



**PORTLAND**  
Regional Chamber  
of Commerce

4101 • (207) 772-2811 [chamber@portlandregion.com](mailto:chamber@portlandregion.com) •

[portlandregion.com](http://portlandregion.com)

*Cape Elizabeth • Cumberland • Falmouth • Gorham • Scarborough • South Portland •  
Portland • Westbrook*

---

## **Testimony in Support of LD 408-An Act to Establish a “No Fare for Cleaner Air” Law in Maine**

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

May 11, 2023

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and members of the Committee on Transportation,

My name is Eamonn Dundon, and I am the Director of Advocacy of the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce. We represent 1,300 businesses in our region who employ over 65,000 Mainers. We are submitting this written testimony today to express our organization's support for the concepts behind Senator Chipman's amended version of LD 408.

Fare free public transit is a difficult balance to strike, but this bill represents the best path forward to realize that vision here in Maine. Especially under our current funding paradigm for bus operators in Maine, where public bus operations and maintenance funding is a combination of 50% Federal Transit Administration funds, ~25% municipal contributions and ~25% fare revenue, it is a near impossibility to accomplish this goal without an added stream of revenue to bus operators from the state. Many transit agencies around the country, including the MTA in Boston and WMATA in Washington, have attempted this in recent years to varying degrees and mixed results, because they were cannibalizing fare revenue at the expense of ongoing investments in frequency and reliability upgrades. By funding this program with state dollars, we would be able to maintain the current mix of O&M funding, without incurring the tradeoffs other transit agencies have seen when trying to implement fare free transit without backfilling fare revenue with additional funding sources.

As I have said to the committee on several bus related bills this year, the single biggest priority for this committee to focus on if we are serious about meeting the transportation emissions



**PORTLAND**  
Regional Chamber  
of Commerce

4101 • (207) 772-2811 [chamber@portlandregion.com](mailto:chamber@portlandregion.com) •

[portlandregion.com](http://portlandregion.com)

*Cape Elizabeth • Cumberland • Falmouth • Gorham • Scarborough • South Portland •  
Portland • Westbrook*

---

reductions targets in *Maine Won't Wait* is adequately funding our public bus operators. We know that it is going to be particularly difficult to reduce or eliminate transportation related emissions in the rural parts of our state and among the heavy commercial users of our roadways, so to accomplish those goals we are going to have to precipitate a massive mode-shift in the most urban areas of our state away from personal vehicle travel, and towards transit and bike/ped solutions. This legislation represents one piece of that puzzle needed to accomplish that shift.

While you await the fiscal note on this legislation, I would encourage the committee to look at a variety of ways to meet the spirit of this goal. Promotional fare holidays, like the one currently running in the Portland region, are a great way to bring new riders into the system on a discounted basis, while not incurring the ongoing expense of a permanent fare free program. Additionally, any action this committee can take to increase O&M funding to bus operators will go directly into improving the frequency and reliability of bus operations, another proven strategy towards building long-term ridership. We urge the committee to consider the totality of approaches to boost ridership, contribute to emissions reductions, and provide safe, frequent, and reliable transit options for workers to get to their jobs and contribute to Maine's economic growth.

We thank you for your time and commitment to all Mainers, and we ask for your expeditious approval of this important legislation.