

To: undisclosed-recipients:

To the Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

I want to take the opportunity to again express my support of this bill as proposed, which would direct the Maine DOT to remove connector 2B2 from consideration. I appreciate the Committee taking up this matter. I have submitted written testimony in advance of the prior Committee meeting, and I hope you have had an opportunity to consider it. I apologize in advance about the length of my correspondence, but I feel that this is my only forum in which I will be heard as opposed to just listened to.

On a personal level, I am opposed to this project as proposed as I own a home within a quarter mile of the 2B2 route and my mother also owns a home within a quarter mile of the 2B2 route on the opposite side of where the road would be built. We are deeply concerned about our quality of life in terms of construction activity, ongoing noise (both of our properties are "estimated" to experience decibel levels approximately twice as loud as the current levels according to the documentation I read on the Maine DOT project web site - and sound barriers are deemed "too expensive"), likely decreased property values, and loss of recreational activity opportunities in the affected area. One of the main reasons I moved back to Maine from Massachusetts was to improve my quality of life, including getting away from noisy congested areas. I feel fortunate to live in a nice area close to my family where I grew up. Now I face the possibility of my dream home and old stomping grounds as a kid being forever altered by this proposed connector.

This project has been studied and restudied for 14 years. That's 14 years of uncertainty for residents who might be affected. I can attest that my mother has considered various home improvement projects over the last 14 years but has not ultimately pulled the trigger on some because she was unsure whether this connector would be built or not. Just when she felt safe a few times when this route was removed from consideration, it magically reappeared literally out of nowhere - at least to residents and city officials.

I work as a consultant in my professional life providing advice and guidance to wealth management firms and their service providers. I have worked on many projects where I evaluate potential alternatives - I would never recommend an alternative that does not meet the client's stated needs even if it turned out to be the only feasible alternative. In that case, the prudent thing to do is to either find more viable alternatives and reevaluate or recommend the firm not move forward with any alternative. Sure, in essence I would be cutting off future near-term project work that would result in a lost revenue opportunity for my company, but I have an obligation to act in my client's best interest if I want to be in play for future work down the road - otherwise they will catch on that I have made recommendations that don't pan out and will stop working with me. In the case of this connector option, basically 2B2 appears to be the preferred choice not because it meets the original intended needs, but because it is the only option able to receive a permit from an environmental standpoint. I strongly feel the best alternative if this project is truly intended to best satisfy the original goals is either go back to the drawing board and find some other alternatives that can satisfy all the environmental criteria; or the No Build option. Clearly, I feel Maine DOT wants the follow on project work even though it's not in the best interests of the client. They don't have to worry about maintaining ongoing relations for future work since they decide what gets done and where.

I also cannot get my arms around how only 1 out of 79 alternatives is eligible for an environmental permit - statistically what are the chances? Sure, logically there is a hierarchy of alternatives from least to most environmentally damaging, but this approach of comparing one alternative to another seems to dismiss the overall environmental impact of each of the 79 alternatives compared to any other Federal Highway project over the last, say, 5-10 years. How do all of these 79 connector options (actually there should be fewer options - anything that didn't meet the original needs should have been thrown out before this stage) stack up against other Federal Highway and Maine DOT projects in terms of environmental impact? I find it reasonable to believe that other road projects in the U.S. have gotten the go ahead despite much worse environmental impact than any of the 79 proposed options. The Army Corps preliminary decision states that they believe 2B2 is the preferred route

because "the Corps continues to believe there are no other available, practicable, or less environmentally damaging alternatives than alternative 2B2". Shouldn't they at least provide a comparison to other projects across the nation? I've traveled many highway miles in my life, and I cannot believe that any of these routes is more harmful than a highway that goes through a swamp (the entire state of Florida). Perhaps my intuition is wrong, but I'd sure appreciate a greater level of context around how these options compare to other projects instead of evaluating the alternatives in a vacuum.

I can attest that Route 46 between Route 9 and Route 1A isn't pedestrian friendly and needs improvement. This can be used to describe many of Maine's state routes unfortunately. I do appreciate the concerns of residents on Rte 46 and Rte 9 as well - although Rte 9 has been rebuilt over the years and is much wider. I do question the notion that Rte 46 has "heavy" truck traffic - it's likely in the eye of the beholder - if I lived on that road I wouldn't like the truck traffic either - because the road is too narrow, not because there are too many of them. Clearly, there is concern over Route 46 currently - so why not put a laser focus on that immediate issue by thinking of ways to alleviate those concerns. The requirements likely involve some low-hanging fruit and some longer-range projects. The current proposal is neither classified as a quick inexpensive fix nor as a viable long-term solution, which should cause one to pause and reevaluate what the real problem is and how it can be abated in the near-term and solved in the long-term.

I think the crux of the issue is reducing/eliminating 18 wheeler traffic on Rte 46 spanning Eddington/Holden. I would encourage the appropriate committees and agencies to explore other alternatives that are not limited to extending I-395. I have a few suggestions - in full disclosure I have not researched their feasibility - but thinking outside the box might present other alternatives that help solve the current problems, and not create new ones and disenfranchise area residents to displacement and decreased quality of life.Â

- Build a connector between Rte 9 near Rte 178 interchange and I-95 between Bangor Mall area and Orono. Ban heavy trucks on Rte 46
- Build a connector from Rte 9/Rte 180 intersection in Clifton and Rte 1A in between Lucerne Inn in Dedham and Rte 46/Rte 1A intersection in Holden
- Rebuild and widen both intersections at either end of Rte 46
- Cede that portion of Rte 46 from the state back to the towns of Eddington and Holden - then they could maintain them and post them with low weight limits or ban heavy trucks. Is there precedent for this?
- Reduce the current weight limit on Rte 46 for any vehicle
- Install a weigh station in Clifton - I believe truckers avoid these because they cost them time (and sometimes violations) - would be a deterrent for trucks to either go down Rte 46 or continue to Brewer on Rte 9. This is my favorite option to explore because no one loses their home and the 18 wheelers would avoid the area.
- Reduce the speed limit on Rte 46 to 30 mph - install cameras and radar to ticket speeders like is done in other states - might not deter speeding truckers as it is the "cost of doing business".
- Consider utilizing the abandoned railroad tracks between I-395/Rte 1A as much as possible - a large amount of the connector could follow this path as the ROW is already established (runs parallel to Route 1A heading toward Ellsworth - intersects Rte 46 right near the Rte 1A/Rte 46 intersection - it connects nicely with some of the uninhabited land I reference in the next bullet.
- Revisit other alternatives that meet the original need of connecting I-395 with Rte 9 east of the Rte 46 intersection. If this road is to really meet long term needs, no compromise should be made on alternatives that do not all the needs. Perhaps the environmental agencies could be encouraged to take a "hard look" at the other alternatives that would meet the project requirements, displace fewer residents, and cause less disruption to the current landscape. There is plenty of forest land and fields to the east of the proposed route 2B2 where there are fewer dwellings.

I have had an opportunity to review some of the testimony that was submitted in advance of the prior Committee meeting on this bill, and one of the concerns raised by a representative of the Maine DOT where she asks you, the Committee, "We hope you will agree that using legislation to kill projects such as this one amounts to using the

wrong tool for the job." Speaking for myself but envisioning others may share similar sentiments, I feel our collective voice has not been heard to date by the Maine DOT, and this is a perfect example of how government with its system of checks and balances is supposed to work.

Frankly, when citizens attend a public forum to ask questions and express concerns over this project, yet few if any answers are given by officials after not being very transparent concerning the resurrection of the 2B2 alternative previously, a reasonable person feels like "the verdict is in" at that point. I commend and praise my fellow neighbors, city representatives, and Representative Verow, for not losing faith in government for the people and by the people. Ultimately, government represents the people, and citizens put trust in elected officials who then put trust in people who work for government agencies that are of vital importance to our lives. But I think it might be natural sometimes for those in public agencies such as the Maine DOT to lose sight that while they are challenged to maintain our existing infrastructure amid rising costs and decreased budgets, and also ensure safety and facilitate economic activity, they must not lose sight of the citizens they serve - their clients, not make decisions in an ivory tower without having to answer to anyone. In the case of my professional life, I have to ultimately answer to my clients and risk future business relationships if I do not give them sound advice. Maine DOT understandably has no competition - and apparently doesn't want legislators meddling in what they perceive as their business considering one of their employees has testified that the agency opposes using legislation to effectively kill projects. You, the Committee, are my voice, and I appreciate being heard and encourage you to intervene on my behalf. Perhaps legislation is not the most common tool used to repeal a highway project, but I hope you recognize that if enough citizens banded together through no other feasible alternative other than utilizing this tool to have our collective opposition recognized, then my objective will be accomplished. Please strongly consider letting the Maine DOT know that you have heard our voice even if they have not by supporting the proposed bill to remove 2B2 from further consideration - then I'd love to see the Committee encourage the Maine DOT to focus on the immediate issues with Route 46 and come up with a better game plan to meet the long-term needs that solve the issues at hand while preserving homes and minimizing quality of life issues for all.

Sincerely,

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