

Testimony Presented to JSC on Transportation in Support of LD 783 SP 227
Emergency Bill
Sturgeon - Brewer

To the Honorable Senator Diamond, Honorable Representative McLean, and the distinguished members of the 129th JSC on Transportation:

My name is Lisa Sturgeon, and I am a resident of the town of Brewer. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support of LD 783, “Resolve, To Require an Independent Analysis of the Department of Transportation’s I-395/Route 9 Connector Project”, and my continued opposition to the selection of 2B-2 as the preferred alternative for this project.

I was hoping to be able to speak to you in person, however we are extremely short staffed at work this week, and I cannot get coverage to leave. That being said I hope this written testimony and the additional testimonies submitted and presented by my neighbors shed light on the importance of this study that is being requested.

Outlined are three major reasons why you should support LD783, and the independent study into this project: 1-The impact to the area, 2- The cost associated with the project, and 3-The original study and merits of the project.

As a concerned citizen, a lifelong Mainer, I have lived in the same neighborhood in Brewer for more than twenty-five years. First, in my childhood home where “talk” of a extending I-395 to cut through the woods and connect to the town of Clifton, started in the late 1990s and early 2000 when the DOT conducted its original study. About four years ago, when my husband and I decided we wanted to buy a house, and start a family, there was no place else we wanted to live than the quiet area between Brewer and Holden where we both grew up; so we returned to the area. His parents still live in the house he grew up in just up the road from us on the Holden side.

Since we bought our house, talk about “The Connector” has increased. The original approved route changed. The wonderful little slice of heaven that my family, our neighbors, and I enjoy, is now being threatened. Directly impacting 54 families, and affecting many others on the peripheral that will not only lose their homes or land, but their quality of life. This “new” route, and overall project could spell the end to our neighborhood as we know it. I stay awake at night worried about what this means for my neighbors who will have to move, my son who will now grow up next to a highway, and asking the question, should we ourselves move?

I have lived in Maine my entire life. I have worked hard to stay here, to not leave, and to give back.. However, I am at the point where the only people who seem to be benefiting from this are companies with out of state interest, Canadian oil and shellfish, and logging companies, and an elected official with an [admitted conflict of interest](#). Meanwhile, the Maine DOT does not listen to residents and community leaders that *this* route is not something that we want. These actions are not becoming of the state that I love.

Each town impacted has submitted a resolution to have the project stopped, but it seems to have fallen on deaf ears. In addition the [\\$25million Federal DOT grant](#) awarded last year, does not include any support from the towns where it would pass through. Why would towns not wish to support a grant that would help fund this project? It was not because they were not asked, but because they do not support this project as is, especially the route that was decided on without their knowledge or involvement.

It is my understanding that you may have heard that if this bill passes, the State will have to give back the grant funding. However, if the original approved route, known as 3EIK-2 which met all of the needs was examined, then the funds should not have to be given back. Additionally, if there is no need for the Connector to be built which is still an option since traffic has decreased in 20 years since the original study, it brings into question what else could the remaining \$55 million of this project be used for?

Standing at just less than \$80 million (an amount which has increased by \$19 million in less than 3 years), this project not only takes away funds from already existing infrastructure in dire need of repair, but also creates [a new need for infrastructure funding and management](#). We have built this state into a hole of auto-dependency, and lack the monetary funds to maintain the roads already built. Investing \$80 million in Rt. 1A alone would solve more than the proposed Route 2B-2, and have lasting effects.

To address the third point of contention with this project is the chosen route. In 2009, Maine DOT said that Route 2B-2 would only meet 20% of the of the system linkage concerns (chart below) and as it did not address the traffic congestion needs, it was removed it from further consideration. Route 3EIK-2, was the chosen route as it met all of the needs and purposes of the study. However, sometime between 2009 and 2015 Route 3EIK-2 was removed, and Route 2B-2 which has been said by several officials on numerous occasions only partially meets the original requirements of the study. I ask why are we willing to pay \$80 million for a partial fix?



Purpose and Needs Matrix

Alternatives	Meets Purpose			Meets Needs	
	Study Purpose	USACE Purpose	System Linkage	Safety Concerns	Traffic Congestion
No-Build	No	No	No	No	No
Alternative 1-Upgrade	No	No	No	No	No
2B-2	No	No	No	Yes	No
3A-3EIK-1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3EIK-2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5A2E3K	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5A2E3K-1	No	No	No	Yes	No
5A2E3K-2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5B2E3K-1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Furthermore, the switch was made unbenounced to town officials in the impacted communities, and only discovered from a resident who was searching the DOT’s website. This is not what I would call transparent, and additionally when asked why the routes were switched, no hard concrete reason was readily given. The communities where not included in the discussion and further “held hostage” to support the new route.

I want my son to grow up safe, in a town that values community, and in a state that values its people. If this connector goes through as is, even though we do not know lose our house because of it, we may be forced to move as it will change the landscape both physically and the quality of life. Our property sits 225 yards from the proposed route, our neighbors will lose their houses, and it will make the it unsafe for my son to walk to his grandparents’ house a mere 1.2 miles away as he gets older (a large deciding factor for why we bought our house).

If this connector goes in as is, it will displace more families, increase taxes for residents in cities involved, yet decrease the tax base for the towns, and potentially hurt small businesses with decreased traffic like what has been seen in Gray, and Presque Isle since their connectors went in. This route is not a fix to the problem, and needs to be looked at.

I would like to thank Senator Rosen for listening to her constituents and submitting this bill, and Senator Carpenter, Senator Dow, Senator Farrin, Representative Stanley, and Representative Verow for co-signing the bill.

I greatly appreciate your time, and hopefully your help and support in this matter. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do, or any additional information you might need.

Sincerely,
Lisa Sturgeon,
Brewer Resident

Links embedded in the testimony can also be clicked on here:

<https://bangordailynews.com/2016/04/27/news/bangor/selectmans-votes-on-i-395-project-raise-questions-about-conflict-of-interest/>

<https://bangordailynews.com/2016/03/26/news/bangor/planners-claim-state-forced-them-to-approve-i-395-connector-project/>

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/grants/infra/archive/>

<https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2016/12/2/best-of-2016-what-are-you-doing-maine?rq=maine>