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**Testimony of Nancy Smith, CEO of GrowSmart Maine
in support of LD 1292 An Act To Codify The Maine Turnpike Authority's
Contributions To The Highway Fund With Regard To The Sensible
Transportation Policy Act**

April 8, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation.

My name is Nancy Smith, I live in Ellsworth, and I am the CEO of GrowSmart Maine. We are a statewide non-partisan non-profit organization helping communities navigate change in alignment with smart growth.

We partner with Build Maine to co-host a transparent crowd-sourcing of policy proposals that has drawn together over a hundred people from across Maine and beyond. Policy Action 2025 follows Policy Action 2023 from the 131st Legislature. Each session we strive, **“to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas.”**

GrowSmart advocates for transportation policy that ties in land use, housing, environmental and economic goals to contribute to a sense of community vitality. This bill presents key strategies to achieve this goal and is a part of Policy Action 2025.

LD 1292 would go a long way towards strengthening the Sensible Transportation Policy Act and the Highway Fund, thus rebalancing transportation policy priorities in the state and offering increased funding for the Department of Transportation to pursue and implement projects that address transportation needs outside of building new highways.

The Sensible Transportation Policy Act requires that transportation planning decisions, capital investment decisions and project decisions (1.) minimize harmful effects of transportation, (2.) be based on an evaluation of the full range of reasonable alternatives, (3.) give preference to transportation system management, demand management, and improvements to the existing system and other modes before increasing highway capacity, and (4.) involve local governmental bodies and the

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public. This is a good piece of transportation policy that needs to be reasserted.

As it stands today, the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) generates an operating surplus of over \$40 million a year from toll revenue while the state has a \$300+ million deficit in the highway fund. Clarifying and codifying the obligations that MTA has to the highway fund is the first step in closing that gap. Currently there is no process to determine whether the surplus of the Authority is being put to its best-possible use of the State and its transportation needs.

Communities that are in the midst of navigating growth must consider the current and future needs of their residents – from balancing building housing to protecting open space and farmland. Transportation infrastructure is a critical component that shapes development patterns. Smart growth principles advocate for development where it makes sense, funnelling pressure away from open spaces and towards growth areas and preexisting Main Streets. What's clear is that building new highways leads to one thing: sprawl.

Nancy E. Smith

Build Maine + GrowSmart Maine

POLICY ACTION 2025

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PROBLEM STATEMENT Maine's current uncoordinated approach to building places is causing real, unintended, and significant social, environmental, financial, economic, and cultural challenges and requires the creation of a cohesive approach to land development, redevelopment, and placemaking.

THE GOAL of Policy Action 2025 is to address barriers to and create incentives for equitable, sustainable growth and development that strengthens downtowns and villages of all sizes while pulling development pressure away from productive and open natural areas. We do so acknowledging that Maine has urban, rural, and suburban settings for which any solution may/may not be a fit and a variety of people who deserve to be welcomed to their communities.

FOR TALKING POINTS AND MORE: [Public Folder for PA25](#)

Policy Action 2025 Priority Bills Supporting the Above Problem and Goal Statements

Working Group	BILL TITLE + Fact Sheet	SPONSOR	Bill # + Text	Committee and Status
1. Improved Transportation Funding	Resolve to Implement Recommendations of the Public Transit Advisory Council	Rep Crafts	LD 1359	
1. Improved Transportation Funding	An Act to Strengthen the the Sensible Transportation Policy Act	Sen Stacy Brenner	LD 1292	Transportation: PUBLIC HEARING 4.8
1. Improved Transportation Funding	An Act to Repeal the Laws Authorizing the Construction of a Multi-Lane Highway Connector to Gorham and to Return the Land Purchased under those laws to the Prior Property Owners	Sen Stacy Brenner	LD 1020	Transportation: PUBLIC HEARING 4.3
1. Improved Transportation Funding	Resolve to Establish a Working Group to Create a Plan to Reorganize the Maine Turnpike Authority Under the Department of Transportation	Sen Stacy Brenner	LR 1890	
1. Improved Transportation Funding	An Act to Improve the Economy, Safety and Stewardship of Taxpayer Dollars by Prioritizing the Selection of Transportation Projects	Rep Adam Lee	LR 1653	
2. Modernize the Growth Management Law	An Act to Revise the Growth Management Program Laws	Rep Melanie Sachs	LR 289	
3. State Regulations for Development in the Right Places	Resolve, Convene Stakeholder Group Tasked with Comprehensive Overhaul and Modernization of State Subdivision Statutes	Rep Jack Ducharme	LD 161	Housing: WORK SESSION 3.11
4. Strengthen Historic Rehab Tax Credit	An Act to Expand the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit	Rep Tavis Hasenfus	LD 435	Taxation: WORK SESSION 4.10
5. Tax Policy to Reduce Sprawl	An Act to Incentivize Improvements to Land by Providing for an Alternative Municipal Property Tax Assessment Rate	Rep Marc Malon	LD 1464	
6. Improve Municipal Capacity	An Act to Restrict Municipal Ordinance Requirements Regarding Housing Developments	Rep Traci Gere	LD 1247	
6. Improve Municipal Capacity	Resolve to Require the Preparation of Preapproved Building Types	Rep Traci Gere	LD 546	Housing: OTP-AM
6. Improve Municipal Capacity	An Act to Create the Statewide Housing Appeals Board	Rep Traci Gere	LR 2140	
6. Improve Municipal Capacity	An Act To Reduce Housing Costs By Not Requiring Fire Sprinkler Systems For Single-Family Homes And Duplexes	Rep Crafts	LD 659	Housing: PUBLIC HEARING 3.6
6. Improve Municipal Capacity	An Act To Prohibit Mandatory Parking Space Minimums In State And Municipal Building Codes	Rep Roeder	LD 427	Housing: WORK SESSION 3.27
7. Government Coordination	LD 1673 from last session, Thriving Corridors (no new bill)	Rep Traci Gere	Pending	
7. Government Coordination	An Act to Require and Encourage Safe and Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects	Rep Adam Lee	LD 287	
7. Government Coordination	An Act to Protect Rural Highway Capacity and Promote Long-term Economic Development	Rep Traci Gere	LR 2369	