



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Transportation

From: Ania Wright, Sierra Club Maine

Date: March 27th, 2023

Re: Testimony in support of 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 members of the Committee on Transportation,

I am testifying on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members and supporters nation-wide. We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 259.

We support a robust transportation budget that includes ample funding for public transit initiatives, and encourage the committee to increase the public transit line item to *at least* \$6.8 million a year (\$13.1 million total)¹.

Our reasoning for this increase is twofold. Firstly, we must invest in public transportation to address Maine's greenhouse gas emissions. Secondly, increased public transit will allow the state to better support youth, elderly, rural, and low-income Mainers, and others left behind by the current transportation options.

Regarding climate impacts, 54% of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector.² Roughly 76% of Mainers use a single occupancy vehicle, and just 0.4% use public transportation. Switching to public transportation is an effective method to reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector. 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

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 https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, "[Public Transportation's Role in Responding to Climate Change](#)", January 2010.



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Globally, we are on track to burn through our remaining carbon budget by 2030, as recently outlined in yet another report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change⁴. Through this budget process, this committee has the opportunity to play a role in curbing our emissions in a meaningful way, and our collective future truly depends on it.

We encourage you to amend LD 259 before voting 'ought to pass.' Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ania Wright
Political and Legislative Specialist
Sierra Club Maine Chapter

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/03/20/climate-change-ipcc-report-15/>