



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 National Parks Conservation Association 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. We strongly support the effort 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 visitor services, outdoor recreation, and local businesses.

The National Parks Conservation Association strongly supports this grant application because it helps address overcrowding, congestion, and climate pollution in Acadia National Park and surrounding communities. Public transportation is a critical component in making our national parks more accessible, enjoyable, and safe for all visitors.

Visitation at Acadia National Park remains at near record levels. In 2023, the park received over 3.8 million visits, most of which occurred in May – October. The Island Explorer and county-wide transit services offered by Downeast Transportation provide critically needed transportation for visitors 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, 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. Ridership is expected to increase in future years.

As a Class 1 region under the Clean Air Act, we must do all we can to reduce air pollution in Acadia National Park. Like many national parks, Acadia suffers from unhealthy air and hazy views due to emissions of nitrous oxide, sulfur oxide, and particulate matter. In Maine, the transportation sector accounts for approximately half of all greenhouse gas emissions. The propane buses of the Island Explorer fleet have helped reduce greenhouse emissions and air pollution greatly in the Acadia region, and the proposed electrification of the fleet through the RAISE grant will help even further. Investing in vehicle electrification is a critical strategy to fight both climate change and air pollution.

We support Maine DOT's application to the RAISE grant program and encourage you to fund it. Thank you very much for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions,

Sincerely,



**Todd Martin** (he/him)  
*Northeast Senior Program Manager*

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