

Testimony of Stanis Moody-Roberts

In Support Of

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

April 3rd, 2025

Sen. Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and Distinguished Members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Stanis Moody-Roberts, and I live with my family in North Scarborough, across from Smiling Hill Farm. Like Smiling Hill and many other neighbors, my home, and my life, is also in the path of the MTA's proposed Gorham Connector turnpike highway. I speak to you today to urge your support of LD 1020, An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham. The MTA has been deeply dishonest, adversarial, and condescending in its efforts to push this destructive project through over the widespread opposition in our community. It is telling that our entire legislative delegation, as well as the town councils of Scarborough and Westbrook, have taken action to oppose this project that would be so harmful to South Gorham and North Scarborough residents.

Picture the things that you love most in this world, that you would sacrifice everything in order to protect. Perhaps it is your husband or wife, your soulmate, your parents or your children. For me it is all those things, but it is also my home. I am lucky to live in a most beautiful corner of this world, a house on a small pond nestled in the woods, that I built myself with my bare hands. For close to a decade, I juggled multiple jobs, lived out of my car, lived covertly out of my office, and then lived in a shipping container with no electricity or running water through two Maine winters in order to build this dream. It is where I met the love of my life, where I raise my chickens and my bees, where I just had my first child, and where I will grow old and gray if the MTA does not pave me over first.

Eminent domain, the forced governmental seizure of people's homes and property, is an act of violence. It may be legal, and perhaps it can be justified for the "greater good", but it is a heartbreaking, gut-wrenching concept that utterly destroys the lives that are victim to it. It should only ever be considered as a last possible resort, after everything else with less impact has been tried and an overwhelming majority of a community is demanding it.

The Gorham Connector would destroy my home that I love and hold dear, along with the homes of so many other of my neighbors here in North Scarborough. It would destroy our beloved Smiling Hill Farm, one of the oldest generational farms in this country, that the Knight

Family has stewarded for over 300 years and has brought such delight to generations of children growing up in Greater Portland. It would entail paving over around 40 acres of protected wetlands, polluting and severely impairing the headwaters of Red Brook, and bisect so many acres of undeveloped wildlife habitat that make our community the beautiful place that it is – subjecting our community to the resulting highway pollution, noise pollution, runoff, clearcutting, re-grading and drainage basin disruption that constructing a new four-lane divided highway entails. According to the MTA's 2023 cost update, it would cost our state \$650 million to construct and maintain over just the first 30 years – close to \$1 billion when factoring in the bond interest – money that while perhaps being paid for through tolls, would still be coming out of the pockets of hardworking Mainers that should not have to be subject to yet another cost-of-living increase.

Traffic all along this corridor is significantly below what it was twenty years ago (and was down even in 2019 pre-covid), which is remarkable considering that the region has grown by around 20% during that time. That data is not just anecdotal – it is statistically borne out through ME DOT historical traffic counts. It is true on Rt 25, on Rt 22, on Rt 114, on New Portland Rd, and on Running Hill Rd.

There are far less costly and far less destructive ways of alleviating traffic congestion along this corridor. Our MPO, PACTS, considers a two-lane state highway over capacity if either its AADT is above 18,000 or if its peak hour is above 1950 VPH. The only place along the Rt 25 / Rt 114 / Rt 22 corridor west of Portland where that is true is the 1-mile Rt 22 / Rt 114 overlap section. Intersection improvements, and limited widening of this one short bottleneck, would go such a long way towards alleviating the congestion in this area, as envisioned by the 1997 Gorham-Portland Alternatives Analysis, the 1999 Route 22/114 Location Study, the 2002 PACTS 22/114 Overlap Study, Scarborough's 2003 Transportation Plan, and the PACTS 2003 Destination Tomorrow plan. Yet ever since the MTA became the lead agency for solving traffic congestion in this area two decades ago, nothing has been done to try to improve our existing roads, as the MTA can only do one thing – build a new four-lane limited access toll highway.

Revoking the MTA's authorization to build the Gorham Connector would finally allow for all other alternatives to be fairly considered. It does not prevent the MTA from coming back to the legislature someday with a new, more community-centered proposal, if they are able to somehow able to regain our community's trust and support in the future. But it does ensure that any future MTA proposal must go through a democratic process – and be approved by the legislature – *before ever moving forward*. That is never a bad thing.

With appreciation for your time and consideration,

Stanis Moody-Roberts