

Testimony of Georgia Dennison

**In Support Of**

*LD 1020, An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham*

April 3rd, 2025

---

Committee on Transportation, 132nd Maine Legislature

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Georgia Dennison, and I live on Rt 22 (County Rd) in North Scarborough, the road that supposedly has such a dire traffic situation that a new four lane divided turnpike highway must be built by the MTA to “save us” from this congestion. I’m wiring to advocate for the passage of LD 1020, An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham, and to ask that the Legislature stand with the majority of our community and constituents in forgoing this unnecessary and antiquated project.

The MTA has been continually dishonest with the public about the Gorham Connector. They have been slow to share vital data and pertinent information, they have lied about how much money they knew the project was going to cost, they have used financial reserves that are supposed to be allocated for fixing existing roads to fund the project and after their initial public meeting—which I attended— where over 300 people from our communities spoke out in opposition of the Gotham Connector—they delayed and then cancelled all further public engagements. They did this under the guise that they were reconsidering aspects of the project and slowing down their plans, which is a lie they fed us as they continued to acquire land for the connector and move forward with the project in secret. It’s abhorrent that the MTA would disregard public consideration and concern over such a large, destructive and expensive endeavor, but it’s also deeply condescending and disrespectful that they think the public isn’t intelligent and wise enough to understand what it is they are doing. They think that if they wait for public outrage to calm down and they remain relatively quiet, they can tire the public out and move the project forward in secret while we grow weary in our fight against this antiquated and egregious highway proposal.

It’s not lost on me that the MTA is not working alone and I question other agencies and entities that have something to gain from the development of this highway. I wonder what kind of developers and corporations could be working against the community so that they, like the MTA, might line their pockets with more money at the expense of Smiling Hill farm, at the expense of

precious wetlands, at the expense of the last surviving population of natural spawning brook trout in Southern Maine, and at the expense of all our neighbors who will lose their land and homes.

According to MDOT traffic surveys available to the public, traffic is down on Rt 114 and Rt 22, has been dropping since it peaked 20 years ago, and has dropped significantly since the pandemic. This, then, begs the question: Why is the MTA insisting on this project in the first place? The answer is because they conceived of this project over 20 years ago and they are having a hard time letting go of over 20 years worth of work. I can empathize with this. I understand it must be difficult to walk away from something you have been working on for this long. But one shouldn't stick with a project, a proposal or an idea, simply because one has been working on it for a long time—especially when this idea, in the years since it was conceived, has become deeply antiquated, flawed and somewhat useless. It is a solution to a problem that no longer exists.

I have a Masters in Poetry and I'm a published author. In the world of writing we have a saying: "Kill your darlings." Kill your darlings means that sometimes, when working on a poem, or a short story, or a novel, or a nonfiction piece – we must be willing to part ways with aspects of the writing that are no longer serving the work as a whole, even though we may have, in the process of writing, grown quite fond of these so-called darlings. This can be an excruciating process. Perhaps one must let go of a stanza in a poem that one has been working on for some time, it could mean cutting whole pages out of a story, and even deleting multiple chapters from a book—chapters that one might have spent, hours, weeks, months, even years working on. Killing your darlings is tough work—you have grown attached to your darlings for good reason, because when you have worked on something for a long time you, come to love it. Abandoning them can feel like abandoning a part of yourself. But something miraculous happens when you are willing to let go of these words, these chapters, these projects that have become useless or antiquated within the writing—you make space for new, creative endeavors within the work. Once the writer is able to let go of what is no longer serving the work as whole, the writing project begins to thrive in a new and unprecedented way. It takes a lot strength, resiliency and wisdom to have the courage to abandon your darlings. But all innovative and successful writers will be familiar with the task, they will understand they must take their ego out of the work in order to let it shine.

The MTA's Gorham Connector is a darling that must be killed. As a writer, I understand how hard this must be to face. But as I have learned in my writing process, just because there is a lot of time and money invested in an idea – does not mean it is a good one. And if one is to look critically and honestly at the Gorham Turnpike, it becomes incredibly obvious that it is not just a bad idea, but a terrible one.

I understand progress and development are necessary parts of a our community's future. We cannot stop progress, we cannot halt growth, and why would we want to? So many wonderful things can come from our ability to engage thoughtfully and responsibly in positive change. The question is, do we want to engage in progress and development through an outdated and

antiquated project that was conceived over 20 years ago? Or we do want to develop new, innovative ways of solving traffic problems, and developing areas, that are in collaboration with our unique and particular time and prioritize our future. The legislature is currently presented with a unique opportunity to choose innovation, to set an example for our surrounding communities of how to grow and expand in a more sustainable and responsible way and to prioritize desires and wishes of their constituents. There is a way to solve our traffic problems and connect our communities that does not corrupt our precious farmland, destroy wetlands and make extinct the last surviving population of naturally spawning brook trout. There is a way to grow and change that does not take our neighbors' land and homes by eminent domain and that does not pollute and contaminate our precious ecosystem. The climate is changing, the earth is warming, and it has been proven time and time again that highways deeply contribute to the pollution spurring this phenomenon.

What innovation awaits us if we are brave enough and smart enough to stand up to the corrupt MTA, abandon this project once and for all, and begin conceiving of new ways of evolving and growing that honor our precious heritage, prioritize our irreplaceable land and respect the people who make this community so special?

I speak from experience when I tell you that—when you are brave enough and wise enough to kill your darlings, the possibilities within the work become endless.

Thank you for your consideration, for representing the People, and for your service to our state.

With warmth and gratitude,

Georgia Dennison