

March 6, 2023

Dear Members of the Transportation Committee.

I'm in complete support of LD 527, An Act to Allow Municipalities to Create Bicycle and Pedestrian Zones with Reduced Speed Limits. I am sorry that I missed my chance to testify during the hearing on March 2nd but would like to contribute my ideas to you now.

As a resident of a rural road that is extremely popular for bicycling and walking, my neighbors and I see the conflict between these healthy and enjoyable activities, and the posted 35 mph speed limit. As with many roads, there are places with long sight lines, limited driveways and wide shoulders, but there the majority of the roadway is narrow, has blind spots and many intersecting driveways. Roads should be posted at the lowest reasonable speed, not the highest.

We have contacted our local law enforcement and been told, "Nothing we can do, it's a State issue. We can't request a change unless there are accidents." LD 527 provides an opportunity for citizens to work with their municipality to PROACTIVELY make a speed limit change - before we have a tragic accident!

There is a distinct need for lower speeds to encourage bicycling and walking and a feeling of safety on our roadways - which are corridors to support MANY types of transportation, not just automobiles. LD 527 directly supports the vision of Maine's Active Transportation Plan, it "Supports and improves people's quality of life and ability to access jobs, education, businesses, healthcare, essential services, social/recreational opportunities, and other destinations..."

And as the plan states, "A robust Active Transportation system statewide will support the Maine Climate Action Plan and the Maine Economic Development Strategy 2020-2029 and enhance the vibrancy of Maine's cities, quintessential villages, and rural areas."

A concern that I have with the proposed language is that it states, "Create a bicycle and pedestrian zone without conducting a speed study in a downtown..." I hope that the bill extends beyond downtown to areas where people gravitate for outdoor recreation and less congested corridors for an enjoyable human powered commute.

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Sec. 3. 29-A MRSA §2075, sub-§3, ¶G is enacted to read:

G. Create a bicycle and pedestrian zone without conducting a speed study in a downtown, as defined in Title 30-A, section 4301, subsection 5-A, where the posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour or less and where not more than 6,000 motor vehicles per day pass through the area and set the speed limit in that zone at 25 miles per hour.

In order to determine whether or not to create a bicycle and pedestrian zone, the municipality shall consult with a law enforcement agency regarding the number of speeding violations, complaints about speeding motor vehicles, accidents and other hazards present in the proposed bicycle and pedestrian zone.

A municipality may deploy traffic calming measures in the bicycle and pedestrian zone.

SUMMARY

This bill would allow municipalities to create bicycle and pedestrian zones in which speed limit is 25 miles per hour.