



Stacy Brenner
Senator, District 30

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

**Testimony of Senator Stacy Brenner introducing LD 1020, *An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham and to Sell the Land to the Previous Owners*
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

April 3, 2025

Representative Crafts, Senator Nangle and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. I am Senator Stacy Brenner, representing Senate District 30 which includes all of Gorham and most of Scarborough. I am before you today to present LD 1020, *An Act to Repeal the Laws Providing for the Construction of a Connector to Gorham and to Sell the Land to the Previous Owners*. This bill is presented in partnership with the folks from Mainers for Smarter Transportation.

The age old adage goes: the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The proposed Gorham Connector is a costly and outdated solution to our region's transportation challenges. While the intent behind the project was to ease congestion, the unintended consequences far outweigh the benefits. This proposal threatens our environment, increases emissions, and fails to provide an effective, long-term transportation strategy.

Over the past two terms, I've served as the Legislature's representative on the Maine Climate Council, where we've worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect our natural resources. The 2024 update to Maine's Climate Action Plan emphasizes that transportation is the largest source of emissions in the state—accounting for more than 50% of our total greenhouse gases. Expanding highways only increases vehicle use, leading to more pollution and further harming our environment.

The proposed five-mile project would also cut through critical wetlands and forests, including the Red Brook watershed, areas that play a crucial role in maintaining water quality and ecological balance. In addition to tailpipe emissions, there's also the massive construction operations, concrete, bulldozing trees and wetlands that absorb emissions with asphalt, ongoing paving every few years, increased demand for more driving, and tire and oil particulates thrown off of speeding vehicles. The creation of this highway will lead to massive greenhouse gas expenditures and will negatively impact the communities of Gorham, Scarborough and surrounding areas.

Beyond environmental concerns, this project would have a lasting impact on our agricultural heritage. North Scarborough is home to some of Maine's oldest and most cherished farmland. The current plan would pave over 12 acres of Smiling Hill Farm, a working farm that has been a cornerstone of our community for generations. Once farmland is lost to development, it is gone forever. Protecting these lands isn't just about preserving history—it's about ensuring food



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security, supporting local economies, and maintaining the character of our towns. Under *Maine Won't Wait*, the State has a goal of increasing locally produced food in Maine to 30% by 2030. Maine's agricultural industry will play a vital role in allowing us to attain these goals and must be protected from the proposed Connector.

This proposed Connector would accelerate westward expansion and urban sprawl by making the area more accessible to commuters. The land use planning impact would be detrimental to the local character and rural heritage of the town of Gorham. The highway Connector from the Maine Mall to Main Street in South Portland destroyed local businesses there, which is now another example of ubiquitous "Americana" including discount hotels, strip malls and gas stations. The highway "Connector" from I-295 to Scarborough made Route 1 into the dangerous, loud, car-dependent town center that it is today.

When I-295 was built through downtown Portland in the 1970's, small businesses in the city were gutted as their customers drove out to the publicly-subsidized highway and parking of the Maine Mall and its big national retailers. Some parts of the city have never recovered, including Libbytown and St. John's Street. The same fate will come to Westbrook and Gorham's Main Streets if this highway were to be built. This highway would not be a cure for traffic congestion but would move the traffic from where it currently is on Route 22 and Route 114 to neighboring towns such as Windham, Buxton, and Standish as sprawl expands to fill the space.

Smarter transportation options must be explored. The Maine Sensible Transportation Act requires both the Maine Turnpike Authority and Maine Department of Transportation to exhaust all available options before moving forward with a highway expansion. Therefore, the Connector project should be repealed so we can look to alternative modes of transportation such as MDOT solutions for reducing congestion, rapid transit and active transportation.

In all the surveys conducted by Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) relative to transportation in the area, repeatedly, residents overwhelmingly speak out about alternate transportation solutions. It's time to heed the call and build towards that future.

I urge this committee to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1206. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Stacy Brenner
State Senator, District 30

LD 1020 Data, Sen. Stacy Brenner

5 miles. This is the length of the proposed highway from Exit 45 on I-95 to the town of Gorham.

4 minutes. This is the amount of time on average that would be saved by residents per rush hour commute. Studies across our nation show that more highway construction does not increase traffic congestion.

\$331 million. This is the figure **which is probably much higher**: The \$331 million figure is from 2023, though the MTA and its in-house consultants HNTB misled the public by claiming a much lower figure of "somewhere north of \$200 million" or "maybe \$250 million" when the project was rolled out in 2024.

2 communities: Gorham and Scarborough. Both of these communities would be negatively impacted by this project. From the impact on our natural resources, farmland and traffic flow, this project would put our communities at a dead end.

1 Gorham Divider Project. This project is a lose-lose for my community and the state.