



4/25/2023

Greetings Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation,

My name is Zoe Miller, Facilitator of the Moving Maine Network, and I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 1634 An Act to Grant Municipalities the Authority to Set Certain Lower Motor Vehicle Speed Limits Without a Department of Transportation Speed Study. I regret that I cannot testify in person today because of health issues.

Increasing safety on Maine's roads and sidewalks is a top priority for the Moving Maine Network. We are a multi-sector, statewide collaborative working to ensure all Mainers have access to transportation regardless of background, destination, or geography. We are especially concerned with the needs of people who are traveling outside of a motor vehicle. We know that many people are doing so because they cannot drive or cannot afford to have a vehicle. This includes people with disabilities, older adults, people with low incomes, and youth.

This bill gives municipalities an effective, low-cost tool for slowing vehicle speeds. Slower speeds not only make communities more pleasant for walking, biking, and rolling with a mobility device, they also reduce deaths and serious injuries. There is a growing body of evidence showing that lowering speed limits without changing design is effective and does not lead to dangerous conditions. Studies by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety from 2017 and 2013 showed similar findings in Seattle and Boston. The Boston study found that just reducing the citywide speed limit to 25 mph (from 30 mph) reduced speeding overall and dramatically decreased the instances of vehicles traveling faster than 35 mph. The Seattle study found speed limit reduction was associated with a 17 percent drop in the odds of an injury crash downtown.

This bill also modernizes Maine's outdated and problematic approach to speed-setting, which relies on the 85th percentile rule. The rule can result in speed studies leading to higher, not lower, posted speeds. Many states, including Minnesota and Oregon, have already moved away from the 85th percentile approach. This shows that it is not necessary for states to wait for the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD) to be updated to make such a change.

In closing, the Moving Maine Network supports LD 1634 because Maine deserves effective, low-cost tools for making roads and sidewalks safe places for all Mainers.

Sincerely,
Zoe Miller, Facilitator, Moving Maine Network

Zoe@movingmaine.org