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Maine's Rural Development Council

**Testimony of Joe Oliva, Outreach and Communications Director of
GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 287, An Act To Require And Encourage Safe And
Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects**

January 6, 2026

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Housing and Economic Development,

My name is Joe Oliva and I am the Outreach and Communications Director for GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth. We advocate for comprehensive policies and funding for smart growth practices and outcomes.

LD 287 does something very important: in a meaningful way, it connects transportation project funding to public safety while establishing clear criteria for the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) to prioritize projects that achieve smart growth development goals. In other words, it correctly assesses transportation projects as being an integral part of community development – and that to build communities in which people are safe and can access housing, recreational, and other life-affirming opportunities, infrastructure investment encouraging the criteria listed in Section Two of this bill must be prioritized.

This bill also gets at the heart of the affordability problem that Mainers across the state are grappling with. Funding projects that encourage access to multi-modal transportation and mixed land use means less reliance on cars. The requirements outlined in LD 287 will bring more resources and opportunities closer to where people live and reduce traffic to access local businesses, schools, and recreation areas; thereby cutting costs for Mainers at the pump and, in certain instances, creating the conditions that make living without a car possible.

For municipalities, transportation infrastructure that encourages denser development and mixed land use can also reduce municipal budgets. That sprawl leads to strained municipal budgets is a well documented fact, but on the flip side of the coin is the promise that, for whatever costs are incurred for upgrading town managed infrastructure due to dense growth patterns (downtowns and Main Streets), those investments will be paid for (and then some).

Not only would LD 287 make streets safer for all users, it would also promote the types of development that makes affordable housing easier to build, addresses the affordability crisis for Mainers and municipalities alike, and protects essential farmland and open spaces for recreation. We strongly urge the committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 287, a bill that appropriately recognizes crucial transportation infrastructure investments as part of a greater housing strategy.