



March 21, 2023

Testimony in Opposition to LD 687

An Act to Increase the Allowable Width of a Snowplow

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). The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians, and to protect the safety and rights of vulnerable users of the public ways. The Coalition is opposed to LD 687, which would increase the allowable size of snowplows for use by plowing contractors from 108 inches (nine feet) to 126 inches (ten feet six inches) for 48 hours before and after a snow event. The Coalition believes that these larger plows will pose a hazard to all users of the road, and people walking or bicycling along winter roads in particular.

Roadway lanes in Maine are commonly 11 feet wide. MaineDOT Engineering Instruction C-1 establishes the standard lane widths for all roads in the state, which for non-highway roads is generally 11-12 feet, except in certain municipal areas posted 35 mph or less, where they may be reduced to 10 feet to create space for bicycle facilities.

According to Title 29-A, Chapter 21, §2380, the only vehicles that may legally use plows over nine feet in width are municipal and state trucks exclusively clearing public roadways, and this limitation is a wise policy. The widest plow currently permitted for general use on Maine roads is 9 feet, which provides a scant foot and half of clearance on each side in a twelve foot lane—and less for smaller lanes. Even under current rules, plow drivers need to use special care while driving to avoid causing crashes.

There is no public benefit to passing LD 687—most parking lots can be cleared adequately with nine foot plows. Municipal and state vehicles must drive until the roads are clear, and are providing a critical public function. Parking lot contractors are generally working for private businesses, and have incentive to finish as quickly as possible. They hustle from parking lot to parking lot with their blades up, in many cases at night and/or in poor weather. Other drivers and users at the roads' edge will be staking their lives on the ability of these contract drivers, rushing to clear parking lots, to stay perfectly in their lane.

LD 687 might be improved by creating restrictions on the types of vehicles that can carry these plows (e.g. front loaders, small dump trucks), and by limiting the distances they can travel or the contexts in which they can operate (e.g. lots of over an acre). But as currently drafted, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine urges an Ought Not to Pass report from the committee.

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 687

Testimony in Opposition to LD 687
An Act to Increase the Allowable Width of a Snowplow

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). The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians, and to protect the safety and rights of vulnerable users of the public ways. The Coalition is opposed to LD 687, which would increase the allowable size of snowplows for use by plowing contractors from 108 inches (nine feet) to 126 inches (ten feet six inches) for 48 hours before and after a snow event. The Coalition believes that these larger plows will pose a hazard to all users of the road, and people walking or bicycling along winter roads in particular.

Roadway lanes in Maine are commonly 11 feet wide. MaineDOT Engineering Instruction C-1 establishes the standard lane widths for all roads in the state, which for non-highway roads is generally 11-12 feet, except in certain municipal areas posted 35 mph or less, where they may be reduced to 10 feet to create space for bicycle facilities.

According to Title 29-A, Chapter 21, §2380, the only vehicles that may legally use plows over nine feet in width are municipal and state trucks exclusively clearing public roadways, and this limitation is a wise policy. The widest plow currently permitted for general use on Maine roads is 9 feet, which provides a scant foot and half of clearance on each side in a twelve foot lane—and less for smaller lanes. Even under current rules, plow drivers need to use special care while driving to avoid causing crashes.

There is no public benefit to passing LD 687—most parking lots can be cleared adequately with nine foot plows. Municipal and state vehicles must drive until the roads are clear, and are providing a critical public function. Parking lot contractors are generally working for private businesses, and have incentive to finish as quickly as possible. They hustle from parking lot to parking lot with their blades up, in many cases at night and/or in poor weather. Other drivers and users at the roads' edge will be staking their lives on the ability of these contract drivers, rushing to clear parking lots, to stay perfectly in their lane.

LD 687 might be improved by creating restrictions on the types of vehicles that can carry these plows (e.g. front loaders, small dump trucks), and by limiting the distances they can travel or the contexts in which they can operate (e.g. lots of over an acre). But as currently drafted, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine urges an Ought Not to Pass report from the committee.

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

Sincerely,

James Tassé
Assistant Director
Bicycle Coalition of Maine