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**Testimony of Meghan Russo
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 131st Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
In Opposition to LD 1634**

An Act to Grant Municipalities the Authority to Set Certain Lower Motor Vehicle Speed Limits Without a Department of Transportation Speed Study

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Meghan Russo, Manager of Legislative and Constituent Services at MaineDOT. MaineDOT respectfully opposes LD 1634, *An Act to Grant Municipalities the Authority to Set Certain Lower Motor Vehicle Speed Limits Without a Department of Transportation Speed Study*.

LD 1634 grants municipalities the authority to set a speed limit on a certain road or section of road without assuming the responsibility of setting speeds within the entire municipality. It allows municipalities to do so without a MaineDOT speed study. While the bill does require public input and a municipality to make physical changes to the roadway in which the speed will be lowered on to promote better compliance with a posted speed limit, it does not specify what those changes should or would include. The bill also does not require a municipality to notify MaineDOT when they lower a speed, which we find problematic.

MaineDOT is the agency responsible for setting speed limits on both state and town roads with the approval of the Maine State Police. The setting of speed limits is an engineering decision based on a multitude of criteria including roadway geometry, crashes, number of entrances, bike/ped usage, and travel speeds on the roadway. Lowering a speed limit by itself will not slow people down. Traffic calming measures must also be considered and implemented in many cases. MaineDOT works with communities to develop traffic calming strategies that could allow reductions in speed.

Many studies conducted over several decades across the country have shown that a driver's speed is influenced more by the appearance of the roadway and the prevailing traffic conditions than it is by the posted speed limit. Some drivers will obey the lower posted speed while others will feel it's unreasonable and will simply ignore it. This disrupts the uniform traffic flow and

increases crash potential between the faster and the slower drivers. When traffic is traveling at different speeds, the number of breaks in traffic to permit safe crossing is reduced. Pedestrians also have greater difficulty in judging the speed of approaching vehicles.

MaineDOT has a full-time bicycle-pedestrian coordinator that works with municipalities on location to observe bike/ped safety concerns. In addition, municipalities can request from MaineDOT a road safety audit where department staff along with municipal staff visit areas of concern, observe traffic and speeds, existing roadway design, and discuss potential remedies to any issues that may be present.

MaineDOT also offers free of charge several tools to municipalities that can assist with traffic calming and increasing pedestrian safety. These include Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (illuminated signs at crosswalks), Dynamic Speed Feedback Signs (signs that alert motorists to their speeds and when they are traveling too fast), Flashing School Zone Signs, and pedestrian in-road crosswalk signs.

It is for the above reason that MaineDOT opposes LD 1634 and urges this committee to vote ought not to pass. Thank you and I would be happy to try and address any questions you might have or bring additional information to the work session.