 259, Highway Fund for Fiscal Years 2024-2025**

Dear Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

**With the full support of the Greater Portland Transit District's (GP Metro) Board of Directors, I am writing to request your assistance to increase state funding for ongoing public transportation operations.** GP Metro's Board of Directors includes elected officials, professional staff, and community members appointed by the city/town councils of Brunswick, Falmouth, Freeport, Portland, Westbrook and Yarmouth.

Through the Multi-Modal Transportation Fund, Maine DOT allocates \$1.1 million to the 20 transit agencies. This funding allocation has been flat for at least 5 years, and represents only 3% of these agencies' total combined operating costs. As percentages of total operating budgets, state funding for rail and state operated ferry services significantly exceed the comparatively small level of support provided to the state's 20 bus and demand response service.

Maine's transit systems (not including rail and state operated ferries) provided nearly 7 million boardings in 2019 which capped a 10-year steady increase in statewide transit use. During the Covid-19 pandemic, ridership dropped to about 3.5 million, but has since recovered back to 4.5 million in 2022. Ridership across these 20 agencies represents about 85% of all transit trips taken in Maine.

These services provide lifeline mobility for people in rural and urban areas across the state, who do not have access to or cannot operate an automobile. In urban areas, public transit helps communities achieve a range of economic, social and environmental goals, while mitigating the more harmful effects of automobile use. In short, robust public transit systems help make sure all people can participate in the economy, in the community, and access all the destinations that make for full lives.

Today, our state's public transit systems are facing a perfect storm of shocks. Most, if not all of these systems, are facing fiscal cliffs due to rising costs, declining revenues, the slow ridership recovery, and the final drawdowns of federal emergency funding.



**We ask that you and the administration consider adding \$5.63 million in funding to the Multi-Modal Transportation Fund.** This would allow Maine DOT to increase its support for statewide transit operations from \$1.15 million to \$6.78 million for each year of the upcoming biennium.

GPTD in particular is leading regional and state level efforts to innovate and adapt our transit systems to a new normal and rebuild ridership lost to the pandemic and its consequences. In the near term, we are seeking your help to ensure that statewide public transit systems can continue provide critical lifeline services and offset the unprecedented increase in costs and the final drawdowns of federal emergency funds.

Thank you for your service to our state and consideration of this request.

Respectfully,



Michael Foley  
President of the Board of Directors  
Greater Portland Transit District

&

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