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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.