

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Anne Gass and I'm writing to urge you to pass LD 1634, which would allow municipalities to set their own speed limits on state roads.

I live in Gray, which has three busy state routes carving through it; Routes 26, 100, and 115/202, along with the Maine Turnpike. We struggle with the negative effects of this traffic every day.

In 2012 I formed a Bike-Ped Committee in Gray to focus on safety for walkers and bikers. We subsequently wrote and obtained Council approval of the Town's first ever Bike-Ped plans (2013, and an updated one in 2018). We also helped draft and received Council approval of a Complete Streets Policy (2020).

In support of our first Bike-Ped plan our committee did a community survey in which we asked where people liked to walk and bike in Gray, or if they didn't, what prevented them from doing so. About half of all respondents reported that too many cars/cars driving too fast made them unwilling to walk or bike at all.

The Town of Gray is working closely with MaineDOT on a plan to reconstruct the roads in our village center, which has one of the worst intersections in Southern Maine. The community has really stepped up to create and support a design that will make the village more bike and pedestrian friendly; this work is supported by our 2020 Comprehensive Plan and by a community planning process in July 2022 which involved 200 residents. The Town is preparing to commit significant financial resources to this reconstruction project.

We have requested that MaineDOT lower speed limits through the village and in other more populated areas of town and have been unsuccessful. Quite simply, MaineDOT's perceives its job to be helping more traffic move more quickly on the state roads in our town, regardless of the impact on the health, safety, and quality of life of the people who live on those roads.

There is abundant data showing that if a car traveling at above 35mph hits a person the result will be severe injury or death. Lower speeds save lives and cost impatient drivers only a minute or two more of their time. Since drivers generally exceed the posted speed limit, a posted speed of 45mph can easily mean 55mph.

If MaineDOT is unwilling to lower speeds in busy residential areas then the towns should have the right to do so to maintain public safety and quality of life.