



February 15, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for the Maine Department of Transportation's application to the FY24 Federal Transit Administration's Rebuilding Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing on behalf of the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce to encourage you to fund the Maine Department of Transportation's (Maine DOT) application to the Rebuilding Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program to acquire up to 24 electric buses, plus charging stations and supporting infrastructure, for Downeast Transportation. These buses will upgrade the current fleet of propane buses that traverse rural Hancock County, Maine, as well as Acadia National Park, providing critically needed links to employment, outdoor recreation, and service centers.

The mission of the Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce is to promote the business interests and general welfare of the town of Bar Harbor, Mount Desert Island, Hancock County, and surrounding areas while providing exceptional services to visitors. It is because of that mission that our organization supports this grant application. As a rural destination, public transportation is critical to helping to reduce traffic congestion and maintain the infrastructure in place to support Bar Harbor and Mount Desert Island as an economic center in Maine. Our member businesses benefit greatly from the Island Explorer service because it brings employees and customers to town. The electrification of the Island Explorer fleet would help to further solidify the positive impact the service has had on our community.

Visitation at Acadia National Park remains at near record levels. In 2023, the park received over 3.8 million visits, most of which occurred during the months of May – October. The Island Explorer and county-wide transit services offered by Downeast Transportation provide critically needed transportation for employees to and within Acadia's gateway communities. These bus services are also a vital part of car-free visits to popular destinations, such as the village centers of Mount Desert Island and Ocean

Drive and Jordan Pond in Acadia. Since its establishment in 1999, the Island Explorer has welcomed more than 9 million riders, including nearly 650,000 passengers in 2019.

The propane buses of the Island Explorer have helped reduce automobile emissions greatly in our region, and the proposed electrification of the fleet through the RAISE grant will help even further. Transit services in our region have high visibility, as many visitors try public transportation for the first time. This will be a valuable demonstration of how electric buses can be incorporated into transit fleets to advance sustainable energy goals, reduce costs, increase access to employment, and serve thousands of passengers.

We support Maine DOT's application to the RAISE grant program and encourage you to fund it. Thank you very much for considering this letter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (207) 801-2566 ext. 13 or [everal@visitbarharbor.com](mailto:everal@visitbarharbor.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Everal B. Eaton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "B".

Everal Eaton  
Executive Director  
Bar Harbor Chamber of Commerce  
PO Box 158  
Bar Harbor, ME 04609