

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 1010 - *An Act to Amend the State's Vehicle Inspection Law by Requiring Inspections Biennially*

and

LD 661 - *An Act to Amend Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements*

and

LD 320- *An Act to Repeal Certain Motor Vehicle Inspection Requirements*

April 8, 2025

MMA has chosen to focus our response to both LD 320 and LD 661 the list of inspection related bills this committee will be considering because it is the most egregious of the proposed legislation. However, municipal officials feel the sentiments outlined in this testimony apply to all legislation that attempts to exempt certain vehicles from inspection or lengthens the time between inspections beyond current law.

Annual inspections are a responsibility we assume to make sure our vehicles are safe for our family members, neighbors, and other drivers. The cost is minimal compared to the catastrophic mechanical failures the process can unmask before a potentially fatal accident. LD 661 would require inspections of vehicles only after an accident has occurred and further limits the inspection to the accident damaged parts. LD 320 repeals all standards entirely.

Vehicle inspections are crucial to road safety as we rely on other vehicles on the road to have adequate stopping power for sudden road hazards, which include meandering children and distracted pedestrians. Road conditions, tires, speed, and adequate brakes are crucial to reducing accidents and saving lives. These are not items that have a long lifespan as they are used daily.

Cracked windshields and bad wiper blades reduce visibility for drivers in Maine's harsh and ever-changing weather. They are not parts dependent on the purchase date of the vehicle but rather use. Ball joints regardless of the age of a vehicle are pummeled annually by our weather impacted roads, aging infrastructure, and even construction hazards such as uneven payment.

A ball joint failure can be catastrophic and fatal particularly at highway speeds.

Even under perfect conditions, brake pads have an average lifespan of 15,000 – 35,000 miles, which is an average years' worth of driving in a rural state. Tires, a very expensive vehicle necessity, vary with respect to useful life, with cheaper softer tires losing their tread quickly on rough Maine roads reducing their ability to stop even further.

Municipal officials understand the economic hardship faced by our residents who lack the capacity to shoulder significant vehicle repair needs. The answer to this problem is not to reduce our safety standards, but to invest in our neighbors through transportation alternatives or safety grant programs for low income individuals. Officials urge you to vote ought not to pass on the legislation that reduces the inspection standards in existing law and further support adequately increasing the fee for an inspection to match the cost of the time the certified individuals spend on promoting vehicle safety through a knowledgeable review.