

**Testimony in Support of LD 287, An Act to Require and Encourage Safe and
Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects**

**To the Committee on Housing and Economic Development
by Josh Caldwell, Climate and Clean Energy Policy Advocate for NRCM
January 6, 2026**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and distinguished members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development, my name is Josh Caldwell, and I am here on behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) in support of LD 287, An Act to Require and Encourage Safe and Interconnected Transportation Construction Projects. NRCM is Maine's leading nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to protecting Maine's environment, with nearly 20,000 supporters statewide and beyond.

Meeting Maine's Climate Obligations

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 nearly half of Maine's annual climate pollution, and reducing emissions from transportation is "Plan A" in the Climate Action Plan.

One of the four primary transportation decarbonization strategies outlined in the Climate Action Plan is to "invest in public, active, and shared transportation," which includes a commitment to "expand active transportation infrastructure" in Maine and "identify and map priority routes for walking and biking."¹ The best way to ensure progress toward these goals is to systematize planning and investment in active transportation infrastructure, which is exactly what this bill seeks to do. While stand-alone active transportation projects will be critical to the fulfillment of Climate Action Plan goals, the process of incorporating those goals into standardized best practice is the way to ensure continued progress over time. This legislation will ensure that safe active transportation infrastructure will be an essential consideration for any major projects undertaken by the Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT) rather than an optional add-on.

Transportation infrastructure induces demand; if you build it, they will come. Investment in roads leads to more driving, which in turn increases carbon emissions and traffic congestion.² This works for transit and active transportation as well. If bicyclists and pedestrians don't feel safe when commuting or recreating, they'll choose other modes or remain stuck at home. However, if safe active transportation infrastructure

¹ *Maine Won't Wait: A Four Year Plan for Climate Action*, Maine Climate Council, December 2024.
https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/sites/maine.gov.climateplan/files/2024-11/MWW_2024_Book_112124.pdf

² "More highways, more driving, more emissions: Explaining Induced demand," Steve Davis, *Smart Growth America*, October 2, 2021. <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/knowledge-hub/news/induced-demand-calculator/>

is built and maintained, it will encourage use and increase the number of bicyclists and pedestrians along a given corridor, reducing emissions and traffic congestion as has been evidenced by numerous studies.³ Unfortunately, pedestrian casualties on Maine roads have been on an upswing in recent years,⁴ but sound policy choices such as this legislation can help to reverse that trend.

This type of dependable infrastructure investment and planning incorporated into all major transportation projects will improve public health and safety, encourage sustainable modes of transportation, and unlock the power of emerging clean transportation technologies like electric bikes and scooters.

Cost Savings for Mainers

In addition to climate benefits, providing more safe choices for Mainers to get around ultimately reduces transportation costs by reducing wear and tear on roads, mitigating climate damage, reducing congestion, and lowering long-term road building and maintenance costs. A new study from RMI found that Maine could save \$86 million per year by building 460 miles of protected bike lanes alongside 79 miles of new bus rapid transit by 2050.⁵

Aligning Transportation Planning with Smart Growth Best Practices

Lastly, this bill seeks to align transportation project prioritization with the smart growth principles that this committee has worked on extensively over the past several years. Your work on the Growth Management Law last year identified that community planning should reflect statewide goals pertaining to natural and working land preservation, urban sprawl containment, downtown revitalization, and access for all to business centers and recreation areas. The same should be true of our transportation system. Maine's transportation planners should prioritize projects that align with the smart growth principles already enshrined by Maine's Growth Management Law. If transportation, housing, and public planning policies are not aligned with each other, Maine's development patterns will be disjointed, inefficient, and costly. LD 287 provides a framework for transportation project selection that aligns with the smart growth principles that undergird current planning best practices.

For these reasons, I encourage the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 287. Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ "The link between low-stress bicycle facilities and bicycle commuting," Ferenchak and Marshall, 2026

"Bikeability and the induced demand for cycling," Fosgerau et al., 2023

"How Bike Paths Make a Difference," American Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2012

⁴ "Maine Highway Safety Reports Uptick in Pedestrian Deaths Last Year," AnnMarie Hilton, Maine Morning Star, January 22, 2024, <https://mainemorningstar.com/briefs/maine-highway-safety-reports-uptick-in-pedestrian-deaths-last-year/>

⁵ "Building Smarter: How Investing in More Transportation Choices Cuts Infrastructure Cost," Miguel Moravec, RMI, November 26, 2025, <https://rmi.org/building-smarter-how-investing-in-more-transportation-choices-cuts-infrastructure-costs/>