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Letter to the editor: Gorham connector plan at odds with Climate Council goals

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Here at Maine Audubon, we're noticing a disconnect between transportation planning and the work of the governor's Maine Climate Council.

On Nov. 29, we read with interest that the Maine Turnpike Authority Board of Directors [had authorized staff](#) to begin securing lands to build a 5-mile connector from Gorham to South Portland. On Dec. 15, the Telegram published a lengthy [article on transportation and climate](#) that said, in part, that reducing vehicle emissions will require "widespread adoption of electric vehicles, public transit expansion, denser and more efficient towns and cities, and overcoming Mainers' reliance on single-occupancy vehicles to travel everywhere."

This is exactly what was proposed in a 2012 report commissioned by the Legislature, the [Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study](#). Rather than constructing a new connector, the study recommends using a combination of regional land use planning, new and expanded public transit and specific roadway improvements on existing roads to reduce congestion and the number of cars on the road. The underlying issues addressed in the report – more sprawl, more cars on the road – will likely not be solved by the proposed connector.

In fact, studies show that building new roads often [increases cars](#) on the road, disrupts existing [human](#) and [natural](#) communities and creates barriers for [aquatic](#) and [terrestrial](#) animals to move safely across the landscape. It's time to resurrect and update the excellent recommendations from the 2012 report, which, if fully implemented, should reduce carbon pollution from transportation – a step in the right direction toward meeting the Climate Council goals.

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