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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO, GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 1359 Resolve, To Direct The Department Of
Transportation To Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit**

April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

My name is Nancy Smith, I am a resident of Ellsworth and CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth.

We partner with Build Maine to co-host a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. [Policy Action 2025](#) follows [Policy Action 2023](#) from the 131st Legislature. Each session we strive, ***“to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.”***

GrowSmart advocates for transportation policy that ties in land use, housing, environmental and economic goals to contribute to a sense of community vitality. This bill presents key strategies to achieve this goal and for advancing more equitable and accessible transportation systems in rural and urban Maine.

LD 1359 pushes for transparency and accountability from the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) in relation to the recommendations outlined in the Public Transit Advisory Council’s (PTAC) biennial report. LD 1559, in the 131st legislature, was a Policy Action 2023 bill that expanded and improved PTAC, and the Council’s most recent report reflects that additional capacity and focus

The PTAC report is an important update on the status of public transportation in the state and the Council works hard to create a roadmap for connecting more Mainers with improved services. Their recommendations are the result of a distillation process that includes input from dozens of organizations and communities across Maine and offer

critical insight into the persistent gaps in unmet transportation needs and how to close them.

As the state continues to grow, so must emphasis on funding and improving public transportation systems in rural and urban areas. The presence or absence of public transportation infrastructure informs development patterns. In order to avoid sprawl – to build housing where it makes sense, retain Maine’s open-spaces and natural resources, and protect productive farmland – the state must promote and support public transportation.

LD 1359 is not the *first* step towards that goal, but it is the critical *next* step. Clarifying MDOT’s role in implementing PTAC’s recommendations – thereby creating accountability and transparency as the biennial plan shifts hands – is necessary for rural and urban communities to grow equitably and sustainably.

GrowSmart Maine is willing to assist the committee in any way that is helpful.