



March 2, 2023

Testimony in Support of LD 527
An Act to Allow Municipalities to Create Bicycle and Pedestrian Zones
with Reduced Speed Limits

Greetings distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation:

My name is Angela King, and I submit this testimony on behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) in support of LD 527 An Act to Allow Municipalities to Create Bicycle and Pedestrian Zones with Reduced Speed Limits.

The Bicycle Coalition of Maine is the statewide organization that advocates for bicyclists and pedestrians. We work to make Maine better for bicycling and walking, and to protect the safety and rights of vulnerable users of the public ways.

The BCM frequently hears complaints from Maine citizens about the threat posed by speeding traffic on residential roads and downtown streets. These complaints are often driven by frustration that their town will not reduce the speed limits, but municipalities in Maine have extremely limited authority to change speed limits. Even spot changes in speed limits on local roads require a MaineDOT study. And because the DOT methodology emphasizes 85th percentile speeds in setting speed limits, if a study shows that 85th percentile speeds exceed the posted limit, the posted speed limit may actually be increased.

LD 527 returns to local government and law enforcement the authority to reduce speed limits to 25 mph on certain low speed and low volume roadways without a formal MaineDOT speed study.

The roads in these bicycle and pedestrian zones must be low speed to begin with so that posted reductions to 25mph will not create hazardous speed differentials between drivers. Lowering the speed limit of a road from 35 to 25 mph is a modest adjustment to an already relatively low speed context.

The 6000 average annual daily traffic volume target is based upon Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommendations on the types of roads suitable for on-road bicycle



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facilities without physical separation from traffic. On roadways with higher volumes or speeds over 35 mph, FHWA recommends fully separated facilities.

LD 527 also clarifies that a municipality can install safe traffic calming measures such as speed tables, curb extensions, and flex posts, to reinforce the lower speed limits of the bicycle and pedestrian zones.

It is important to note that LD 527 still requires a municipality to consult with local law enforcement regarding speeding violations, complaints and safety concerns before creating these low speed zones.

BCM believes that LD 527 gives municipalities an appropriately limited authority to manage speeding on their roadways by permitting specific, situational reduction of speed limits in certain contexts. It will restore a measure of local control to one of a communities' most important shared assets: neighborhood streets.

BCM urges an Ought to Pass vote on this bill.

Thank you for your time and service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Angela King
Advocacy Manager
Bicycle Coalition of Maine