



October 31, 2017

**Maine Better
Transportation
Association**

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David Bernhardt, PE, Commissioner
Maine Department of Transportation
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Commissioner Bernhardt:

On behalf of the Maine Better Transportation Association, I wanted to express our strong support for a grant through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program to support the I-395 connector to Route 9. We urge US DOT to consider funding of up to \$35 million to help build this critical artery. There are many reasons why building this vital regional connection is so important including:

- To help revitalize the Downeast region of Maine, one of the most impoverished regions in New England, by improving better shipping connections to industries there and to eastern New Brunswick;
- To significantly reduce travel time for both freight and passenger users;
- To improve safety at a time when highway accidents are increasing precipitously;
- To improve traffic flow to the Acadia region, visited by millions of visitors per year;
- To improve east-west connections in Maine and across the region; and
- To connect to a highway system of regional and international significance

Route 9 was rebuilt over the course of the administration of four governors, each of whom was committed to fixing the then substandard road, and recognizing what an important corridor it was. Reconstructing Route 9 brought significant time savings and efficiencies to both ends of the "Airline" road. It also served to reduce accidents, as it was a major safety project. The missing piece to opening up this critical artery is a road connecting I-395 to Route 9.

The extensive study that MaineDOT completed of this project clearly indicates that the route chosen (2B-2 Connector) will provide for approximately a 1.4-million-mile reduction in vehicle miles traveled and a \$250,000 annual savings for passenger vehicles when compared to the current routes on 1-A and 46. Similarly freight truck movement could be reduced up to 262,000 in vehicle miles traveled and generate \$247,000 in annual savings.

We understand that studies show that passenger vehicles are expected to save over 80,000 hours while freight customers will save 16,000 hours of driving per year; these will result in estimated savings of \$1.85 million and \$962,000, respectively.

Finally, fatal and serious injuries could be reduced by 20% - a significant drop - with an estimated \$5.2 million reduction in Crash Costs.

Thank you for pursuing this grant application. We strongly support urge you to view the I-395 Connector Project favorably with an INFRA grant of up to \$35 million.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria R. Fuentes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and "F".

Maria R. Fuentes
Executive Director