

## The East-West Corridor? It's not just another highway!

An East-West Corridor which will cut across the entire state of Maine from Calais to Coburn Gore has been proposed. Early proposals referred to it as a "utility corridor" in order to emphasize to investors that it would be much more than just a highway and carry a lot more than just vehicular traffic. Now that those who love the natural beauty of Maine and its way of life have begun to question the wisdom of such a project, the developers more often refer to it as an "East-West Highway," probably to make it sound like just another road similar to I-95. But, it isn't.

Such a corridor can include a lot. There is a highway, most likely used by large trucks hauling materials between Quebec and New Brunswick through Maine. It can also include new railways to haul freight. Then there's the utility aspect including pipelines and other facilities to transport petroleum products such as tar-sands oil and petcoke, the two dirtiest of all. It is well known that Canadian companies are looking for outlets to both east and west coasts as well as to the Gulf coast for their rapidly expanding petroleum industry centered in Alberta. Other pipelines could transport other chemicals as well as fresh water extracted from Maine's abundant supply. Finally, the corridor can involve communications lines, including cell towers, fiber optics, and other cables.

Because it's so much more than just another road, the corridor will take up a lot of space. It will be about 220 miles long and at least 500 feet wide (if it were just a highway using the entire space it would



most likely be the widest highway in the entire world). In some places, mostly east of the Penobscot River, the proposed right-of-way sprawls 2,000 feet wide, four times wider! But such a road would carry much more than just motor vehicles; any truck traffic could carry highly toxic chemicals through some of the most pristine places left in the state as well as across some of its most productive farmlands, wetlands, and forests. As with all highways, there will also be noise pollution, air and water pollution, habitat fragmentation and destruction, and the risk of the inevitable toxic spills which are made worse by the fact that this corridor is most likely designed to carry the most toxic petroleum products known to



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mankind from one part of Canada to another.

But we can't even be sure how much of the corridor will be only 500 feet wide and how much will be 2,000 feet, or which communities will be overrun. Unfortunately, the developers have not been forthcoming about the details. We might never know until the project is actually begun just what and where the impacts will be. But this much is certain: if built, the corridor will eradicate much of the land and greatly alter all of the lifestyles of the many communities along its probable path, including one of Maine's most beautiful and valuable (at least to its inhabitants): the town of Garland.

### The Land of Gar

The hills and valleys of our hometown were carved out about twelve thousand years ago by retreating glaciers. Now, rich forest



covers the area and the aboriginal people used it as prime hunting/gathering/fishing grounds for thousands of years before Columbus. As European settlers increasingly moved onto the land 200 years ago, the richness and diversity of the area quickly became obvious to those first permanent inhabitants. The region had abundant water for power and agriculture, mature forests for fuel and building material as well as for income, and large deposits of sand and gravel for roads and local construction. Nearby markets in Bangor allowed early settlers to slowly build a community of villages for commerce and these were surrounded by small farms to meet their needs for food and fiber. Most farms in the region were around 40 acres and within 50 years the population of Garland had grown to 1500.



Garland has always been an agricultural town with no industrial development of any size. From 1860 to 1970, because of westward migration, the population slowly declined to under 500 people. During this time, the people living here were able to exist by sustainable use of the abundant natural resources despite the many fluctuations in the national economy. Starting in 1970 new people came to live here as they sought an alternative to city/suburban living taking over much of the rest of the country. Today,



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Garland has a population of 1100. Farms are of various sizes and are diverse in their production, and many people have gardens.

The community has a strong independent infrastructure, many civic societies, a moderate tax rate, and is financially solvent (one of the few small towns in Maine which doesn't have to borrow money in "tax anticipation"). As energy becomes more expensive, a sense of place becomes more valued as people tend to stay put more. While major change surrounds us, Garland is positioned to continue supporting its inhabitants with the rich, diverse natural resources that have served this area for years.



### Consequences

Construction of the East-West Corridor will have consequences for all the people of Maine, but especially for those who currently live along its presumed path. These include environmental degradation, proven health risks, and loss of the farmlands and woodlots that basically sustain the area. The noise pollution alone will be both a nuisance and a severe hazard, a danger to both mental and physical health. In addition, diesel truck emissions are another proven risk that can become extreme over time. Diesel emissions are the most



widespread toxic air pollution in the U.S., according to the Clean Air Task Force. It includes various dangerous organic compounds such as formaldehyde, acrolein (poisonous liquid aldehyde) and PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), black carbon particulate matter (soot), a variety of toxic metals, smog-forming ozone, compliments of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and other trace toxic gases. In all, diesel truck emissions contain at least 40 hazardous pollutants and 15 known or suspected carcinogens, all of which can damage the immune, reproductive, and nervous systems. The California EPA has established a link between diesel exhaust and lung cancer resulting from long-term exposure based on more than 30 epidemiological studies. It simply cannot be honestly denied that those living in proximity to a corridor like that proposed for Maine face significantly increased health risk, and that just from "normal" operations!

The Corridor also poses the risk of toxic spills, accidents, salt pollution, even acts of terrorism which could cause an alarming amount of damage to the lives and health of those nearby. All these consequences would be due to the transport of vast quantities of

hazardous materials right through one of the cleanest and most pristine rural agricultural areas remaining in the country. Yet there is no real evidence that the corridor is even necessary. In fact, the corridor was not proposed to meet the needs of Mainers but to fulfill the interests of foreign corporations, especially for the transport of highly toxic petroleum products like tar-sands oil and petcoke. Existing rail lines, with minimal upgrading, could already handle the transportation needs which the corridor is designed for. For example, the Vanceboro-Jackman line is probably a saner and safer alternative to the proposed East-West Corridor. Truck trailers could be loaded onto railcars with far less diesel emissions and noise. In addition, a rail line can last more than 50 years without major rebuilding while a highway usually needs complete rebuilding within 10 years, especially in Maine's climate.

The corridor will also utterly destroy the rural farmland lifestyle which Garland exemplifies. It would be impossible to keep the farms and forests which form the beautiful landscapes that Mainers love intact with the passage of what might be one of the widest



highway/utility/communication corridors in the world. In addition, so many tourists come here because they find such relatively unspoiled land becoming so rare! When it's gone, once we sacrifice this beautiful town and its peaceful lifestyle, we can never get it back. The corridor will change the face of Maine forever just as similar projects have permanently changed other regions the world over.



**Opposition**

The idea of a highway spanning central Maine has been studied many times in the past few decades. The major difference with the current plan being brought up by Cianbro Corporation is the extent of the proposed development. To repeat, the proposed East-West Corridor is not "just another highway," it's vastly more invasive and destructive than those earlier proposals which have been repeatedly rejected. And according to all the information we can glean from Cianbro's statements on this project, Garland is in the pathway of this corridor and would likely be split diagonally if it were to go through. The reaction of Garland citizens has been significant. Two public meetings have already been held on the subject and strong emotions exhibited almost unanimously against the project. One of the first actions proposed was to hold a vote at the annual town meeting to

institute a moratorium on development of all private ways. A duly appointed moratorium committee has been meeting every Wednesday evening at either the town hall or the fire hall, and has expanded conceptually better to explore and develop strategies dealing with the East-West Corridor. We have taken the name Concerned Citizens Of Garland. All interested individuals are welcome to attend the 6pm to 8pm meetings. They are run with fairly strict agendas, but an opportunity to voice concerns or ideas would be offered and input appreciated.

A petition left at the Garland Store was quickly signed by many eligible voters from the town, as well as a number of residents from surrounding communities, as a show of resistance to the proposed project. It has been sent on to many newspapers, as well as local, state, and federal political representatives. It represents a major display of local sentiment.

**What do you really want?**

In considering who would benefit from the East-West Corridor, consider its purpose which would be to transport products across the state of Maine from one Canadian province to another. Also consider who the owners would be, the possible and even likely environmental impacts, how it may affect the tourism industry and the people involved, and most important, how it would either benefit or degrade the lifestyle of a typical Garland resident.

Proponents of the corridor have tried to sell it as a highway to progress and prosperity for Maine. But not only might it cost far more than it returns, those returns would most likely leave the state, even the country, as the real profit goes to foreign corporations at the expense of our beautiful land.

Do you really want to see what might be the largest highway corridor in the world cut the state of Maine in half, to spoil mile after mile of some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth, to hinder the activities of hunters, anglers, and sportsmen, which might devastate the tourism industry in Maine, and to destroy forever the rural farmland lifestyle that thousands of Mainers love? Do you want to approve this just so that traffic, utilities, and toxic chemicals can be shipped across the entire state for the likely profit of foreign countries, all without Maine's people even owning the corridor or the rights to what's on, below, and above the land? The more we learn about the planning for this project, the more concerned we are.

For More Information:

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