



THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature
**LD 1531, "An Act to Better Protect Animal-drawn Vehicles and
Motorists on Public Roadways"**
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
April 23, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Stacey Guerin, and I have the privilege of representing Senate District 4. I'm here today to introduce LD 1531: "An Act to Better Protect Animal-drawn Vehicles and Motorists on Public Roadways."

This bill is about safety—plain and simple. It is not intended to add burdensome regulations or inconvenience any group. Rather, these updates are necessary changes that will ultimately help save lives.

Across Maine, particularly in our rural communities, animal-drawn vehicles continue to play an essential role in daily life. This is especially true for our Amish neighbors, for whom animal-drawn transportation isn't just occasional, but their primary mode of travel. Whether they're heading to town, to work, or to visit family, these horse-drawn wagons and buggies share the same roads as cars and trucks, which often travel at much higher speeds.

Unfortunately, when visibility is limited or signage is unclear, the mix of fast and slow-moving vehicles can become dangerous. We've all heard of close calls—and in some tragic cases, serious accidents—that could have been avoided if these vehicles had been more visible from a distance. I personally had a close call on a dark, rainy night when I nearly missed seeing a buggy until the very last second when I noticed a small, single flame that looked like a candle but was actually a small oil lamp..

Recent incidents involving horse-drawn buggies have highlighted significant road safety concerns in Maine. In Whitefield, a 1-month-old baby was ejected and injured when a truck struck an Amish buggy at an intersection; authorities noted the buggy was only lit by a lantern and lacked reflective signage. In Bradford, a Ford SUV attempting to pass a buggy collided with it from behind, leading to minor injuries for the three ejected occupants and necessitating the euthanasia of the horse due to severe injuries.

An example from Indiana, just 2 weeks ago three Amish siblings—Glenda Jo Yoder (13), Darrell Yoder (10), and Devon Yoder (9)—were killed when their horse-drawn buggy was rear-ended by a Mercedes GLA SUV on April 9, 2025. The children were on their way to school when the collision occurred, ejecting them from the buggy and resulting in their deaths at the scene. This heartbreaking event underscores the vulnerability of horse-drawn buggies on modern roads and the urgent need for enhanced safety measures to protect Amish communities.

While Maine law does have some provisions for lighting and reflectors on animal-drawn vehicles, the current regulations are vague and don't fully reflect how and when these vehicles are used. LD 1531 strengthens these requirements by establishing clear, specific standards for lighting and visibility. The bill ensures that animal-drawn vehicles are equipped with flashing yellow lights, as well as either a slow-moving vehicle emblem or reflective tape. It also provides

additional guidelines for when visibility is reduced, such as during nighttime, in poor weather, or any time windshield wipers are needed.

This is a common-sense update designed to protect both those using animal-drawn vehicles and the drivers who share the road with them. It's about giving everyone the best possible chance to see—and be seen—so that we can all get home safely.

There is a compelling reason to include strobe or flashing lights as part of this bill. Flashing lights are proven to be highly effective in low-light conditions such as dusk, dawn, fog, or nighttime. They make slow-moving vehicles like buggies much more conspicuous from a distance, giving drivers more time to react.

In addition to enhancing visibility, flashing lights can significantly reduce the risk of rear-end collisions, which account for a large number of buggy accidents. A strobe light alerts drivers approaching from behind much earlier than traditional reflectors or non-flashing lights.

Furthermore, adverse weather conditions—like rain, snow, and fog—can severely reduce visibility on the road. A strobe light is much more effective at cutting through these conditions than static lighting, making the buggy safer in inclement weather.

The idea of using flashing lights is not new. Cyclists—who, like buggies, are slow-moving vehicles—have long used flashing lights to enhance their visibility on the road. Studies show that flashing lights significantly increase the detection distance for cyclists, allowing drivers to notice them much sooner and react more appropriately. This principle is equally relevant for buggies on the road.

Research on bicycle safety has shown that flashing rear lights can increase a cyclist's detection distance by up to 2.8 times compared to cyclists without lights. It also helps drivers recognize the object as a bicycle more quickly, prompting them to take appropriate action.

Interestingly, flashing lights can also reduce daytime accidents. One study published in the journal *Accident Analysis & Prevention* found that cyclists using flashing rear lights during the day were 47% less likely to be involved in a collision.

By applying the same principle to animal-drawn vehicles, we can enhance the safety of buggies on our roads. Studies and real-world examples from states with large Amish populations, such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, show that accidents often occur due to rear-end collisions, collisions at intersections, or accidents while passing. These incidents are particularly common during periods of reduced visibility, and flashing lights can dramatically reduce these risks.

LD 1531 is a practical, necessary update to our laws that enhances safety for everyone on the road. It's based on proven principles from both research and real-world experience. By making animal-drawn vehicles more visible, we give everyone—the drivers of these vehicles and the motorists who share the road—the best possible chance to avoid an accident.

I respectfully ask for your support of this important bill. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.