



## Fact Sheet Southern Toll Plaza Site Selection Process

### The Situation

The existing mainline toll plaza at mile marker 7 in York has a number of safety and operational deficiencies that are increasingly exacerbated by its age and ever-increasing traffic volumes. When the York Toll plaza was constructed in 1969 it was thought to have a structural lifespan of about 25 years. It has now been in operation for 38 years. In 1969, it handled less than 5 million vehicles per year. Last year, the plaza handled more than 16 million vehicles. This more than tripling of traffic volume has highlighted the following deficiencies.

### Existing York Toll Plaza Deficiencies

- **It is located on a curve** in the highway, which prevents approaching drivers from seeing all lanes of the plaza in advance, which in turn prevents them from using all lanes of the plaza to maximum efficiency. Traffic tends to backup behind just a few of the available lanes, extending back stream and causing traffic to slow and stop.
- **It is located at the bottom a hill**, requiring passenger vehicles and large trucks to apply breaks and downshift excessively when approaching and to gear-up and accelerate heavily when leaving the plaza. This situation results in safety, efficiency and noise concerns.
- **It is located near an interchange**, causing entering vehicles to merge with northbound plaza traffic within the limits of the plaza. Exiting vehicles face similar maneuvers in that they must use the extreme right toll lanes or cross toll lanes to exit within the limits of the plaza. These two situations result in driver confusion, distraction and inefficient use of the plaza lanes.

- **It cannot be expanded or altered** responsibly or affordably because it sits in a wetland. Environmental laws in 1969 allowed for construction in wetlands, but today they are much more stringent and would prevent any expansion or alteration in the existing location.
- **Sections of plaza are sinking.** Because it was constructed on wetlands sections of the plaza are sinking. This results in constant and costly maintenance and ultimately affects the efficiency and safety of the plaza for both employees and motorists.
- **It is unable to accommodate technology advances** that will make toll collection safer, faster, quieter and more convenient and less expensive to operate. The Maine Turnpike is planning to introduce highway speed toll collection, which allows E-ZPass customers to pay their tolls by passing beneath a sensor at 55-65 mph. This cannot be accomplished at the existing plaza because of its wetland location, curve in the roadway, proximity to an interchange and lack of sight distance.

#### Critical features of a modern, safe and efficient mainline toll plaza

- A straight section of highway (horizontal alignment): The new plaza should be located on a long, straight section of highway, (approximately 8,000 feet) that allows motorists to see the plaza and make decisions and safe movements in advance of it.
- Crest of a hill (Vertical Alignment): The new plaza should be located on the crest of a gradual hill, allowing approaching vehicles to ease toward the plaza without heavy breaking and to depart the plaza without heavy acceleration.
- Maximum Visibility (Sight Distance): The new plaza should be located away from overhead bridges and other structures that restrict visibility when approaching the plaza
- Focused Traffic Flow: The new plaza should be located away from highway ramps and interchanges to avoid the confusion of merging vehicles.
- Traffic flow technology: The new plaza should be built in a location that is able to accommodate new innovations and technologies such as highway speed tolling. Today, nearly 50% of all vehicles traveling the Turnpike and 80% of all trucks pay their tolls electronically with E-ZPass. The Maine Turnpike Authority is planning to introduce “highway speed” electronic toll collection at

the new Southern Toll Plaza. Highway speed toll collection will allow E-ZPass users to remain on the mainline of the highway and pay their tolls by simply passing beneath a sensor at 55-65 mph. Customers without E-ZPass will move to lanes on the right leading to a more traditional toll plaza. Highway speed toll collection helps to reduce traffic congestion and gas consumption and is safer because it separates E-ZPass customers who are paying without stopping from cash paying customers who are stopping.

### Phase #1: Footprint Identification

Maine Turnpike engineers and consultants conducted a survey on the roughly 16 mile stretch of highway between mile marker 3 in Kittery and mile marker 19 in Wells to identify any and all sites that could accommodate the basic footprint of a modern mainline plaza. A total of 16 sites were identified based on the following general engineering criteria.

- Horizontal Alignment (is there at least an 8000' straight stretch?)
- Separated from Interchanges (by at least one mile)
- Separated from overhead structures (by at least 3500')
- Vertical alignment (is it on the crest of a hill?)

### Phase #2 Initial Site Screening

Maine Turnpike engineers and consultants then continued the evaluation with a more detailed engineering analysis, comparing each of the 16 sites. The following criteria were used:

- A more detailed review of the above general engineering criteria
- Nearby Land Use (what is the existing local zoning and land use?)
- Number of homes (how many homes are nearby?)
- Home displacements (how many homes might have to be purchased?)
- Wetland and Stream and other environmental impacts

Four sites emerged from the Phase #2 Initial Site Screening analysis:

- Mile 8.7 in York
- Mile 9.9 in York
- Mile 11.3 in York
- Mile 13.2 in York

### Phase #3 Site Screening and Public Participation for four candidate sites

The Maine Turnpike Authority and its engineering consultants are now in the process of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the four remaining sites to determine which site should be submitted for environmental permitting. This phase of the screening analysis broadens public participation and includes the following additional comparison criteria areas:

- Local Road Access (can the plaza be accessed easily?)
- Tunnel Construction (Does site have conditions that hinder tunnel construction, i.e. high groundwater table, presence of ledge?)
- Grade Adjustments (will the grade of the highway have to be changed?)
- Utilities (does the site have efficient access to necessary utilities?)
- Historic and Archaeological (does the site have special historical or archaeological value?)
- Hazardous Waste (is the site near any existing hazardous waste sites?)
- Cost (how much will it cost?)
- Public Comment (insight gained from public comment about sites)

### Site Screening Public Meeting #1

As part of the site screening process the Maine Turnpike Authority held an open house and public meeting to describe the process, answer questions, and receive comments on the four remaining sites. The open house and public meeting was held at York Middle School, 30 Organug Road, Wednesday, February 27, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

### Additional Site Screening Public Meeting

To accommodate interested citizens who were unaware of or unable to attend the February 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Maine Turnpike Authority has scheduled an additional open house and public meeting to begin at 6:00 p.m. April 3, at the York Middle School, 30 Organug Road.

### Next Steps:

### **Identification of Preferred Site**

Following, and with the benefit, of the February 27<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup> public information meetings, the Turnpike Authority and consulting engineers will conduct a more detailed analysis of the phase #1 and phase #2 screening criteria. Based on that analysis, the four sites will be compared to determine a preferred alternative. The Turnpike Authority expects to select a preferred alternative before the end of May 2008.

### **Proving the LEDPA**

Once the Turnpike Authority has selected a preferred alternative, it must then prove to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and that the preferred site is also the *Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative* (LEDPA). Put simply, the LEDPA is the site that has the least environmental impact that can be reasonably constructed and operated. The process of identifying the LEDPA also requires ample opportunity for public comment. Only after the environmental agencies agree that the preferred site is also the LEDPA can the site be submitted for permitting. The Turnpike Authority expects to begin the LEDPA confirmation process within the next 3 months.

### **Environmental Permitting**

The proposed southern toll plaza project will require environmental permits from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Following the LEDPA determination, the Turnpike Authority will begin preliminary design and environmental permitting applications. The Turnpike Authority could receive the necessary permits for construction within a year.

### **Construction**

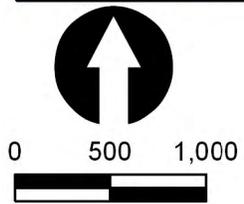
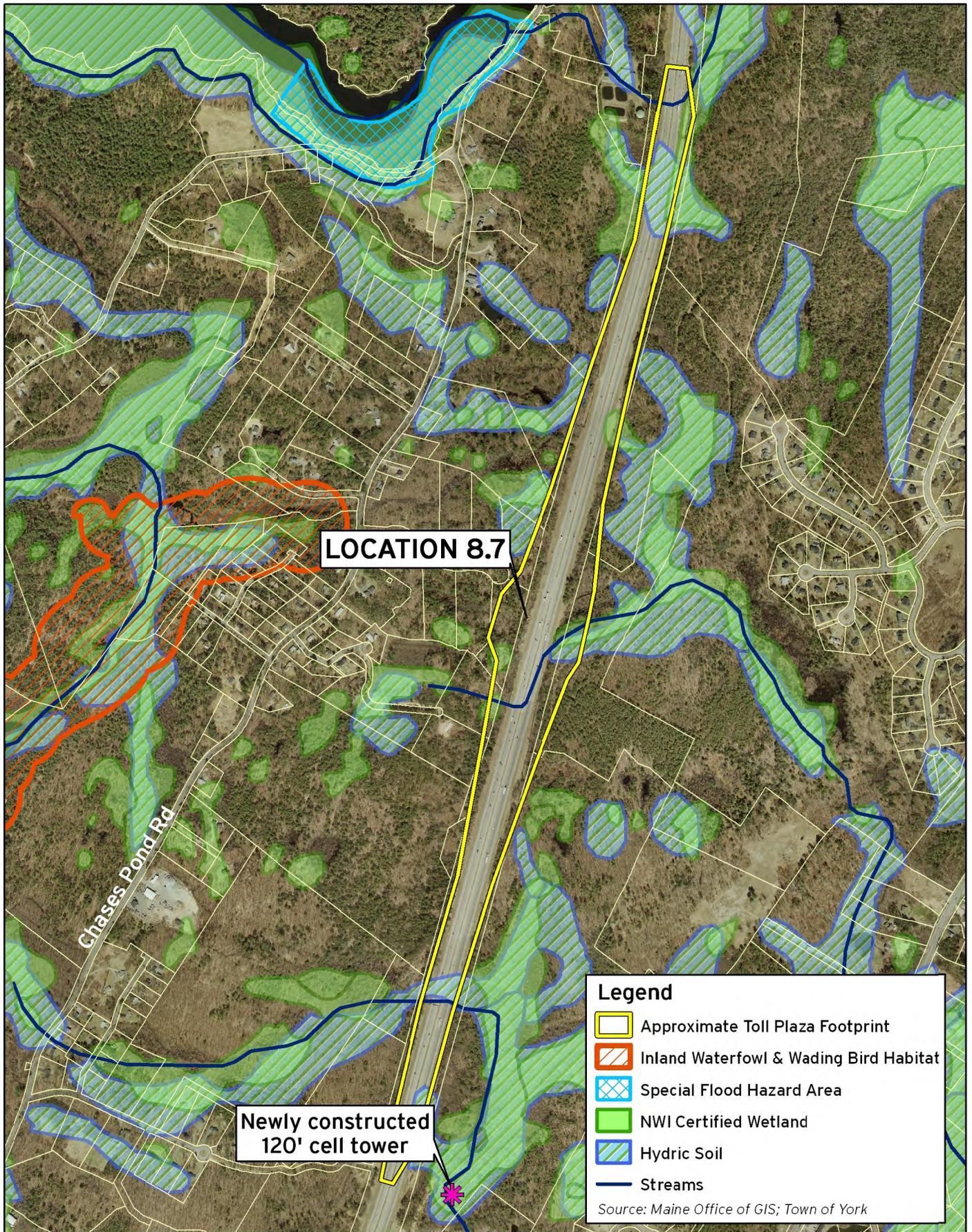
Providing the permitting process goes as expected, construction of the new toll plaza could begin by the summer of 2009. A two year construction project would allow the new highway speed toll plaza to open by the summer of 2011.

### **Attachments**

-Aerial Maps of sites 8.7, 9.9, 11.3 and 13.2

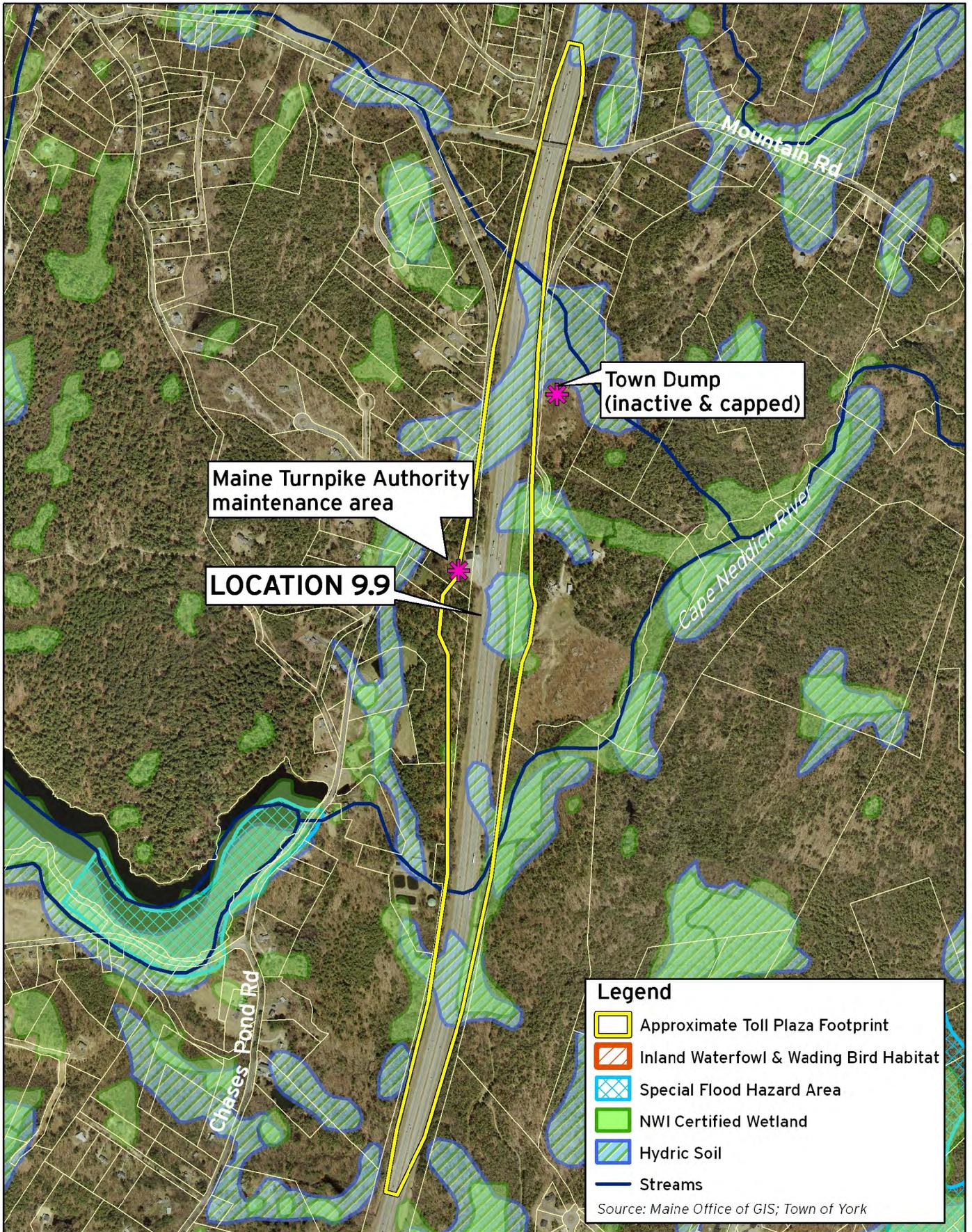
### **Information and Updates**

Please visit [www.maineturnpike.com](http://www.maineturnpike.com)  
or call Bruce Pelletier at 871-7771 ext. 119



**Maine Turnpike Authority**  
**Southern Toll Plaza Replacement Study**  
**Location 8.7**



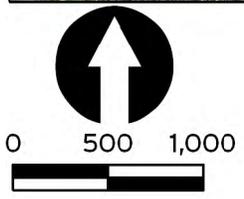
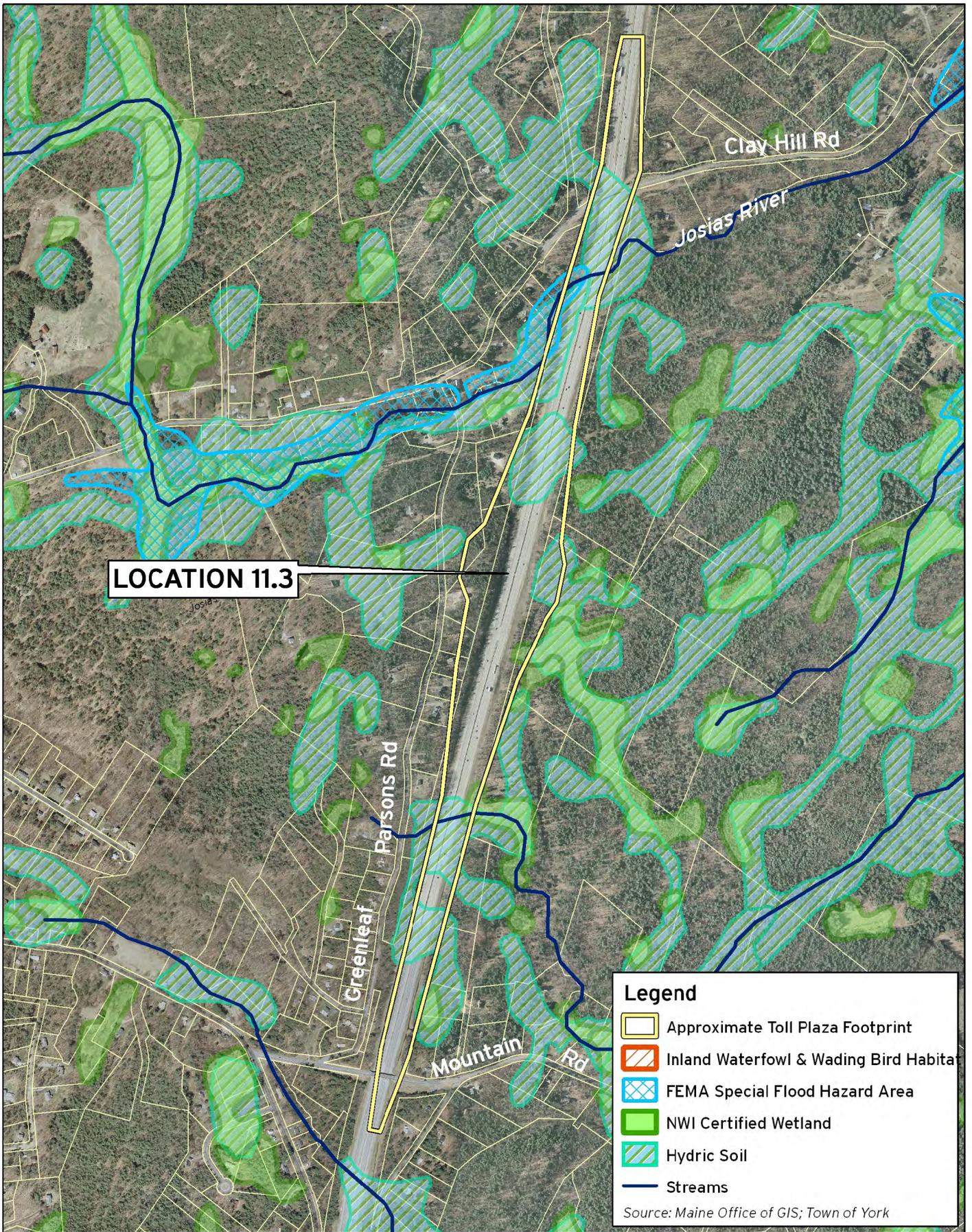


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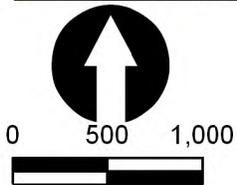
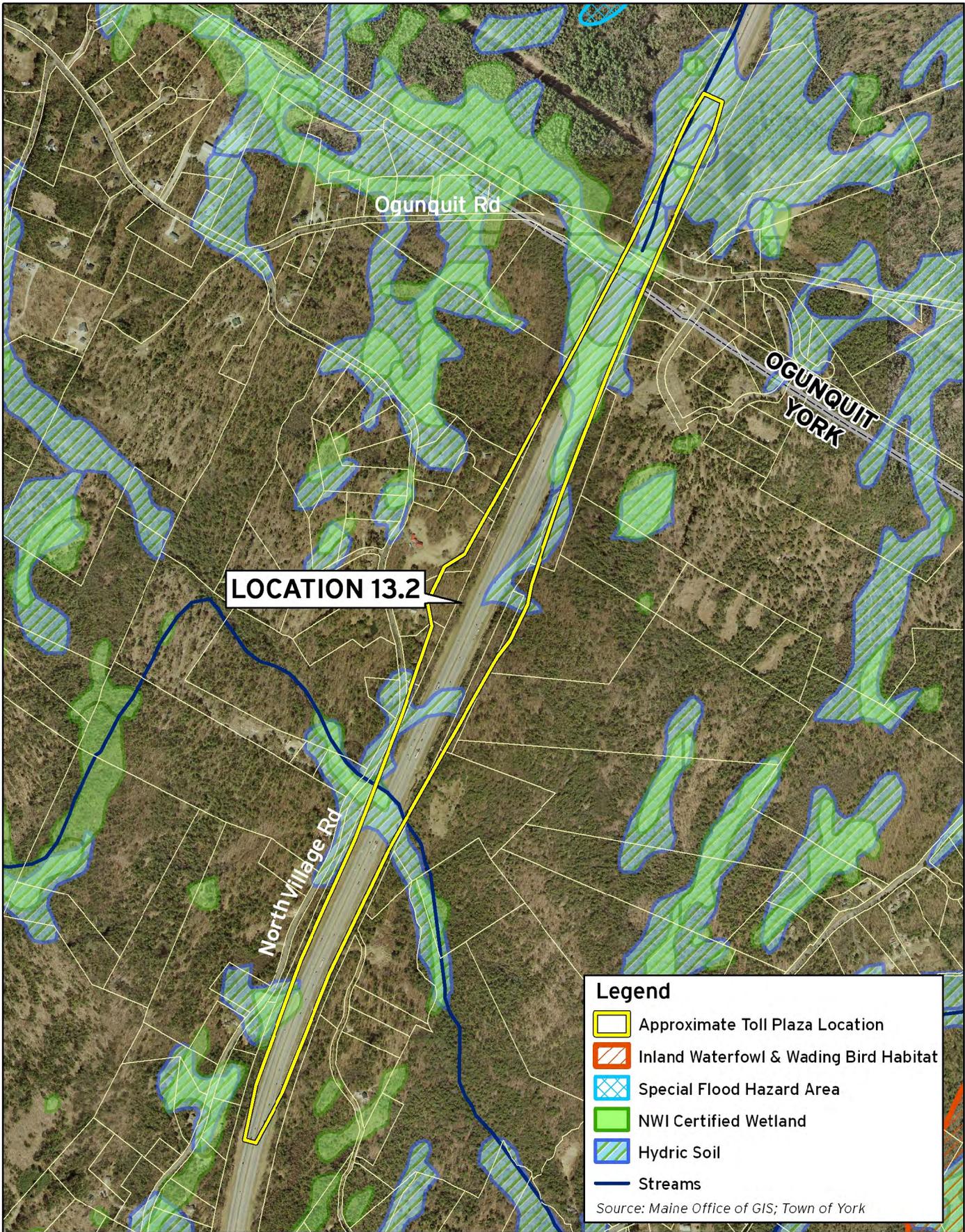
**Maine Turnpike Authority  
Southern Toll Plaza Replacement Study  
Location 9.9**





**Maine Turnpike Authority**  
**Southern Toll Plaza Replacement Study**  
**Location 11.3**



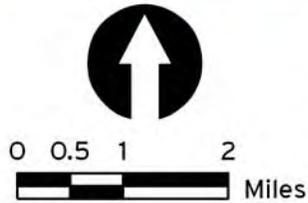


**Maine Turnpike Authority  
Southern Toll Plaza Replacement Study  
Location 13.2**





Note: Location # represents approximate Maine Turnpike mile marker  
 Source: Maine Office of GIS



# Maine Turnpike Authority Southern Toll Plaza Replacement Study Candidate Toll Plaza Locations

