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2017 MAY 18 A 9:07

Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
Attn: Marybeth Richardson  
312 Canco Road  
Portland, Maine 04103

*The voice of Maine business*

**RE: Southern Maine Toll Plaza Project**

Dear Ms. Richardson:

The mission of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce is to promote a positive business climate in the State of Maine by focusing on advocacy, access, and leadership. As the state's premier business advocacy organization, we work to empower the state's business community to collaboratively advance a proactive agenda for economic growth and prosperity in Maine. We do so by working with a network of approximately 5,000 companies statewide. Because the new highway-speed toll plaza proposed by the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) will improve the economic competitiveness of the State, the Maine State Chamber supports the project.

As you know, a safe, efficient and modern Turnpike is critical to the economic vitality of the entire State of Maine. Although the Maine Turnpike represents only about 1% of the state's highway mileage, it carries almost 10% of statewide traffic, and is the primary economic connection to the rest of the nation. According to the Maine Department of Transportation, 87% of Maine's freight is carried by truck, and about 55% of all truck freight traffic crossing state boundaries passes over the Turnpike in Kittery. Clearly, a well-functioning Turnpike is central to Maine's economy. The York toll plaza is a critical piece of the Turnpike. Located at the gateway to Maine, it collects \$56 million per year, being 42% of all Turnpike revenue. It is a central reason that two thirds of Turnpike revenue are paid by out-of-staters.

The MTA's proposal is for a modern high-speed Open Road Tolling (ORT) plaza at Mile 8.8 in York. ORT provides highway speed center lanes for electronic tolling with minimal abutter and environmental impacts, and also continues roadside cash collection. It also avoids the toll increases and traffic diversion that come if roadside cash collection was eliminated. As a general proposition, higher tolls and increased traffic congestion hurt economic competitiveness. Further, we note that the project will result in a dramatic reduction of traffic queues of the current barrier plaza, which will be a huge improvement to the visitor experience specifically and tourism in general, Maine's largest industry.

In conclusion, because the MTA proposal provides significant improvements to the state's transportation system and economic competitiveness while avoiding negative impacts like toll increases and traffic diversion, we support it.

Sincerely,

  
Dana Connors, President and CEO  
Maine State Chamber of Commerce