

CARLA VALENTINE
Waterville
LD 1292

Testimony of Carla Valentine

In Support of LD 1292: An Act Clarifying the Contributions of the MTA to the State Highway Fund

April 8, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

My name is Carla Valentine and I live in Waterville, ME , and I am a former Gorham resident with family still living in the town.

I support LD 1292 because:

- Fiscal pragmatism - Maine has a huge budget deficit and this could save \$200 million that we need for EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, if not for roads and bridges that we already have.
- Keeps down taxes and fees - Other plans to close the budget gap see rising fuel taxes and fees for drivers, paid disproportionately by Maine residents. This bill shifts the costs to close the budget gap towards out-of-staters.
- Fiscal uncertainty - Many federal grants have been or will be cancelled for priority projects all over the state. We need to use all our revenues to keep Mainers moving.
- Past poor decisions of the MTA - The MTA has a record of questionable decision-making. This includes removing the Route 112 exit, which they are now spending \$45 million to reconstruct.
- Future poor decisions of the MTA - The MTA is planning to further widen I-95 on the lightly-used stretch to West Falmouth, while there is far more congestion on I-295. It also continues to keep the plan alive to build the \$330 million+ Gorham Connector boondoggle, which would cost all I-95 users.
- Congestion Con - highways do not fix congestion. More road capacity to ever more rural areas encourages sprawl, which requires more driving, which eventually fills the roads to capacity. See Transportation for America report, the Congestion Con.
- Historic precedent - Maine did this in 1980s when MTA was flush with cash and the state was broke. It's the only reason the MTA continued to exist, as it used revenue from tolls to fill the short-term funding gap.
- Other states allocate toll money, much of which comes from out of staters, to fund needs of the whole state for transportation infrastructure and service
- This bill does not impede operations or maintenance in any way - the Maine Turnpike will remain in the same condition.
- Gives legislature more authority over funding priorities for Maine's transportation revenues.
- MTA will argue that the tolls should only be used to maintain the Turnpike out of fairness to its payers. If this were true, why has the MTA been charging toll payers about \$40 million per year more than it needs to cover its costs? Plus, anyone who uses the Maine Turnpike also uses the roads that feed into it, by definition.

I am willing to assist the committee in any way that is helpful.

Thank you.

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