

Jason Shiers
Norway
LD 1634

Essentially, I am here to support LD 1634 as it will help municipalities streamline safety and the development of their comprehensive planning relative to growth and health of their communities.

In my experience in construction, safety shouldn't involve a lot of red tape. I wish to describe my situation as a small town business developer to help provide a clear example of how this bill is an important step forward for folks like me and towns like Norway.

In many Maine towns, Main Streets are also state highways, as is the case in Norway, where routes 117 & 118 traverse. As downtowns in places like Norway revitalize and grow, their Main Streets begin to include areas not exactly on Main Street where people wish to walk, exercise, enjoy, shop, play, work and live. For example, in Norway, the efforts of the Western Foothills Land Trust have created incredible opportunities for residents and destination seekers to gain better access to the outdoors.

My project—Lakeside Norway—seeks to further these efforts. We're located less than a quarter mile west of the end of Main Street on 6.6-acres of historic commercial property, with over 1400-linear feet of shoreline of Lake Pennesseewassee. We are renovating an old warehouse to help Norway Brewing Company to expand; creating new boat slip rental and outdoor recreation spaces for public and private use; and establishing an outdoor retail garden center that localizes green solutions relative to climate change and lake water quality issues.

The underlying mission of Lakeside Norway aims to connect (or re-connect, that is) our residential and business downtown communities with the lake so that they can directly access and share the lake from downtown. In addition, we're also creating coalitions with local charities—such as the Maine Dragon Boat Club, the Cancer Resource Center of Western Maine and Western Maine Recovery Center—to provide inclusive lake-based four-season outdoor recreation, educational programming and entertainment-driven fundraising. Furthermore, our property abuts both town-owned and land-trust preservation areas with amazing trail systems, which will become accessible from our shoreline during all four seasons of the year.

There is a town-maintained sidewalk that extends from Main Street past our property, along 15 residential homes, past a popular marina and terminates across the highway (Lake Road) at a staple dining establishment frequented by local and seasonal residents. Currently, the speed limit leaving Main Street where it becomes Lake Road (rt 118) changes from 25 mph to 40 mph, which makes for dangerous pedestrian crossing; also limiting the use of the maintained sidewalk.

While we have a town-approved site plan designed, we're unable to have crosswalks installed on this stretch of road, as it is a state highway with a speed limit above 35-mph. Our Town Manager has informed us that there is significant red tape involved to get the MDOT to reduce the speed limit. While the LD 1634 may not be able to apply to our situation, it is an important step to help empower municipalities to be able to make better decisions and take more immediate actions regarding public safety on state roads that extend through their developing Main Street areas. Providing public safety for their community is a municipality responsibility.

Thank you, Jason Shiers