



**BIKE-WALK
ALLIANCE**
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Thomas Walsh, Chair
House Transportation Committee
Granite Place Room 234
1 Granite Place
Concord, NH 03301

Subject: SB599-FN – AN ACT reducing the minimum allowable speed limit on locally controlled roads.

Dear Representative Walsh:

Bike-Walk Alliance of New Hampshire (BWANH) is an education and advocacy organization that aims to make New Hampshire a safer place for people on foot, people on bikes, and other vulnerable road users. The subject bill would enable municipalities to set speed limits on locally controlled roads as low as 20 mph (rather than the current 25 mph) based on engineering or traffic investigations. **We strongly support the bill as amended by the Senate and would also support an amendment to carve out speed limits in school zones and work zones.**

New Hampshire, along with the rest of the United States, has been experiencing an epidemic of traffic deaths, and excessive speed is a major factor contributing to this crisis. Please see the attachment for relevant statistics. This bill would provide local officials with greater latitude in setting more appropriate speed limits. While the most effective way to reduce speeds is through a combination of road design, speed limits, and enforcement, “A growing body of research shows that speed limit changes alone can lead to measurable declines in speeds and crashes, even absent enforcement or engineering changes,” according to the National Association of City Transportation Officials (2020). And according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, “Convincing evidence exists that lowering speed limits can reduce average travel speed and crashes in urban areas, even if no or few changes are made to the roadways.”

Municipal officials know their communities best and should have the authority to set speed limits as they see fit. This bill would not require municipalities to change speed limits; it would just broaden their ability to use their discretion to set lower speed limits in certain areas, based on a traffic or engineering study. Several states have already adopted similar legislation. BWANH urges the Transportation Committee to stem the rising tide of speed-related deaths by voting Ought-To-Pass on this bill.

Sincerely,

Amanda Gourgue
Executive Director

Paul Susca
Board President

Attachments: Please support SB559 to enable municipalities to establish safer speed limits on local roads



BIKE-WALK ALLIANCE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

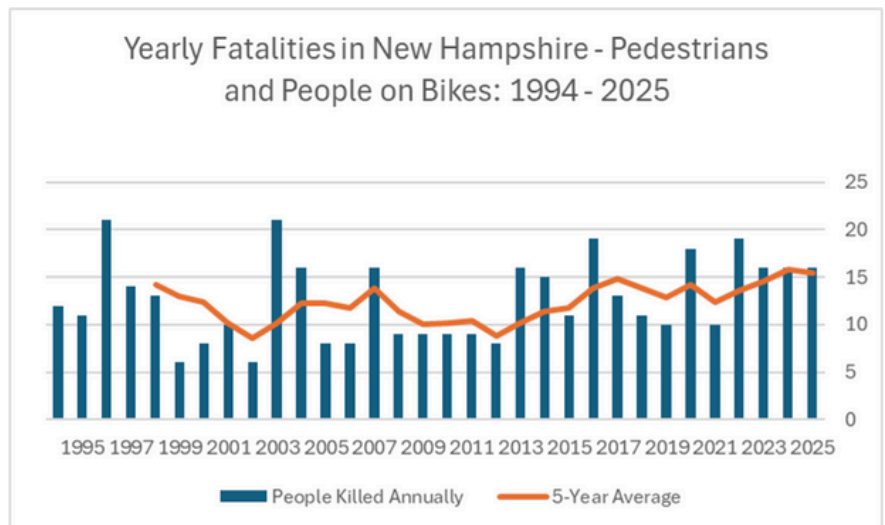
PLEASE SUPPORT SB559 TO ENABLE MUNICIPALITIES TO ESTABLISH SAFER SPEED LIMITS ON LOCAL ROADS

SB 559-FN – “AN ACT reducing the minimum allowable speed limit on locally controlled roads” would enable municipalities to **set limits as low as 20 mph** (rather than 25 mph) based on engineering or traffic investigations.

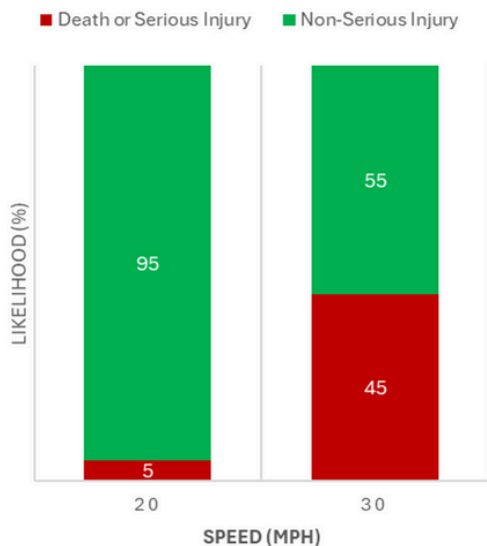
AN EPIDEMIC OF PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST FATALITIES

New Hampshire is experiencing an epidemic of pedestrians and people on bikes being killed due to crashes involving motor vehicles.

- 404 people killed since 1994
- The 5-Year average has increased 54% from 2009 to 2025, from 10 to 15.4 deaths per year
- Over the last 10 years, that's one person killed every 25 days.



SPEED VS. SURVIVAL



SPEED PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE

- According to law enforcement officers, one of the main reasons for the carnage is that people are driving too fast and too aggressively
- **Speed is a factor for four reasons:**
 1. Speed reduces peripheral vision; the faster you drive, the narrower your field of view.
 2. Speed reduces the time you have to react when you do notice somebody in the road ahead.
 3. Speed increases your stopping distance once you do react. At 30 mph, your stopping distance is 50% greater than it is at 20 mph.
 4. When a crash happens, speed exponentially increases the likelihood of killing or seriously injuring the person hit.
- Quoting the Federal Highway Administration's [web page on speed limits](#), "A driver traveling at 30 miles per hour who hits a pedestrian has a 45 percent chance of killing or seriously injuring them. At 20 miles per hour, that percentage drops to 5 percent."



BIKE-WALK ALLIANCE

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



LOWERING SPEED LIMITS HAS BEEN SHOWN TO MAKE STREETS SAFER

- Posted speed limits are one factor that influences how fast people drive. Ideally, the most effective way to reduce speeds where pedestrians mix with cars is through a combination of road design, speed limits, and enforcement. **But speed limit changes alone can make a difference.**
- According to the National Association of City Transportation Officials in their guide, "[City Limits, Setting Safe Speed Limits on Urban Streets](#)," **"A growing body of research shows that speed limit changes alone can lead to measurable declines in speeds and crashes, even absent enforcement or engineering changes."**
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's [web page](#), "Convincing evidence exists that **lowering speed limits can reduce average travel speed and crashes in urban areas, even if no or few changes are made to the roadways.**"



NH MUNICIPALITIES NEED THIS BILL TO SET LIMITS BELOW 25 MPH

- Not all cities and towns are the same. **NH municipal officials know their communities best and should have the authority to set speed limits as they see fit**, as long as they are based on traffic or engineering studies.
- Currently, municipalities have the authority to set speed limits as low as 25 mph on locally controlled roads in a business or urban residence district or outside an urban district. This bill would change that to 20 mph.
- **The bill would not require municipalities to change any speed limits**; it would just broaden their ability to use their discretion to set lower speed limits in certain areas, based on a traffic or engineering study.



LOWER LIMITS IN SELECTED AREAS WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE TRIP TIME

- Such modest reductions in speed limits, which studies show are effective in improving safety, have little effect on travel time, since the roads that would have the lowest speed limits make up a small percentage of the typical car trip.



LOWER LIMITS ARE CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT FEDERAL GUIDELINES

- This bill would enable municipalities to implement the US Department of Transportation's new [SAFE ROADS initiative](#), which urges states to adopt what the Federal Highway Administration calls "[proven safety countermeasures](#)," which include "[appropriate speed limits for all road users](#)."



THE CHANGE WOULD MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES BETTER PLACES TO LIVE

- Reducing the likelihood of a serious crash is good for everyone: pedestrians, people on bikes, and people driving, and it makes our communities better places to live.