

Mary Emerson

LD 1292

Senator Nagle, Representative Crafts and Honorable Members of the State Transportation Committee:

My name is Mary Emerson. I'm from Gorham, ME and I'm writing in support of LD1292 because I believe that in contrast to the MTA the MDOT more needs and can more ethically and responsibly use available funds.

Through my involvement over the past 13 months with the Gorham turnpike proposition I have been greatly disappointed as my awareness has unfolded to the unethical way the MTA operates which has made me wonder who the MTA is accountable to. Is there oversight into the way they expend funds and the tactics and rationale they employ?

I was initially concerned about the "Gorham Connector" (as it was dubbed) but as time passed and I saw the MTA and their team of consultants in action at the public meeting held in Gorham in March of 2024 and at their board meetings and read their press releases etc, I lost all trust in them and am extremely disenchanted with their lack of integrity. In my opinion the power they hold makes them feel they can boldly defy the sincere, fair and rational questions and concerns expressed by the public. I now believe that their actions regarding this issue as well as past actions in other parts of the state need to be rigorously investigated when considering this bill.

Watching state and local departments efficiently take on serious traffic problems in my area has been in stark contrast to what was happening in the proposed Connector area, where for years the MTA's ownership of the problem kept any common sense improvements from happening. This meant that commuters weren't able to get the relief of wider lanes, more efficient lights, a roundabout or two that would have answered their commuter prayers. Additionally, because of their use of eminent domain they have been able to cruelly keep residents in a state of flux and instability for years. And it begs the question, what could the money the MTA used for studies and meetings, upwards of \$30 million, have allowed if used for what was actually needed? Are those on the MTA accountable to anyone for holding up this project for YEARS??

This is exactly the bottom line of this bill. Imagine if the MTA had never been in charge of the area of what they termed their "Connector"! What if the MTA had to release to the MDOT the huge sums it's amassed in anticipation of building the Connector? How can our Maine roads be so badly need of repair while the MTA sits on millions? They make around \$40 million each year on toll profits while there is a \$300 million deficit in the highway fund. How did the MTA become so all-powerful? Who do they answer to? It seems from their actions they clearly feel they answer to no one.