



TOWN OF GRAY

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

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April 24, 2023

Maine Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Testimony in support of LD1634

Honorable Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and members of the Legislative Committee on Transportation:

On behalf of the Town of Gray, I write in support of LD1634 - *An Act to Grant Municipalities the Authority to Set Certain Lower Motor Vehicle Speed Limits Without a Department of Transportation Speed Study*. The Town of Gray is in the planning and design stages of a revitalized Gray Village, which is an historic center of economic activity for the town, and which has community economic development potential that is hampered by substantial through-traffic from the Maine Turnpike (I-95 Exit 63 is directly adjacent to two complicated intersections known as "Gray Corner"), Route 202/4, Route 100, Route 26, and Route 115. Heavy vehicle traffic cuts through the Gray Village, north to Lewiston/ Auburn on Route 100, to avoid the toll booth in New Gloucester. This traffic diversion contributes to 67-foot trucks regularly coming within a breath of pedestrians walking on Gray Village sidewalks who, if they are brave enough, must traverse intersections up to 80' in length to cross Main Street. These untenable safety conditions are repairable with better street design, but as of yet we have been unable to resolve Gray's desire for a bicycle and pedestrian (bike-ped) friendly street system that supports local development, with the Maine Department of Transportation's (MeDOT) assertion that these streets need to be designed to road standards for highway "levels of service", with the preferences of truck drivers and the speed of through-traffic taking precedence over those of local residents and the Town's economic future.

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Lowering traffic speed makes streets feel safer for bike-ped use, especially for those who are less experienced riders or those who need more time to walk across a street or road. It reduces vehicle miles travelled by creating bike-ped friendly streets, which improves community health, reduces climate impacts, and increases quality of life. It creates places with higher real estate value and greater development potential. Despite these obvious gains for a town like Gray, which has a 2020 Comprehensive Plan that directs exactly these types of local investments in a pedestrian-friendly Gray Village that invites new business and real estate development, we have been told that we cannot expect the road construction projects slated for the Gray Village will be designed with these goals as the top priority. Without authority like that granted in LD1634, we have little influence over the final design decisions.

We believe that streets can be designed to slow traffic naturally, and that lower speeds will make Gray safer with only minimal delays for through-traffic, and I have great hope that Gray and MeDOT will come to an agreement on a people-safe street design. But if Gray and other municipalities are unable to convince MeDOT that mutually beneficial designs for local economies and the state economy are possible, passing LD1634 will at least give municipalities some form of local control to reduce speeds to levels that feel are safer for residents and business owners.

Thank you for your consideration in support of LD1634.

Respectfully,



Nate Rudy, Town Manager

CC: Gray Town Council

Nathaniel Rudy
Gray
LD 1634

Submitted in support of LD1634 on behalf of the Town of Gray