

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
Maine Legislature

March 1, 2023

Re: LD527 (An Act to Allow Municipalities to Create Bicycle and Pedestrian Zones with Reduced Speed Limits)

Distinguished Members of the Committee on Transportation:

I would like to offer my support for LD 527. Speed limits should be set based on a number of priorities, including municipal planning efforts to create hospitable zones for all users. The current system of setting speed limits does not permit cities and towns to implement local plans that have economic, social, and equity benefits for residents, as it turns the focus onto drivers and ignores other users of roadways.



In addition, I'd offer my support of the friendly amendments proposed by the Maine Association of Planners, as follows:

- Consider expanding the zones where this measure may be applied by swapping “downtowns” in line 21 with “designated growth areas of a municipality consistent with section 4349-A, subsection 1, paragraph A”
- Allow reductions from speeds up to 45 miles per hour in order to capture streets with unacceptably high speed limits
- Consider replacing the word “and” with “or” in line 21, which would then read “speed limit is 35 miles per hour or less ~~and~~ or where not more than 6,000 motor vehicles”

However, I don't support their proposed amendment to increase the AADT for streets this applies to from 6,000 to 12,000.

While this bill is an important step, the number one determinant of travel speeds is not the speed limit, but the design speed of the road. The best way to calm traffic is to design a roadway for the desired travel speeds and time traffic signals accordingly. I'd encourage members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation to also think of ways to expedite efforts to create Complete Streets in Maine's town and city centers. Regardless, LD 527 is a good first step in Maine's efforts to plan for a vibrant and economically prosperous future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JRL'.

Jeff Levine, AICP
Lecturer, Economic Development & Planning