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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION

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Testimony of Representative Traci Gere Introducing LD 1632
An Act to Provide Incentives and Amend Laws Regarding Access to Protect Rural Highway
Capacity and Promote Long-term Economic Development
April 30, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. I am Representative Traci Gere, and I represent House District 134, which encompasses Kennebunkport and coastal Biddeford and Kennebunk. I am before you today to present LD 1632, which would reestablish a process for protecting rural highways, align the process with Maine's Growth Management program, and provide incentives for multi-municipal regional transportation planning to create thriving corridors.

In my work on housing issues, I have had the opportunity to meet people in many communities all over the state who are working to revitalize their town and village centers at the same time that they face significant development pressure in rural areas. The former law that applied MaineDOT access management rules to all state highways, and not just controlled access highways, was repealed in 2013. This change has left many rural state highways vulnerable to sprawl development that may be unplanned, with often unintended consequences to sensitive rural lands and farmlands, community vitality, and economic development. This bill would bring all state highways, rather than just controlled access highways, back under Department of Transportation access management rules under the Sensible Transportation Policy Act.

LD 1632 does a few key things:

1. It specifies that MaineDOT will provide technical assistance to municipalities in developing community transportation plans through regional planning councils or other agencies.
2. It promotes communities working together to develop shared visions and plans for their rural roads by making available transportation incentive funding for transportation plans including relevant policies, programs and ordinances.
3. It prioritizes development in Designated Growth Areas by allowing waivers of the access rules for driveways when the property abuts no other road affording vehicular access to a person's property and the property is outside the compact area of an urban compact municipality *only if* the property is located within a locally designated growth area identified in a state-approved comprehensive plan.
4. It requires MaineDOT to coordinate all access management waiver requests with the Maine Land Bank Redevelopment Authority and the Maine Office of Community Affairs.

Maine Department of Transportation grants and technical assistance play a significant role in planning, coordinating, and funding work in communities across the state. Reinstating a process that helps rural



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communities engage in collaborative planning with their neighbors and focus desired growth in Designated Growth Areas will help them proactively manage their development, control costs for road maintenance and public services, and spur economic development.

Thank you for your consideration, and I ask for your support of LD 1632.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Traci Gere".

Traci Gere
State Representative