



# AGC MAINE

THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

## Testimony of Matthew Marks in Support of LD 607

### ***“Resolve, to Direct the Department of Transportation to Examine the Feasibility of Extending Interstate 95 to the St. John Valley”***

Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

March 7, 2023

Senator Chipman, Representative Williams, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, I am Matt Marks, a Principal at Cornerstone Government Affairs and here today on behalf of my client the Associated General Contractors of Maine (AGC Maine).

In 2018, the country celebrated the completion of Interstate 95, but many in Maine and specifically residents of Aroostook County recognized a long-discussed problem as the highway abruptly ended before connecting integral sections of Northern Maine leaving Route 11 or Route 1 as the alternative.

The Northern Maine Economic Development report<sup>1</sup> cited deteriorating road conditions and distance to large markets as a weakness. Across Maine, Twenty percent of Maine’s rural roads are rated in poor condition – the tenth highest rate in the nation- and 23 percent are in mediocre condition. The rate of traffic fatalities on Maine’s non-Interstate, rural roads is more than double the fatality rate on all other roads in the state – 1.67 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel vs. 0.71. There were 123 fatalities on Maine’s non-Interstate, rural roads in 2020. Rural roads are more likely to have narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes, and limited clear zones along roadsides according to an independent report by TRIP<sup>2</sup>-a transportation research group.

Northern Maine’s economic activity, forestry, agriculture, outdoor recreation, and manufacturing would be assisted by transportation infrastructure improvements. Transportation equity for residents of rural Maine includes both commercial and residential access to safe, reliable, and expedient means of travel. The Loring Commerce Center announced a developer will rehabilitate 600 apartment units and according to a press release will be the "largest commercial and industrial park in the state of Maine offering access to an immense airfield, the longest airstrip (over 12,000 ft long) as a prominent and premiere Air Cargo Distribution Hub for national points of presence in Maine and beyond.”

Assembling a stakeholder group to determine the feasibility of expanding Interstate 95 and reviewing both economic and safety data will be instrumental in examining the future of transportation for Northern Maine. AGC Maine encourages the Committee to pass this bill.

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Maine Development Economic Report: <https://www.nmdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-2023-CEDS.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Trip Rural Road Report for Maine: <https://tripnet.org/reports/rural-connections-maine-news-release-10-13-2022/>