

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 20, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We write in strong support of the application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) for funding through the FY2022 Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program. If awarded, this funding will be used to construct a replacement ferry for the Maine State Ferry Service's (MSFS) existing 35-year-old vessel, the *Margaret Chase Smith*.

The *Margaret Chase Smith* is the only means of public transportation to and from the rural community of Islesboro, Maine, and is the only way for vehicles to travel on and off the island, therefore providing a crucial link for residents and visitors to the island. Out of the six island communities that the MSFS serves, the Islesboro route is the most-traveled. In 2019 alone, the route carried over 180,000 walk-on passengers, and over 73,000 vehicles.

The community of Islesboro has roughly 600 year-round residents, with a summer population that swells to over 2,000. Residents and visitors alike rely on sustainable ferry service for access to jobs and resources, including emergency medical transports. The MSFS provides service to and from the island with nine round trips Monday through Saturday and eight round trips on Sundays during peak summer months.

Replacement of this aging vessel is not only crucial to maintaining reliable service to the island, but also to environmental stewardship as well. The Transportation Working Group of Maine's Climate Council has identified transportation as being responsible for 54 percent of Maine's greenhouse gas emissions. Responding to these findings, MaineDOT plans to replace the current vessel with one operated by an electric or hybrid propulsion system, thereby minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

We urge your careful consideration of this proposal, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, and ask that you please notify us or have your staff notify Trevor Hustus (Collins) at (202) 224-2523 and Corrinne Latti (Pingree) at (207) 774-5019 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,


Susan M. Collins
United States Senator


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress