



**Testimony of Marge Kilkelly on Behalf of
The Maine Council on Aging
To Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

**In Favor of LD 1451 - An Act to Strengthen Coordination of
Community Transportation**

Submitted April 10, 2025

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

My name is Marge Kilkelly, and I am a Policy Consultant for the Maine Council on Aging (MCOA) which is a broad, multidisciplinary network of over 140 organizations, businesses, municipalities, and older community members working to ensure we can all live healthy, engaged, and secure lives with choices and opportunities as we age at home and in community settings. The MCOA is a unifying force across sectors that is creating a new narrative about aging and older people in Maine with the goal of building local, statewide, and national support for the systemic changes needed to support our new longevity.

On behalf of the MCOA, and Jess Maurer, our Executive Director who has served on the Public Transit Advisory Committee since its inception, I am testifying in Favor of LD 1451 An Act to Strengthen Coordination of Community Transportation.

Transportation is one of the core social determinants of health because it is a foundational beam to all of our economic and social structures. Access to transportation not only ensures people can get to medical care when they need it, it also helps people stay healthy and sometimes avoid the need for medical care altogether. That's because, in order to stay healthy, we need reliable and consistent access to employment, financial resources, healthy food, exercise and socialization. Socialization is especially critical for older people because social isolation is now associated with increased rates of falls, coronary heart disease, stroke, suicide and depression.

According to Maine's 2025 Strategic Transit Plan, **72% of older Mainers live in communities without access to fixed route transit or one of the larger flex route transit systems.** This means that only 28% of older Mainers have access to public transportation of any kind to fall back on if they can no longer drive. In 2022, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimated that about 13% of people 70 and older did not have a driver's license. In Maine, this translates to about 29,031 people age 70 and older who do not hold a current driver's license.

Older adults who can't drive and don't have access to public transportation have to rely on others to get to medical appointments, the grocery store, social interaction, and the bank. If they don't live with a spouse or have a close family member, they have to rely on friends and neighbors to meet their basic transportation needs. If they don't have a solid network ready to help, an older person who cannot drive can deteriorate quickly due to a lack of socialization and inadequate nutrition. Because of these realities, older people often drive much longer than they feel comfortable driving, increasing the risk that they or someone else will be injured in an accident.

As Mainers, we have an abiding belief that a just society ensures everyone can equally participate in community life. This is true even if they cannot drive. To make sure we can all remain active, healthy members of our communities long into old age, we must increase access to public transportation by making necessary investments in the public transportation system in Maine.

There are complex challenges and barriers to providing transportation in a rural state. Older residents tend to live outside of service areas and expanding public transit to every part of Maine is not a feasible strategy. Meeting the transportation needs of rural Mainers requires a creative and multi-pronged approach that maximizes available resources of both human and other capital.

The Maine Strategic Transit Plan 2025 concluded that it would cost between \$7.4 and \$14 million each year to reach the modest goal of providing 20% of the unmet transportation need in Maine.

In these times of difficult budget constraints, we need to be creative.

LD 1451 seeks to address community transportation needs with state level coordination. The Maine Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility will build interagency communication, establish mobility management hubs in 8 regions and seek ways to reduce barriers to cost sharing. This will use the current resources more efficiently and to leverage additional federal funding. Interagency coordination leads to better systems, lower per trip costs and studies from states that have this model find that consumers miss fewer appointments and are more satisfied with the service they receive.

Passing LD 1451 will not solve all of Maine's transportation challenges but it certainly helps us take a step in the right direction and we urge your support. We also stand ready as partners to advance the important work of this legislation after it is enacted.

Thank you.