

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee,
My name is Roberta Manter, I live in Fayette, and I am asking you to support LD 1020.

The MTA believed there was "silent majority" that supported this project. If so, why didn't they show up at the hearings? I submit that the true silent majority consists of those who could not travel an hour and a half or more each way to Gorham to express their *opposition to the connector*. I am here to speak for them. This is not just a "not in my back yard" situation. Smiling Hill Farm is a state treasure, and they share it generously. Their influence stretches far and wide - I contend, much wider than the area that allegedly would benefit from the Connector.

Farms generally operate close to the edge. That's why in addition to farming they seek as many other sources of income as they can - maple sugaring, lumber, petting zoo, tour groups, cross country skiing, ski equipment rentals, etc. Farms depend on acreage to survive, and that acreage has to be readily accessible. ANYTHING that makes it harder on a farm can be the straw that breaks the camel's back. We are losing farms at an alarming rate, especially dairy farms.

Smiling Hill Farm supplies fresh dairy products to stores as far away as Lewiston, Augusta, and Waterville. And people who come here to cross country ski, come from all over the United States. Maine depends heavily on tourism. People don't come to Maine to travel our highways, they come to Maine to see our unspoiled countryside. When a farm can no longer sustain itself, it may be sold for development, or a solar farm, and we lose all that scenic beauty and open space. If you eliminate Smiling Hill Farm, where will people from Portland go to see a farm? And once our farms are gone, WHAT WILL WE EAT? We need our farms, and we need to do everything within our power to see that the few farms we have left remain sustainable.

Each year, Smiling Hill Farm hosts hundreds of tour groups - schools, homeschool groups, the children who will shape our future. Many travel over an hour and a half to get there. How many thousands of children have benefited, over the years this program has been offered? How many of them got to learn the importance of our farms, and will support them in the future, or perhaps even go into farming themselves?

Years ago I helped take a variety of animals to a "Farm Day" in New York City's Central Park. It was a unique one-day opportunity for city kids to see and touch farm animals. As we were leaving the city with our menagerie in a slat-sided stock trailer, we got stopped at a traffic light. A father happened to be walking by with his young son, and suddenly saw the opportunity he had missed. He picked up the boy and literally ran the length of the trailer, saying, "Horse! Cow! Donkey! Sheep! Goat! Pig!" Then the light changed, and we had to drive on. Is that what we want for our children in Maine? Smiling Hill Farm is here 365 days a year, not for a few seconds at a traffic light.

Again, this isn't just "not in my back yard," this is something that affects people far and wide. There are few spots they could have chosen that would have wider consequences than to damage Smiling Hill Farm. Please, count the cost.