



## THE MAINE LEGISLATURE

February 13, 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:

As members of the Maine Legislature who represent communities served by the Island Explorer bus system, we are writing 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.

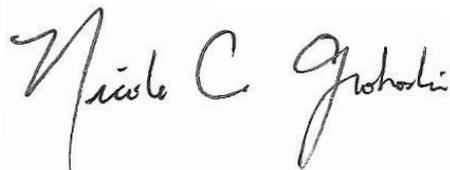
Visitation at Acadia National Park remains at near-record levels. In 2023, the park received over 3.8 million visits, most of which occurred from May through October. The Island Explorer and county-wide transit services offered by Downeast Transportation provide critically needed transportation for employees 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 as well as 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 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' first experience with

public transportation is an Island Explorer bus. Converting the Island Explorer buses will provide 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 us.

Sincerely,



Nicole Grohoski  
Senator, District 7  
P.O. Box 1732  
Ellsworth, ME 04605  
Nicole.Grohoski@legislature.maine.gov



Lynne Williams  
Representative, District 14  
13 Albert Meadow  
Bar Harbor, ME 04609  
Lynne.Williams@legislature.maine.gov



Holly Eaton  
Representative, District 15  
8 Hardy's Hill Road  
Deer Isle, ME 04627  
Holly.Eaton@legislature.maine.gov



Nina Milliken  
Representative, District 16  
276 Turkey Farm Road  
Blue Hill, ME 04614  
Nina.Milliken@legislature.maine.gov