



April 3, 2025

RE: **Testimony of Build Maine in support of LD 1020**, An Act to Repeal the Laws Authorizing the Construction of a Multi-Lane Highway Connector to Gorham and to Return the Land Purchased under those laws to the Prior Property Owners

Dear Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Members of the Joint Select Committee on Transportation,

My name is Kara, and I am the Chair of Build Maine. We are a statewide group working to align fiscal, economic, environmental, and quality of life goals within our state through pragmatic and common-sense solutions that strengthen villages, towns, and cities across Maine.

**Build Maine supports LD 1020**, which proposes to repeal the law authorizing the construction of the Gorham Connector Highway and return the land purchased under those laws to private property owners.

Turnpike expansions incentivize car-oriented suburban sprawl, which increases vehicle miles traveled for all commuters, drives up municipal service costs, and increases the tax burden for Maine people.

Encouraging longer commutes increases congestion on our roads, leading to a continuous cycle of road expansion projects to address the additional traffic induced by growth resulting from highway expansion. The result is ever increasing road maintenance costs that we simply can't afford. The Maine Department of Transportation is already facing a massive deficit in the state's highway fund. And on the municipal side, low density development is fundamentally unable to provide the taxable value needed to cover the cost of paying for ongoing maintenance and replacement costs of the infrastructure.

Transportation and housing are directly linked, with a known connection between highway expansion and the promotion of a sprawling, inefficient pattern of land use. The low density development pattern quickly and efficiently erodes rural land and working farms and forest, which are critical to local land-based industries and quality of life. Low density development also costs municipalities more to service, with fire trucks, plows, buses, and other municipal providers having to cover a much larger geographic area, which comes with a very large price tag.

Because highway expansion ultimately increases driving, it requires more land area to be set aside for parked cars, which directly reduces land area available for compact, mixed-use infill development and desperately needed housing in villages and downtowns. Land is finite. By expanding highways, we are making a policy choice to prioritize long commutes and parking lots over building housing near jobs. This erodes our traditional pattern of villages and towns and the social networks they

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support, and also undermines the significant economic value provided by our traditional communities.

Finally, it is important to note that this bill emerged from a grassroots effort, with regular Maine people putting in time to build a coalition to oppose this misguided project. The work of these farmers, business owners, and other residents helped to empower local elected officials to stand up against the Maine Turnpike Authority and reject the project. However, the Gorham Connector is not cancelled until the legislature officially takes action. We urge you to support LD 1020 and move Maine out of the 1970s and into the 21st Century.

Sincerely,

Kara Wilbur, Chair  
Build Maine

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