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**Testimony of Dale Doughty
Maine Department of Transportation
Before the 132nd Legislature, Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

In Opposition to

LD 1020

An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham and to Resell the Land Taken Under Those Laws to Previous Property Owners

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Dale Doughty, Deputy Commissioner at MaineDOT. MaineDOT is in opposition to LD 1020 because it is premature, presupposes the result of a pending study, and removes a potentially valuable tool from the transportation solution toolbox.

LD 1020 proposes to repeal the law that authorizes the Maine Turnpike Authority to construct a connector roadway to Gorham and would require that the MTA resell any land acquired for the construction of such a road. The traffic congestion of roadways west of Portland has been a topic of conversation for decades. During the 123rd Legislature, this committee passed legislation directing the Department of Transportation and the Maine Turnpike Authority to conduct a study of possible western connector roads to municipal centers in Cumberland and York Counties. What resulted from these conversations was LD 905 which was submitted and passed during the 128th Legislature.

23 MRSA §1965-C *authorizes – but does not require* - MTA in partnership with MaineDOT to study, fund, construct and maintain a connector in Cumberland County from Route 114 in South Gorham to an interchange on the turnpike. The purpose of this authorization was to address safety and mobility deficiencies in a manner that maximized public safety and enhanced the mobility of people and goods and funded these with revenue from users of the system.

MaineDOT is initiating planning efforts related to addressing traffic congestion between Gorham and South Portland. These efforts, which we expect will get underway this spring to take upwards of two years to complete, will include robust conversations with impacted stakeholders, communities and residents. The study will update the Purpose and Need Statement by engaging stakeholders to review housing, regional workforce, transit, and active transportation

opportunities. These efforts will identify a suite of tools to be considered as alternatives in the region west of Portland. It is unlikely that any one tool will meet all the needs to be identified.

MaineDOT intends to conduct a modally balanced transportation study, reviewing any and all options that will alleviate the congestion issues, facilitate expansion of housing and accommodate a future regional workforce. Passage of LD 1020 will prohibit MaineDOT from this goal. We believe that the residents in this region would like to see some sort of congestion relief to improve safety, economic vitality and quality of life for the region.

Again, the existing law only authorizes a potential highway. It does not presuppose a result of the current MaineDOT analysis, or the environmental studies and permits required, which require avoidance and mitigation of environmental and cultural impacts. Passage of this bill would eliminate the reasonable exchange of ideas and analysis that such a process will facilitate and substitute a desired outcome before the study gets fully underway.

It is for these reasons we urge the committee to vote ought not to pass on LD 1020 and allow MaineDOT to study a full range of alternates in a comprehensive, regional and modally balanced manner. Thank you.