

What is the East-West Corridor proposal?

Peter Vigue and Darryl Brown of Cianbro Corp. are leading an effort by transnational corporate investors to build a transportation and utility corridor that would run 220 miles from Calais to Coburn Gore, beginning with the construction of a four-lane gated highway. Labeled as the Northeast Trade Gateway, this private toll road is intended for heavyweight truck transport from Canada across Maine into Canada, and future pipelines. It would be a private swath of land dividing the entire state in two.

The corridor would not follow existing state highways and would require at least a 500-foot right-of-way (compared to I-95 at 350 feet wide). Local towns would provide emergency services.

Why is it called a transportation and utility corridor?

Cianbro calls this a “transportation, communications, and utility corridor.” The proposal appears to be actualizing Plan Atlantica, a regional free-trade plan to maximize global, private-sector access to resources by increasing infrastructure to seaports. Initially Vigue promoted the corridor’s use for natural gas, transmission lines, and other “future needs.” With increased public pressure, he has directly denied “intentions” beyond a highway.

In fact, the corridor may include pipelines for highly corrosive tar sands oil, natural gas from fracking fields, and Maine’s fresh water. Oil companies are vying for Atlantic access. It could include transmission lines and unregulated import of out-of-state trash.

Would the corridor bring jobs?

While the East-West Corridor may create a few hundred new jobs for Maine, the only facts available raise concerns for rural communities. In 1999 the state completed a study on improving east-west transit that concluded that a newly built east-west highway from Calais to Coburn Gore would cause the most environmental impact, would not increase manufacturing, would not increase population, and would create a detrimental bypass effect on rural communities, especially in Washington County. Marginal growth was projected around population centers like Bangor in trades and services.

We believe a limited access corridor from Quebec to New Brunswick would siphon money away from local businesses to Canada, China, and beyond. Most development that might follow—gas stations, big-box stores, distribution centers, and transnational

resource extraction—would further harm traditional land-use jobs such as farming and logging, devitalize rural town centers, and lose the economic boost of tourism and guiding. We need to protect the local jobs we have and keep more money in Maine.

Mainers have worked hard to promote regional identity for relaxation and recreation—whitewater rafting, hunting, fishing, designated scenic byways, and scenic towns and villages. Many ATV and snowmobile routes could be cut off, limiting traffic to rural communities that enjoy this recreation and rely on tourism.

Would property rights be respected?

The East-West Corridor has been referred to both as a “public-private partnership” (PPP) and as a private project. Although proponents and Maine Department of Transportation now say the project is not an official PPP, we can’t find any other legal pathway for them to develop a private highway. With state involvement eminent domain would be an option for land acquisition. Further, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that private property can be taken by a private entity if the state determines it’s for the public good. Land devaluation due to corridor proximity is a huge concern also because of noise, air, and water pollution, as well as cultural changes that follow.

If the project moves forward as a PPP, under Maine law the public could pay up to 50% of the costs. In fact, in Cianbro’s 2008 Conceptual Feasibility Study, it assumes the public will take on 50% of the debt. In the last legislative session, Stop the East-West Corridor helped win public access to most information on PPP projects that used to be confidential, one good step forward.

How would the corridor affect Maine’s wildlife and natural resources?

Due to fencing, the corridor would adversely impact significant north-south wildlife movement for moose, deer, bear, coyote, lynx, and bobcat, to name a few. These wildlife corridors and habitats would be altered permanently. In addition, the proposed corridor could forever damage trout and salmon habitat dependent upon clean aquifers Down East and across the Stud Mill Road—an area and resource Mainers have been working to restore.

All Mainers benefit from our large bodies of water and rivers being free from degradation. Corridor construction would damage thousands of acres of sensitive wetlands and waterways. The

extensive scope of the project has the potential to drain finite local gravel and loam resources for highway construction.

Finally, the corridor would damage and drain Maine's resources by increasing privatization and extraction by transnational companies at the lowest possible cost. This could include water, wood, gravel, rare metals, minerals, industrial wind, and burning out-of-state waste in Maine. Local use would be increasingly lost.

How would the corridor affect the communities it passes through?

Communities along the route would be bisected. Future expansion for local needs would be restricted. The public would not have input on private corridor uses or public accessibility. The exact route is still veiled in secrecy and landowners are living in fear that they will lose their property or suffer unrecoverable financial loss.

We the citizens of Maine love our home. Our sense of place is what defines us. When it's gone, it's gone forever.



About Stop the East-West Corridor

Stop the East-West Corridor (STEWEC) is a statewide coalition of Maine citizens dedicated to raising awareness, fostering open communication, and requesting transparency about the proposed East-West Corridor.

Our mission is to stop the East-West Corridor by demonstrating that the project is not in the interest of Maine and that Maine citizen stakeholders do not want it.

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East-West Corridor Through Maine: Why Not?



Stop the East-West Corridor

A coalition of Maine citizens