



February 28, 2023

Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 31
An Act to Allow the Commissioner of Transportation to Reduce Speed Limits at Construction Sites with Input from Municipalities and Utilities

Greeting distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation:

My name is James Tassé, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) on LD 31, “An Act to Allow the Commissioner of Transportation to Reduce Speed Limits at Construction Sites with Input from Municipalities and Utilities.” BCM is neither for nor against this legislation.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians. We work to make Maine better for bicycling and walking, and to protect the safety and rights of vulnerable users of the public ways.

The BCM frequently hears complaints from residents across the state about the threat posed by speeding traffic on residential roads and downtown streets. Unfortunately, the process of setting speed limits in Maine is based upon the 85th percentile speed (which is the speed that 85% of drivers will drive at or below) of traffic on a road. If a study shows that the 85th percentile speed exceeds the posted limit on a road, the posted speed limit may actually be increased. So as a policy that would sidestep absolute reliance on the 85th percentile, we support this bill, which would provide more flexibility to reduce speeds without having to go through the full process of a speed study conducted by MaineDOT.

However, we feel that the purview of this bill is too narrow. The MaineDOT commissioner, as well as municipal leaders, should be able to exercise the authority to lower speeds on roads in other contexts besides just construction zones. While roadway workers absolutely deserve the protections afforded by lower speeds in the areas they are working, the BCM feels that these same protections should be extended more broadly to vulnerable users in other locations as well.

We therefore are more supportive of other bills, such as LD 527, which would give municipalities similar authority to lower speed limits on roads posted 35 mph or less and with traffic volumes of 6000 AADT or less.



We appreciate that LD 31 opens the conversation on the specific, situational reduction of speed limits in certain contexts. We believe it is important for the Legislature to be aware that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the process that sets speed limits across the state. BCM believes that the same authority to reduce speeds in construction zones should be extended to municipalities so that they can better manage speeding traffic in residential and downtown contexts as well.

Thank you for your time and service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "James Tassé".

James Tassé
Assistant Director
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

James Tasse
Bicycle Coalition of Maine
LD 31

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