



NORTH COUNTRY COMMONS

Information of Interest, Concern and Celebration

Stop the East-West Corridor coalition, a grassroots citizens' group, offers this first in a series of bulletins to inform about the East West Utility Corridor.

What is a Utility Corridor?

The 2010 public private partnership law (Title 23, Section 4251) protects Cianbro Corporation and the Maine Department of Transportation from public disclosure of any and all aspects of the East-West Utility Corridor Proposal. Our research has revealed the following:

- "[W]e're not talking about a road, we're talking about a corridor. A corridor for utilities, for transportation for communication" (Peter Vigue, "Cianbro president sings praises of potential east-west highway," *St. Croix Courier*, April 3, 2012).
- The State of Maine defines *energy infrastructure* as including electric transmission and distribution facilities, natural gas transmission lines, carbon dioxide pipelines and other energy transport pipelines or conduit. An *energy infrastructure corridor* is a geographic area designated for the siting of energy infrastructure (MRS Title 35-A, Section 122).
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources definition: "Utility corridors are linear strips of land ... to secure access between two points for the purpose of transmitting and distributing hydrocarbons, electrical energy, telecommunications services and include such facilities as pipelines, poles, powers, wire, cable. ..." (<http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/16000/271289.pdf>)

What would the corridor be like?

- "... [I]t will initially serve as a shortcut across Maine for Canadian truckers ..." (Peter Vigue, "The East-West Highway: Gateway to Opportunity or Toll on the Environment?"; *Downeast Magazine*, June 2012).
- "220 miles of limited-access, four-lane concrete corridor" (2008 Cianbro Feasibility Report).
- "7,891,910.4 cubic yards of gravel to build the roadbed" (*ibid*).
- "... 4,000 trucks [double- and triple-tandem of Canadian weight limit of 137,000 lb/trailer] per day traffic volume ..." (*ibid*).
- "...development of inland port facilities (i.e. intermodal centers linked to marine ports)..."

(http://canamconnections.com/bm-doc/Final-Report_.pdf, p.38).

The East-West Utility Corridor represents a destructive transformation of Maine's natural landscape, leaving behind chronic problems with the existence of a permanent 220-mile long physical barrier from foreign border to foreign border, with road safety and disaster access concerns, many hidden public costs (such as the building of a homeland security facility at a new border crossing at Coburn Gore), and certainly, the ever-presence of high-security surveillance systems, nocturnal illumination and continual air, water, soil, noise and light pollution.

How would the corridor be financed?

- "Vigue says a four-lane, 220-mile road ... could be built for less than \$2 billion through a public-private partnership, one that would call on the private sector to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the roadway" (<http://www.mainebiz.biz/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120416/CURRENTEDITION/304139997>; April 2012).
- "We have public-private partnership legislation in place," said Maine [DOT] Commissioner David Bernhardt when promoting the concept in St. Stephen, N.B., "but private investors will have to step up" (<http://bangordailynews.com/2012/03/29/news/down-east/canadians-told-east-west-highway-through-maine-a-gateway-to-opportunity/>; March 2012).
- "A public-private partnership... 'allows for private sector participation in the financing, development, operation, management, *ownership* [italics added], leasing or maintenance of a transportation facility ...'" (MRS Title 23, Sect. 4251; 2010).

And if the profit produced is insufficient?

- "[I]t fell, financially, far short of its revenue projections. By 2004, the toll road had failed and the bond holders foreclosed. The road was sold at auction for \$12.1 million to John Hancock Financial Services, Inc. ... After purchasing the roadway, John Hancock immediately closed the road to all traffic. This move forced Texas DOT to pay the [above] private company \$20 million to purchase the road, allowing it to finally re-open after five months" (U.S. PIRG Education Fund "Private Roads, Public Costs," Spring 2009).
- "Indiana State Road 91 ... was subsequently forced to buy back the road because non-compete clauses prevented the state from improving ... for at least fifty-five years without providing compensation to the toll road operator for lost revenue" (Report to Congress on

- The debate over the [PA] turnpike lease was narrowly focused on the state's current financial condition and did not ... set up adequate oversight of the operation—a crucial mechanism to ensure transparency. Result? "The largest public-private partnership in US history collapsed last year" (*Driven by Dollars*, cited in "Case Study: Failed Public-Private Partnership for PA Turnpike," Stephen C. Fehr of *Stateline*).

Conclusion

The driving force behind the corridor proposal is not the highway! Creation of the super corridor for utilities and communications is where the maximum profit for investors lies.

- Moving container freight across the border presents challenges with U.S. and Canadian Customs, Homeland Security, and the Department of Agriculture—Peter Mills, Director, Maine Turnpike Authority, at the August 2012 OneMaine transportation forum in Biddeford, ME (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLN02Hxb30o>, ©2012 Truth TV).
- Expecting container freight traffic in Maine to increase based on improvements in the Panama Canal is folly, according to Matt Jacobson, former railroad executive, at the OneMaine transportation forum (*ibid*).
- "... [T]he corridor would be accessible to utility companies well into the future, 50 –100 years. ... The concept of creating a corridor will have a significant impact on reducing the costs of future utility needs" ([http://www.eastwestme.com/en-us/frequently asked questions.aspx](http://www.eastwestme.com/en-us/frequently%20asked%20questions.aspx)).

- The Spring 2009 Public Interest Research Group report recommended proceeding "with great caution. ... Public officials should not prioritize projects based on the availability of private capital. Instead, they should focus on projects that meet true public needs, regardless of whether private investors see those projects as potential profit opportunities". (PIRG Report *Private Roads, Public Costs: the Facts about Toll Road Privatization and How to Protect the Public*, U.S. PIRG Education Fund).

- In mid-August, 2012, Gov. Paul LePage announced that Maine Department of Transportation will slow down work on the economic feasibility study for the east-west corridor proposal to ensure a "thorough and thoughtful process" for the study—and to remove it from election debate (<http://bangordailynews.com/2012/08/14/news/state/lepage-agrees-to-slow-down-east-west-highway-process/>).

Stop the East-West Corridor coalition suggests the proposal and its feasibility study slow to **a complete and permanent halt**. It is a faulty vision and inappropriate for the State of Maine.

For more information: www.stopthecorridor.org or contact 207-564-8687 or stopthecorridor@gmail.com.

Upcoming bulletins:

Bulletin #2:

Land Matters--Eminent Domain & Maine Real Estate

Bulletin #3:

'That secret road'... Government & Corporate Complicity



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