To: Committee on Transportation
From: Jess Falero and Ezra Sassaman, Maine Youth for Climate Justice
Date: March 28, 2023
Re: Testimony commenting on LD 259: An Act Making Unified Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and the honorable members of the Committee on Transportation, our names are Jess and Ezra. We are writing as representatives of Maine Youth for Climate Justice (MYCJ), a coalition of over 460 youth from across the state who are fighting for bold climate action and a just transition to a livable future in Maine.

The proposed Department of Transportation budget of $1.2 million per year ($2.4 million in total) for transit is far too low. Maintaining existing operations would require much higher funding to maintain existing operations, closer to $6.8 million per year ($13.6 million in total).[1] Taking public transportation seriously is an important aspect of climate justice. Roughly 76% of Mainers use a single occupancy vehicle as their primary mode of transportation, while only 0.4% of Mainers use public transit. As it currently stands, 54% of Maine's carbon emissions stem from the transportation sector.[2]

Public transportation is an effective method to reduce these carbon emissions. Even a public transportation system reliant on diesel-powered buses leads to a 33% decrease in emissions per passenger mile in comparison to single-occupancy vehicles.[3] Expanded clean

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[1] $6.8 million/year is in line with the request from Maine Transit Association to allow transit agencies to maintain their operations and lower burden on municipal governments.
[2] Dr. Geoff Morrison et al., "Executive Summary: Maine Clean Transportation Roadmap", *GEO/GOPIF*, December 2021.
[3] U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, "Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change", January 2010.

transportation investment could create even greater reduction of emissions compared to fossil fuel-powered single-occupancy vehicles. Maintaining a reliance on personal cars and trucks makes it harder to meet the carbon neutrality and greenhouse gas emission goals laid out in the Maine Climate Council's Climate Action Plan.

Additionally, increasing public transportation funding will allow the state to better support youth, elderly, rural, and low-income Mainers, and others left behind by the current transportation system in our state.

For instance, public transportation is an affordable option for low-income Mainers. The monthly costs of a personal vehicle, essentially the default for Maine transportation, averages to $894 for a new vehicle or $515 for a used car driven 15,000 miles annually.[4] In comparison, recent US public transit costs averaged between $60 (bus) to $150 (commuter rail) per month,[5] These cost savings for public transportation represent a 70-88% decrease in comparison to even a used car.

The lack of an adequate transportation system has disportionately affected those in marginalized and poor communities. The simplest of errands, such as getting groceries or grabbing a child's medication, become a huge barrier when coupled with lack of transportation and affordable pricing. A good majority of Mainers can't afford to drive, to buy a car, or for all intents and purposes rent an apartment in a majority of towns in this state. When having conversations around putting money into accessible transportation or public health systems, we have a nasty habit of forgetting that 90% of America's population lives under the federal poverty level. To make matters worse, approximately 700 people die each day due to our poverty levels – despite the fact that the U.S. is the wealthiest nation in the world.[6]

A robust public transit system in Maine helps meet the state's climate goals and makes sure accessible, affordable transportation is available for all people in the state.

For the above reasons, our coalition, Maine Youth for Climate Justice, urges you to increase the funding included in LD 259. Thank you.

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[4] Whitney Vandiver and Shannon Bradley, "What is the Total Cost of Owning a Car", *Nerdwallet*, March 2023.
[5] Erick Burgueño Salas, "Average monthly passes fare in U.S. public transportation between 2017 and 2019, by mode", *Statistica*, May 2022.
[6] Mark Gruenberg, "Barber: Rising poverty endangers the whole country", *People's World*, September 2020.