

May 1, 2025

RE: Testimony in support of LD 1632, An Act to Provide Incentives and Amend Laws Regarding Access to Protect Rural Highway Capacity and Promote Long-Term Economic Development

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Transportation,

My name is Abraham Dailey, I am a self-employed Planning Consultant and resident of Raymond, where I have lived for most of my life. I have a master's degree in Community Planning and Development from the Muskie School of Public Service, and I have more than a decade of experience working as a planner at the regional and state level in Maine.

I support LD 1632 because this bill will help communities like Raymond work with our neighbors to solve the big transportation problems that are facing the Lakes Region. Raymond recently completed our [2025 Comprehensive Plan](#), and one of the top concerns raised by residents is traffic congestion and safety. Many people in Raymond are afraid to walk around their neighborhoods because our roads are narrow and there are no sidewalks or paved shoulders to buffer pedestrians or bicyclists from vehicles traveling at unsafe speeds in residential areas.



This problem exists in Raymond today because our transportation infrastructure was built when our population was much smaller and most people in town worked in forestry or agriculture. When my parents first moved to Raymond nearly 50 years ago, they bought a 19th century farmhouse on a dirt road, where the nearest neighbors were more than a mile away. Even though this narrow dirt road served a regional purpose, by connecting the village of Dry Mills in Gray with North Raymond, West Poland, and Oxford, it carried a low volume of daily traffic because few people lived on this road and it was faster for through traffic to drive on Route 26.

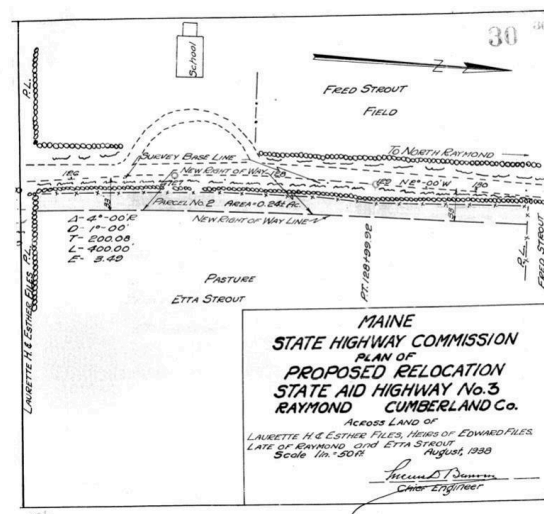
After a century of decline, Raymond started to grow again in the 1960s. The town's population doubled every decade between 1960 and 1980 and continued to gain 1,000 people per decade until 2000. Working people in the Greater Portland region moved to rural towns like Raymond because land was cheap, and Raymond had minimal land use controls. Subdivision records show nearly all the road frontage on the North Raymond Road was subdivided into large lots for single family homes between 1971 and 2015.

Now, on average there's a driveway every 300 feet, and more than 2,000 vehicles travel through my front yard at speeds exceeding 50 MPH daily. I say these cars are traveling through my front yard because I live in a 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse that was built about 30 feet from the road. This is not just local commuter traffic, as I routinely see commercial tractor trailer trucks using the North Raymond Road as a shortcut to save a few minutes on the trip between Gray and Poland or Casco, even though they could safely and legally drive 55 MPH on the Route 26 Bypass, which is just a mile east of my home.

Seven years ago a [truck hauling a dump trailer crashed into my neighbor's house](#) to avoid a distracted driver. Fortunately, nobody was seriously injured in that crash, but I often worry that this will happen again and it will cause more serious damage or loss of life. This outcome is the result of poorly planned development that was built incrementally, over decades, combined with state transportation policy that, historically, was focused only on building a state highway network to connect rural farms and villages to urban centers.



The State Highway Commission (SHC) planned and built these state highways with minimal public engagement and oversight, and they did not anticipate the long-term impacts of the decisions made nearly 100 years ago to build Third Class Highways, what we now call Town Ways, over the old County Roads that often faded into cow paths at the edge of town.



The problem I'm describing is not unique to Raymond. You can find similar examples in towns all over Maine. The next time you drive on a narrow, rural road that connects multiple towns, has speed limits of 35-40+ MPH, and is lined with a mix of old farmhouses built too close to the road and post WWII suburban ranch homes, you may be driving on a Third Class Highway that was built by the SHC nearly 100 years ago.

I know residents in [Gray](#) and [Casco](#) share my concerns, because the residents of those towns have also expressed concerns about traffic safety in their comprehensive plans. This is a regional problem that would be more effectively solved at the regional, rather than the local level. Maine's [Growth Management Act](#) allows municipalities to do regional planning, but this seldom happens because of the lack of state financial incentives for regional planning.

LD 1632 would create that incentive by providing multi-municipal transportation planning grants to encourage neighboring towns to coordinate their land use and transportation policies to prevent rural highways from becoming congested and unsafe while also investing in the infrastructure to support more active transportation or public transit, like the Lakes Region Explorer that runs between Portland and Bridgton.

The multi-municipal transportation planning grants are not a new idea. LD 1632 would restore laws that were enacted to advance the goals of Maine's 1988 [Growth Management Act](#) and 1991 [Sensible Transportation Policy Act](#) by encouraging regional transportation and land use planning. The [Multi-Modal Corridor Management Plan for Route 302 and the Lakes Region](#) is one example of a regional transportation plan that was completed after those laws were enacted. This was a collaborative project between MaineDOT, the Greater Portland Council of Governments, and the seven Lakes Region communities along Route 302. This is a proven concept that is needed in every region of the state.

This act is a chance for the Legislature to offer people at the local level more control over the future of their communities, to give them the opportunity to plan for the future of their towns, rather than just waiting for MaineDOT or the MTA to build another highway. We do not need more highways; we already have more highways than we can afford to maintain in Maine. We should instead prioritize our transportation funding to help the people of Maine plan and implement transportation projects that will improve their daily lives at the local level. This is why I urge you to support LD 1632.

I am willing to assist the committee in any way that is helpful.

Sincerely,

Abraham Dailey  
Raymond, Maine