

## **Testimony in Support of LD 1020: A Bill to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham and to Sell the Land to the Previous Owners**

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

My name is Lou Simms. I live in Gorham and I am a member of the Gorham Town Council. I want to recognize the hundreds of residents who have signed the petition, spoken to me, emailed our town council, and spoken up at public meetings to reject MTA's highway proposal.

I fear that the people of Gorham have been misinformed on this project. The benefits of MTA's proposed highway have been grossly exaggerated by its supporters, with blatant disregard for the enormous costs. MTA has dominated the planning process for years, and supporters of alternative options have not been provided an equal seat at the table.

Gorham has been promised that MTA's highway expansion will somehow make traffic disappear from our local roads and make those roads safer for our residents. We've been pressured into thinking that MTA's highway is the only path to economic development for our town. We've been assured that building a 5-mile, 4-lane elevated highway with multiple interchanges will somehow lead to a decrease in carbon emissions, without meaningful damage to local farms and wetlands. We've been told that if we do not accept MTA's highway, then the only alternative is turning County Rd into a 70-foot-wide, multi-lane stroad. And we have been sold on the promise that MTA's highway project won't cost the people of Gorham a dime, and that MTA will pay for improvements on all the local roads feeding into the highway.

Despite all these promises, the overwhelming majority of Gorham residents who have chosen to speak their minds have rejected MTA's proposed highway. There is scarce evidence to suggest that MTA's highway will deliver on the hype promised by its promoters. There is far more evidence to suggest that Gorham would be paying for the negative effects of MTA's highway for decades to come. As has been demonstrated in towns across North America: more highway expansion does not guarantee more prosperity – to the contrary, more highways only guarantees more eternal road maintenance liabilities, which generally means higher taxes for our residents.

The more we force our residents to spread out, the more we raise our costs of living including housing, transportation, internet, utilities, and road maintenance. The more we force everyone to drive everywhere for every daily need, the more traffic congestion we create.

If LD1020 is to move forward, Gorham will need help in charting a new path forward. We need DOT investment in quicker, cheaper, less destructive improvements at the critical intersections in this region. We need to incentivize smart growth that builds more housing within walking

distance of our daily needs. We need more state investment in quality public transportation options for those that need and want to use them. We need a more collaborative, comprehensive approach to regional transportation that integrates land-use policy recommendations, and fosters increased cooperation amongst our neighboring municipalities.

I am supportive of LD1020 moving forward in an amended version, and I support friendly amendments to revise section 4 of this bill. Those amendments should temper any land transfer directives, such that the State and the local communities can still make use of the work that has been completed thus far, as well as the land that may still be of use for alternative transportation solutions. The municipalities need flexibility to utilize any land that comes into our possession in ways that best serve our communities.

Ultimately, the highway expansion plan that MTA presented to the public last year should not move forward.

Thank you  
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Gorham