

## OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: February 18, 2021  
To: Transportation Committee  
From: Karen S. Nadeau, Legislative Analyst

### **LD 234 – An Act To Amend the Law Concerning the Annual Number of Ferry Service Trips to Matinicus Isle**

- Current law provides that ferry service must run at least 12 times per year and may run up to 36 times per year.
- This bill amends the law concerning ferry service to Matinicus Isle to remove the upper limit on the number of times per year the ferry may travel to Matinicus Isle.

#### **TESTIMONY:**

##### **Proponents:** *Resident of Matinicus Isle; Island Institute*

- Matinicus Island lies roughly 20 miles south-southeast of Rockland; We operate a plantation, hold annual town meeting, collect local taxes to fund our one-room school and operate public services and maintain a year-round working community.
- Matinicus is not a community of retirees nor well-to-do estate owners; most Matinicus residents are middle-class working families.
- Nobody on Matinicus relies on the Maine State Ferry Service as (MSFS) their only access to the mainland; the ferry service is primarily about moving vehicles and the sort of freight which must be delivered by vehicles, such as propane and heating fuel, building materials, appliances, trash and recyclables.
- Our ferry vessel is relatively small; only the shortest vessel in the fleet fits into our harbor and sea conditions limit the number of high-profile or heavy trucks on each trip in the interest of safety.
- We are asking that MSFS management and MaineDOT be allowed to determine our schedule based on demonstrated need without an arbitrary cap on service.
- The ability to remain flexible is a necessity in maritime operations and does not need to be in law; we feel the number of trips should become discretionary as the formula already has numerous considerations.
- It is important to note that this legislation does not require the ferry service to provide additional service to Matinicus or otherwise adjust operations in any manner.

##### **Opponents:** *None*

##### **NFNA:** *MaineDOT*

- MSFS currently provides vehicular ferry service to Matinicus – scheduling 35 trips per year (one trip per month in Dec, Jan, Feb; two trips per month in Mar and Nov; and 4 trips per month Apr thru Sept).
- Matinicus is the longest trip made by the ferry service; the island is 23 miles from Rockland and a one-way trip takes 2 hours and 15 minutes. The trip is complicated by a shallow island landing, which requires a smaller vessel and special attention to the tides.
- Per state law, 50% of the operational cost of the ferry service is subsidized by the Highway Fund; the other 50% must come from Maine State Ferry Service revenues (ticket sales and parking fees).
- MaineDOT covers 100% of all capital costs associated with the service – boats, terminals, piers and other infrastructure.
- Maine's transportation funding challenges are daunting and the ongoing pandemic has compounded these challenges. Since the start of the pandemic, passenger trips are down 31% and vehicle trips are down 11%. This has resulted in an estimated revenue loss (and additional unplanned subsidy) of more than \$3 million.

#### **OTHER LEGISLATION:**

##### **LD 43 – AA To Require the Department of Transportation To Provide Ferry Service to Frenchboro**

**FISCAL IMPACT:** *Not yet determined.*