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April 8, 2024

The Honorable Peter Buttigieg
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I write in support of the application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to the Federal Transit Administration's FY24 Rebuilding Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. If awarded, funds would support the acquisition of up to 23 electric buses and associated charging infrastructure for Downeast Transportation Inc. (DTI), replacing 21 propane buses that are at the end of their useful life and expanding the fleet by two buses.

DTI is the authorized public transit provider for Hancock County, operating year-round commuter bus service between Bar Harbor, Bangor, Brewer, Franklin, Milbridge, and Ellsworth; it also provides seasonal Island Explorer shuttle service for Acadia National Park and the surrounding communities on Mount Desert Island and the Schoodic Peninsula. Many riders rely on these buses to commute to and from work, including a number of employees at the Jackson Laboratory, Hancock County's largest employer.

This project is also supported by the National Park Service and the non-profit conservation organization Friends of Acadia. The Island Explorer bus fleet enhances visitor enjoyment and accessibility at Acadia National Park, welcoming more than 9 million riders over its 25 years of service. It is anticipated that ridership of the Island Explorer will increase in the coming years, as annual park visitation has attained and remained at record high levels. The Island Explorer bus fleet is tremendously beneficial to visitors and to the local economy.

Thank you for your consideration of the MDOT's funding request. Please notify Deidre Grant in my Bangor office at (207) 945-0417 when a decision had been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator