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April 29, 2020

Ms. K. Jane Williams
Acting Administrator
Federal Transit Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Williams:

I write in support of the application submitted by the Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) for funding through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) competitive Passenger Ferry Grant Program. If awarded, CBITD would use this funding for a diesel electric hybrid propulsion system to power its soon-to-be constructed new vessel.

Based in Portland, Maine, and operating since 1981, CBITD is a quasi-municipal entity that provides year-round ferry service to six unbridged islands in Casco Bay. The ferry system is a critical lifeline for the islands' fulltime and seasonal residents who would otherwise have no means of transportation to the mainland. As a result, CBITD is acutely aware of the myriad economic and environmental challenges that face our island communities.

CBITD is currently in the process of designing and constructing a new vessel to replace one that is beyond its useful life. As both our country and the State of Maine seek ways to reduce transportation emissions, new technology is being used in other parts of the world to power passenger vessels utilizing battery power sources. CBITD is pursuing funding to utilize this technology in place of a conventional diesel mechanical propulsion system. Not only does CBITD estimate this technology would allow them to eliminate up to 800 metric tons of CO2 emissions annually, the propulsion system will dramatically improve the rider and neighbor experience by eliminating exhaust fumes, excessive engine noise, and vibrations common on existing vessels.

As this would be one of the first public passenger ferry systems in the country fully utilizing this new electric hybrid technology, this project represents an important opportunity to pursue innovation within the transit industry and to demonstrate benefits that could spur others to seek forward-thinking approaches to the future of passenger vessel service.

Thank you for your attention to the Casco Bay Island Transit District's application. I urge your consideration of this application, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that your staff please notify [REDACTED] when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator