



August 5, 2024

To Town Councilors of Gorham, Scarborough, South Portland and Westbrook:

I am writing on behalf of the Maine Turnpike Authority's Board of Directors to provide you with an update on the status of the Gorham connector project and give you a sense of our plans to pause and reset. As we announced in July, we extended our timeline for the public process to ensure thorough review and integration of feedback received to date. This will also provide time for a new Executive Director to be selected, become familiar with the project and work with the project team to set a clear direction moving forward. The public process on this project will continue until obligations in the Memorandum of Agreement dated January 2022 are fulfilled. There is currently no formal schedule for filing environmental permits.

It is my understanding that the Scarborough Town Council will be holding a mid-year workshop on Wednesday, August 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss its 2024 goals. We acknowledge the delay in public meetings has raised questions related to the project at your council meetings. While we have been thoroughly evaluating the public input received so far, we will begin to communicate through smaller public sessions and regular website updates. We will continue to weigh feedback and look at other solutions/alignments and mitigation strategies suggested during our public engagement, even if they were previously dismissed. We are in the process of updating our evaluation and presentation of alternatives that include:

- the no-build option,
- prior spot improvement evaluations,
- the widening of existing roadways, and
- alternative alignments of a new roadway.

Some of these were reviewed with the public during previous phases of the project, however, we acknowledge that a side-by-side comparison of all alternatives will be beneficial for anyone reviewing a project of this magnitude. This analysis will continue to take public feedback into account along with current travel patterns, recent GPCOG/PACTS draft growth projections for the region, municipal land use management strategies, transit opportunities and other relevant information.

Another reason for extending the timeline is that the Authority is committed to ongoing coordination with MaineDOT's studies on active transportation and transit related to the Gorham Connector. These studies are focused on understanding opportunities for a wholistic multimodal transportation network, not just a new road. GPCOG/PACTS and several other organizations responsible for delivering these modal services are engaged as part of MaineDOT's Technical Advisory Committee for these studies. The information developed through these studies will be important to MTA's analysis. MaineDOT's website for the related Active Transportation and Transit studies will be available soon.

In the meantime, a public information plan for the proposed Gorham Connector will continue engagement with stakeholders, interest groups, elected officials, and the public well into 2025. The current plan includes several elements that will be communicated in more detail:

- Regular e-mail communications will be sent regarding current efforts and areas of focus on the project sent to those who have signed up for project updates. These will also be posted on the MTA's project website. We encourage anyone who would like to actively receive these updates to register using this link:  
[https://pima.maineturnpikevpi.com/public/subscribe/search?project\\_id=102](https://pima.maineturnpikevpi.com/public/subscribe/search?project_id=102)
- Additional topic-specific discussions will be hosted with interested parties and municipal representatives to build upon prior communications. These are intended as informal opportunities to share how topics have been considered to date, to receive feedback, and to further identify and address topics of interest.
- The existing project website will be updated to facilitate information sharing including items previously requested, such as prior studies. This website will also include a calendar where people can see a listing of any upcoming meetings scheduled, including meetings with municipal managers and interested parties. It will also contain estimated timing of major project milestones. Meeting agendas, minutes, and materials will be uploaded.
- Additional community input sessions will be held once the project team has meaningful information to share based on its continuing consideration of public input and engineering.

We are committed to improving communication and ensuring that our public engagement efforts are more consistent and transparent moving forward. We encourage interested parties to remain engaged in an open and productive dialogue on this project, both at scheduled meetings and through the project website [www.GorhamConnectorProject.com](http://www.GorhamConnectorProject.com). We want to provide the elected officials representing the study area communities with timely information. We value your input.

We ask that the four municipalities continue their support of the project during this transition. We appreciate your patience as we continue to study potential solutions to the congestion west of Portland.

Sincerely,

Peter Merfeld

Acting Deputy Executive Director