



TOWN OF GRAY

Henry Pennell Municipal Complex
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www.graymaine.org

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

Nate Rudy, Town Manager
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(207) 657-3339

May 11, 2023

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

RE: Testimony in support of LD 1673

Honorable Senator Pierce, Representative Gere, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Housing:

On behalf of the Town of Gray, I write in support of LD 1673 - *An Act to Encourage Affordable Housing And Mixed-Use Development By Establishing A Thriving Corridors Program*. 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 significant housing 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 tractor trailer 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 friendly street system that supports housing and 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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Taking a coordinated approach to transportation and land use planning, with the State helping to support local housing and economic development objectives, can help create streets that feel safer and that have a greater chance for attracting investment. Slower, safer streets are critical for making a place comfortable and safe for future residents. This kind of coordinated land use and transportation plan that results in more walkable and bikeable places also improves community health, reduces climate impacts, and increases quality of life. 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 housing, business, and real estate development, we have been told that we cannot expect the road construction projects slated for Gray Village to be designed with these goals as the top priority. Without a coordinated effort between the State and the Town, and support for local planning that works to advance both state and local goals, we have little ability to get housing built.

We believe that streets can be designed to slow traffic naturally, and that lower speeds will make Gray safer and more attractive for residential and other development, with only minimal delays for through-traffic. I have great hope that Gray and MeDOT will come to an agreement on a people-safe street design. Passing LD 1673 will begin to give municipalities some support from the State in advancing these critical local action plans that seek to produce housing in our town centers and corridors.

Thank you for your consideration in support of LD 1673.

Respectfully,

Nate Rudy, Town Manager

CC: Gray Town Council

Nathaniel Rudy
Town of Gray
LD 1673

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