

Matthew Donovan
Bowdoinham
LD 29

My name is Matthew Donovan, age 26, from Bowdoinham, Maine, and I am writing to express my support of LD 29.

In 2024, Maine ranked 45 out of 50 states for funding bicycle and walking infrastructure. As one of many residents who chooses to walk and bike on a daily basis, I am concerned for the safety of cyclists. I argue that the construction of the Merrymeeting Trail would not only contribute to our state's great industry of outdoor recreation, but also provide safe locomotion for many Mainers.

According to the MDOT, over half of all cycling accidents from 2019 to 2023 occurred when a motorist either failed to yield right of way, improperly turned, followed too closely, or were otherwise driving in a reckless manner. It is also worth noting that according to this data, over 85 percent of bicycle accidents occurred in broad daylight, in clear, dry weather conditions. Despite taking all possible personal safety measures, cyclists have been fatally injured as a product of this proximity to motorists.

Safe-passing laws and other "Share the Road" initiatives are a step in the right direction, however the separation of pedestrians and motorists is critical. Funding the construction of the Merrymeeting Trail would firstly mitigate cycling accidents in a way that simply reducing speed limits or modifying existing intersections would not. Secondly, it would provide a huge area of the state access to non-motor travel. Driving a car is a privilege that many Mainer's do not have, as some 40,000 homes are without access to a motor vehicle. Meanwhile, the demand for adequate public transportation remains unmet. The approval of LD 29 will ensure that a higher level of pedestrian safety, access, and dignity is attainable for all Mainers.

To all the committee members, thank you for reading this reply, and I encourage you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 29.