

Brenton Dupee
Portland
LD 1634

Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you today in support of LD 1634, a bill that aims to empower our municipalities by granting them the authority to set lower motor vehicle speed limits without the need for a Department of Transportation speed study. This legislation, sponsored by Senator Rick Bennett, addresses the outdated approach to speed-setting and provides a safer, more equitable environment for our communities.

The bill allows municipalities to take action more quickly to lower speeds, improving safety and quality of life for all residents. By enabling towns and cities to lower speed limits by up to 10 miles per hour, and no lower than 20 miles per hour, we provide an effective, low-cost tool for slowing vehicle speeds. Research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has shown that reducing speed limits has a significant impact on overall speeding and decreases instances of vehicles traveling at dangerous speeds.

LD 1634 will modernize Maine's approach to speed-setting, which currently relies on the problematic 85th percentile rule. This rule often results in higher, not lower, posted speeds. Many states, such as Minnesota and Oregon, have already moved away from this approach, and the National Association of City Transportation Officials is urging updates to the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways to end the use of the rule.

This bill matters for several reasons:

1. Equity: Slower speeds make streets safer and more inviting for people who walk, bike, and use mobility devices, especially for those who lack the option of driving.
2. Transportation Safety and Choice: Maine residents love to walk and bike, but many feel unsafe on our roads. To increase transportation choice, we must make our roads safer for everyone.
3. Climate Action: Slowing traffic in activity centers allows more people to walk, bike, and roll for day-to-day trips, reducing vehicle miles traveled.
4. Fiscal Health: This bill will increase real estate values and retail activity in areas with slower speeds, directly increasing the local tax base.
5. Economic Development: By slowing vehicle speeds in downtowns and village centers, we create safer streets that boost retail sales, economic activity, and investment.
6. Quality of Life: Safe streets are critical for enabling Mainers to be physically active and socially connected in their communities.

In conclusion, LD 1634 will provide municipalities with the tools they need to create safer, more equitable, and more prosperous communities. Let's support this bill and work towards a better future for Maine and its residents. Thank you.