

Move to Benefit Maine's Pets Gathers Momentum

Pre-sales of specialty "adopt" license plates prompt introduction of new bill.

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The Maine Adoption Leaders Team (MALT), a partnership of private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, is one step closer to creating a specialty license plate that would benefit the state's animal welfare program.

Planet Dog, a member of MALT, announced Tuesday that 2,000 "Adopt" specialty plates have been pre-sold. That means a bill allowing for the creation of the plate can now be proposed to the state Legislature for the 2009 session.

"This was huge collaborative effort," said Catherine Frost, Planet Dog's MALT representative. "What I think made it succeed in record time was the combination of teamwork and passion for animal welfare."

MALT formed in May to promote an animal welfare specialty license plate initiative that would support the State of Maine Animal Welfare Program. Specifically, half of the proceeds from the sale of the plate would help fund animal cruelty and abuse investigations and half would help fund the Help Fix ME Program, which is Maine's spay and neuter program for low-income residents.

In addition to Planet Dog, MALT includes representatives from Happy Tails, a doggie day care, boarding, and training facility; the Animal Welfare Society; The Animal Refuge League; the Maine Chapter of the Humane Society of the United States; and the State of Maine Animal Welfare Program.

The brightly colored plate designed by MALT displays a cat, dog, rabbit, horse, and bird with the words "respect. love. adopt."

Before being released by the state Bureau of Motor Vehicles, specialty plates must go through a legislative process. And only after 2,000 license plates have been pre-purchased by Maine residents can a bill be introduced to the state Legislature.

Now that MALT has met that requirement, the bill can move forward. Senator John Nutting, of Leeds, Maine, is sponsoring the initiative.

If approved, the plate could be available by late summer 2009.