



April 23, 2025

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Senator Tim Nangle, Senate Chair
Representative Lydia Crafts, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Testimony of TrainRiders Northeast Neither For Nor Against LD 1359, Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Develop Practices Regarding Public Transit

Dear Senator Nangle and Representative Crafts:

I am the President of TrainRiders Northeast. TrainRiders is the grassroots citizens' organization that was the driving force behind the initiation of the Downeaster passenger rail service between Brunswick and Boston and continues to strongly support that service to this day. It also supports improvements and expansion of passenger rail service in Maine and throughout the Northeast, where such expansion is rationally justifiable given current and projected economic and social conditions.

TrainRiders Northeast is neither for nor against the passage of LD 1359. Transparency in the allocation of any type of State funding is an admirable goal. On the other hand, this bill requires disclosure only of "public transit" funding and reduction of the local match required for "public transit" operators, and TrainRiders wonders why this mode of transportation has been singled out for this treatment. It is possible that the passage of these requirements only for public transit may result in that funding becoming a target for those who oppose this mode in general. Transportation is a multi-modal system, and transportation decisions should examine and compare the costs of each of these modes, not just of one single part of that system. Therefore, consideration should be given to making this requirement apply to public funding of other transportation modes, such as air, motor vehicles, and ferries, to clearly show how funding for each mode compares.

One additional point: the bill applies to "public transit" without defining that term, which leaves it ambiguous. For example, would it apply to private bus companies that receive State funds for some or all of their operations or equipment? Would it apply to the Downeaster passenger rail service? The bill leaves this unclear.

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For these reasons, as well as others, TrainRiders does not take a position on the passage of this bill. This Committee, however, should consider whether the bill, if it is to be passed, should be amended in response to the foregoing comments.

TrainRiders apologizes for its inability to attend the public hearing on this bill, which is now scheduled for April 23. As always, TrainRiders appreciates this opportunity to provide the Committee with its comments and stands ready to assist the Committee in its consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,



F. Bruce Sleeper, President

TrainRiders Northeast

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