

**Testimony in Support of LD 1138, An Act to Reduce Pollution Associated with
Transportation in Alignment with the State's Climate Action Plan**

To the Committee on Transportation

by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM

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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and distinguished members of the Committee on Transportation, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in support of LD 1138, An Act to Reduce Pollution Associated with Transportation in Alignment with the State's Climate Action Plan. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

I am honored to be a member of the Transportation Working Group for the Maine Climate Council. Over the course of a year, the 40 members of that group worked together to make recommendations to inform the 2024 update to Maine's Climate Action Plan. As you know, transportation accounts for half of Maine's annual climate pollution, and reducing emissions from transportation is "Plan A" in the Climate Action Plan.

That strategy hinges on two topline goals: increasing electric vehicle adoption rapidly in the coming years and decreasing vehicle traffic and associated air pollution by 20%. LD 1138 focuses primarily on reducing vehicle traffic by providing more transportation options for Mainers, which will not only reduce climate pollution, but will also reduce wear and tear on our roads, increase road safety, improve air quality, reduce transportation costs, and improve local economies by providing better access to businesses and essential goods and services.

Unfortunately, we aren't making the progress we need to on this goal. Mainers are now driving more than they were before the pandemic, and as Maine continues to grow, vehicle traffic will increase without appropriate planning.

There is a growing body of evidence that providing more transportation options can provide climate, health, safety, and cost benefits. RMI's Smarter Modes Calculator quantifies those benefits, showing us what Maine stands to gain by reducing vehicle traffic by 20%¹:

¹ RMI, *Smarter Modes Calculator*, 2024, <https://rmi.org/insight/smarter-modes-calculator-smarter-mobility-options-for-decarbonization-equity-and-safety/>

- Avoided Emissions: **13 million Metric Tons CO2E** (same as annual pollution from 3 coal plants)
- Average Household Savings: **\$2,402 per year** (fuel, maintenance, & depreciation)
- Auto Crash Fatalities Avoided: **32 fewer deaths per year** (Maine had 171 traffic deaths last year)
- Improved Air Quality & Physical Activity: **229 fewer deaths per year**

One of the commonsense strategies that emerged from the Transportation Working Group and is now in our Climate Action Plan is to establish an offset system so that transportation projects that increase vehicle traffic are counterbalanced by clean transportation projects that reduce vehicle traffic:

“Invest in clean transportation programs and projects that offer low-carbon alternatives to help offset emissions from other transportation projects that could increase vehicle traffic.” (*Maine Won’t Wait: A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action*, December 2024, pg. 48)

This legislation does several things, each of them in service of reducing transportation pollution and expanding transportation options for Mainers:

- First, it asks the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA), the agencies that oversee our statewide transportation systems, to make a plan to meet our established climate goals. Our Climate Action Plan establishes high-level targets for the transportation sector, but we need the Department to bring its technical expertise and research to bear to understand the best path for Maine’s transportation system to achieve those goals.
- Second, it establishes a process to measure the climate impacts of new capacity expansion projects so that we know how proposals may contribute to increasing vehicle traffic and associated air pollution.
- Third, it ensures that our future transportation investments do not contribute further to the climate crisis by establishing an offset mechanism as called for by the Climate Action Plan.
- Finally, it establishes greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for the transportation sector so that Maine’s transportation agencies can plan with the benefit of clear benchmarks to aim for. Those targets will be adjusted over time as new data comes in, but it is important to have a baseline around which to plan.

This legislation only applies to new proposed projects that expand road capacity. It does not interfere with any existing projects in the work plans of Maine DOT or the MTA, and it will not affect any future projects associated with road maintenance or repair. It simply ensures that future projects that add to our road capacity – which naturally increases vehicle traffic – are offset by projects that reduce vehicle traffic by also making investments that increase choice for

Mainers, so that our future transportation investments remain aligned with our established climate goals.

Responding to climate change does not have to be a sacrifice. This bill would establish a system by which we can build the transportation infrastructure we need to support a growing Maine with a thriving economy, and do it while reduce vehicle traffic in alignment with our Climate Action Plan goals by providing more options for Maine people to get to where they need to go.

The proven solutions we have at hand, such as quality public transit; safe walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure; and connected, accessible downtowns and villages will not only reduce air pollution, but will also improve local economies, improve public health, increase community safety, and lower burdensome transportation costs for Maine families.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1138. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to any questions you may have.