



Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0016

Bruce A. Van Note
COMMISSIONER

May 1, 2025

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

In Opposition to

LD 1632 *An Act to Provide Incentives and Amend Laws Regarding Access to Protect Rural Highway Capacity and Promote Long-term Economic Development*

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Jennifer Grant and I serve as the Director of the Bureau of Planning at the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT). MaineDOT is opposed to LD 1632.

LD 1632 would require MaineDOT to prioritize state objectives over local decision-making on land use. MaineDOT already has a strong, community-driven approach, and the success of these initiatives depends heavily on local support. Many of the communities we work with are small, rural, and often lack formal planning staff. Adding new state-imposed requirements for accessing MaineDOT planning funds would create unnecessary barriers and burden these communities.

MaineDOT fully recognizes that land use is an essential part of transportation planning. Our Long-Range Transportation Plan highlights the importance of collaboration with state agencies, stakeholders, planning organizations, and — critically — local communities to advance Maine's transportation goals.

Our approach to community planning is built on genuine partnerships with local governments, centering their needs and visions. Programs like our Village Partnership Initiative thrive because they are locally initiated and led, giving communities ownership over their future. We have updated our Local Cost Share Policy to further support these efforts, ensuring that as projects move forward, the burden on local budgets decreases and more federal and state resources are leveraged. This model ensures both the department and the municipality are fully invested in a project's success.

Communities are enthusiastic when given the tools and a supportive state partner to shape their future. When the state tries to impose its own vision, that enthusiasm quickly disappears. MaineDOT remains committed to supporting towns, cities, and villages that want to grow in

ways that fit their own needs — but we believe that vision must come from the people who live there, not from the top down.

Much of what LD 1632 aims to accomplish is already happening through existing collaboration. Further restricting local flexibility would be counterproductive, and MaineDOT simply does not have the staff or funding to implement the additional mandates this bill proposes.

For these reasons, MaineDOT respectfully opposes LD 1632. Thank you.