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August 25, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for the Federal Transit Administration FY2022 Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program

Dear U.S. Secretary Buttigieg:

I write in support of the Maine State Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) submission for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) FY2022 Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program. Funding support for operating costs would enhance the Maine State Ferry Service's (MSFS's) ability to provide reliable ferry service that is critical to supporting the mid-coast islands of Maine.

I am a resident of the Town of Islesboro, Maine, one of the islands in Penobscot Bay served by the Maine State Ferry Service. Our town has approximately 600 full time residents and our population increases dramatically during the summer months. In addition to Islesboro, the MSFS also provides service to the communities of Vinalhaven, North Haven, Swan's Island, Frenchboro and Matinicus.

During the summer, our ferry runs nine round trips a day from and to Islesboro. During the off-season, there are seven round trips. Morning runs are filled with contractors and service providers, as well as USPS, UPS, and local building delivery services. The ferry carries cement trucks. Truck traffic is regular and heavy, as we have no gravel pit on the island. All our fuel comes over on the ferry. Residents of the island regularly use the ferry service for food shopping (the island has only two grocery stores), medical appointments, medication pick up (we have a health center but no pharmacy), veterinary services, hardware and building supplies and general shopping. The ferry also provides, when necessary, EMS services and spends the night here on the island in the event of medical emergencies. In short, it is essential to Islesboro's continued existence as a robust and vital community.

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I currently serve at the request of the Islesboro Select Board as Islesboro's representative of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board, which was created by the Maine Legislature. As such, I am quite familiar with the challenges the MSFS faces as the present time.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the pandemic has caused significant problems for ferry services, as well as public transportation in general. Reliability is an important component of the service provided by MSFS. The consequences of the pandemic have created serious staffing and personnel issues, and, not surprisingly, to the reliability of service as well. In addition, personnel costs and the cost of operating and maintaining the MSFS fleet of vessels present significant issues of continued affordability of the service to our island's residents.

These are important concerns, not only to our community but also, I believe, to the State of Maine. The inhabited islands of this state are an important part of what we are and anything that assists our islands to continue as vibrant and robust communities is, I believe, a benefit of all the citizens of Maine. I wholeheartedly support MaineDOT's proposal for the Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program. This opportunity presented by the FTA's Ferry Programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Program and Consolidated Appropriates Act will support necessary and critical transportation services to the Maine island communities and will be money well spent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John H. King, Jr.', is written over the typed name.

John H. King, Jr.

Jhk/hal