



Natural Resources Council of Maine

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Dear Authors of the Maine State Transit Plan,

The Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization with more than 25,000 supporters statewide and beyond. For 60 years, NRCM has been protecting, restoring, and conserving Maine's environment, now and for future generations. We work statewide to:

- Protect the health of Maine's rivers, lakes, streams, and coastal waters;
- Promote sustainable communities through initiatives that reduce toxics pollution and waste;
- Decrease air and climate-changing pollution through energy efficiency and renewable sources;
- Conserve Maine lands and wildlife habitat, including our treasured North Woods; and
- Defend the federal environmental policies and programs that help protect Maine.

NRCM is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector and to providing more opportunities for all Mainers to access the state around them without total reliance on personal vehicles. We are pleased to see an updated Transit Plan that calls for more and more consistent funding for public transit in Maine, and we commend the authors on drafting this important framework outlining the state's transit needs and vision.

We are impressed by many elements of the plan, particularly the existing conditions assessment and the needs assessment. It is helpful to see exactly where our transit system currently stands, yet it is also evident that our state is not meeting the diverse needs of all Maine people where they are. The needs identified align with the needs we have heard from Maine residents, and we are glad to see climate change featured as a theme.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled and increasing public transit use and funding are explicit goals in Maine's Climate Action Plan, and the Transit Plan would be stronger if it made the connection to the Climate Action Plan more concretely. Improving Maine's public transit system is not just going to lead to climate benefits, it is also a critical component of the state's statutory responsibility to address climate change, and therefore must be acted upon with urgency. Maine's Clean Transportation Roadmap points to public transit expansion as an important tool to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and recommends transit-oriented development, case studies for rural transit, and a State Transit Plan implementation schedule with 5 and 10 year targets for transit investment goals. We hope to see that level of specificity in future plans.

Increasing the state contribution to terrestrial public transit would be the most effective way to best leverage incoming federal funds and alleviate the pressures of local match for Maine municipalities and regional organizations. The plan indicates that the amount of state funding directed to public transit is a policy decision and is not set in statute, and we hope to see Maine DOT supply more consistent and increased public transit funding to assist with local match and planning. Without assistance, much of

rural Maine does not have the capacity to implement effective transit solutions for an aging and low-income population that is increasingly in need of transportation assistance.

Thank you for the work you have done to assemble this plan and identify some potential solutions. With more specificity, implementation timelines, a stronger connection to Maine's Climate Action Plan, and concrete goals for accountability, this would be a stronger plan.

Sincerely,

Josh Caldwell

Climate and Clean Energy Outreach Coordinator

Natural Resources Council of Maine