



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

September 11, 2009

The Honorable Raymond L. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I am writing to express my strong support for the TIGER Grant application in the amount of \$25 million submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) for the "Caribou Connector Project" to develop a new connector in the City of Caribou, Maine.

The Caribou Connector Project, having independent utility, is a segment of a larger Aroostook County Transportation Study, which is looking at north-south connections in Aroostook County. The Caribou Connector is a key central element that is common to all of the north-south regional corridors being evaluated through the NEPA process, and is essential to achieving the transportation and economic benefits of the Aroostook County Transportation Study. The Caribou Connector project has received a Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) determination from the Army Corps of Engineers. The project would serve as the first step in developing a transportation corridor that would improve the cost-competitiveness of the northern Aroostook County region and improve the long-term efficiency of the transportation network by reducing travel times. Aroostook County's transportation system currently limits access and mobility to, from, and within the county. This limited mobility in turn limits economic opportunity. The regional transportation system of two-lane highways, often extending through downtown centers, does not provide direct, efficient connections between population and commercial, industrial, and agricultural centers, to the high-speed Interstate highway systems of Maine and southeastern Canada (I-95 and Canadian Route 2 [TransCanada Highway]).

The City of Caribou, in conjunction with MaineDOT and the Aroostook County Legislative Delegation, has been working to address the regional need to construct a new connector from Route 161 to Route 1, north of Caribou, to separate truck- and through-traffic from the downtown district. From a quality-of-life perspective, the goal of separating this traffic will improve passenger and destination traffic patterns in the downtown area. It will eliminate existing one-way patterns, improve pedestrian safety, and preserve and improve the unique and historic aspects of downtown Caribou. There will also be significant regional economic impacts, in that a number of employers in the region ship their product by truck within Maine, south into the Boston and New York metropolitan areas, and across the border to Quebec, and would realize cost and time savings from a direct route around Caribou, rather than through its downtown. These companies include Fraser Paper in Madawaska, McCain Foods in Easton, and Sargent's Trucking in Mars Hill, among others. This project will improve connections within Aroostook County and through-traffic from the St.



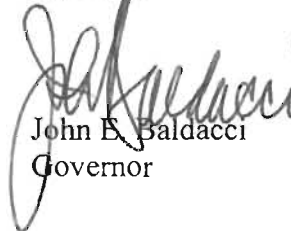
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER
888-577-6690 (TTY)
www.maine.gov

John Valley and Canada to Maine's Interstate-95. In addition, there will be benefits to the tourism industry through more direct connections and decreased travel times to destinations such as the training facility for the U.S. Olympics biathlon team in Fort Kent, as well as for summer and winter outdoor recreation opportunities.

As you will see in our application, TIGER Grant funds for the Caribou Connector Project will be used to construct a 4.3-mile new highway connection between U.S. Route 1 and Route 161 in Caribou, Maine. Specifically, the project will construct a two-lane controlled-access highway on a four-lane divided-highway footprint. The new connector would cut the number of freight trucks and passenger vehicles in downtown Caribou while reducing vehicle travel-time for through-trips. Economic benefits include shortened commuting times for workers traveling to employment and population centers, and reduced travel times for tourists traveling to and from the region.

This is a significant investment for the region that would fill a very important infrastructure need in Northern Maine, improve quality of life, and promote economic development. I urge your strong consideration of the Caribou Project application submitted for funding under the USDOT TIGER Grant discretionary program.

Sincerely,



John E. Baldacci
Governor