

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition To

LD 1632 – An Act to Provide Incentives and Amend Laws Regarding Access to Protect Rural Highway Capacity and Promote Long-term Economic Development

May 1, 2025

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 1632 at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

As drafted, this bill places a barrier between communities and much needed technical assistance funding by requiring a community to adopt zoning through a comprehensive plan and only allowing those with designated growth areas to benefit from technical assistance.

Sec. 2 of the bill removes the department allowance to make a determination on additional access along state aid highways when there is not a significant impact on public safety and mobility of travelers. This is vital in many communities where state aid highways form the backbone of evacuation routes with little to no alternative roads available to facilitate significant traffic, particularly at peak times when additional subdivisions and resulting traffic without no other road outlet would be detrimental to the road system along many peninsulas.

Sec. 3 of the bill further creates peninsula grid lock issues by requiring a property to be within a growth area of a municipality where previously a driveway allowance was allowed along a compact highway when no alternative access to the property was possible, which is often the case along a peninsula corridor. In many peninsula communities, the designated growth area is away from state aid road evacuation corridors to encourage commercial growth where it is sensible and provides adequate access and egress without impacting the residential areas along often scenic byways. As drafted, this would prevent residential building along a state aid highway that is currently allowable and would not place a burden on the road system. While this will force additional road cuts on municipally controlled roads in some areas that fall within a designated rural zone for back access to a parcel, more often than not it will prevent residential construction entirely particularly in peninsula communities.

The two approaches seem counterintuitive. Furthermore, the limits of the funding mean peninsula communities will lose more rural lands to local roads to accommodate residential development that would be now restricted unless an entire peninsula community was designated a growth area.

The Association is willing to work with the sponsors to adequately address the built environment needs of all Maine communities but officials and our members are opposed to the bill as drafted.