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April 23, 2025

**Testimony of Meghan Russo
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

Neither for Nor Against

LD 1562, An Act Regarding Municipal Road Standards

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Meghan Russo, and I serve as the Director of Government Affairs at the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). While MaineDOT takes no formal position for or against LD 1562, we do have concerns with section one of the proposed legislation.

Section one would require local roads to be maintained in a condition that is “safe and convenient for travelers,” in accordance with standards established by MaineDOT. It also directs MaineDOT to establish a petition process for individuals who believe a municipality is unreasonably neglecting its responsibility to maintain local roads.

Currently, MaineDOT does not have established standards defining what constitutes “safe and convenient” for local roads, nor do we have a petition process for residents dissatisfied with municipal road conditions. MaineDOT is responsible for approximately 8,800 miles of state-maintained roadways. We do have design guidelines and construction specifications for state roads, which municipalities are welcome to use. We manage these roads through an asset management approach outlined in our annual three-year work plan. Responsibility for local roads, however, rests with municipalities and counties under longstanding home rule authority.

That said, MaineDOT does provide robust support to municipalities through our Local Roads Center, which has operated since 1986. This center offers advice, technical assistance, and training workshops for officials across Maine’s 486 towns, cities, counties, and Indian Reservations. Each year, we host around 100 training sessions statewide, reaching approximately 2,000 municipal officials. These workshops cover a range of topics, including gravel road maintenance, snow and ice control, paving, work zone safety, traffic signals, striping, drainage, and bridge and culvert maintenance. We promote these sessions by reaching out to at least two officials in every municipality and posting schedules on our website.

In addition, MaineDOT provides direct technical assistance through our “Road Ranger” and “Bridge Ranger” programs, offering one-on-one support to municipalities upon request.

We have shared our concerns about section one with the bill sponsor and outlined the services we currently provide to municipalities at no cost. MaineDOT is also willing to enhance outreach to ensure municipalities are more aware of the support available to them.

Should the committee choose to move forward with LD 1562, we respectfully recommend that section one be removed. We believe the services we already provide can continue to help municipalities maintain their local roads effectively.

Thank you.