



CHELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT, MAINE

September 20, 2013

Dr. Parkinson Pino



Dear Park,

I am writing to provide you, and the attendees of the MOFGA Common Ground Fair, with my thoughts about the proposed East-West Highway.

There have been proposals to build an East-West highway across the central portion of Maine since at least the 1960s. Those discussions have always revolved around the use of public funds to build the road, and the costs and benefits to the people of Maine. Each time a public East-West highway has been proposed in the past, Mainers decided not to move forward with the project.

As you know, the current proposal being discussed is a privately financed multi-lane toll-highway from Calais to Coburn Gore. I have a number of concerns about this proposal. Project details have changed over time so that it is difficult to know exactly what the final project will look like: how wide it will be, what other kinds of infrastructure will be buried along the route, and so on. Despite the private financing of the proposed road, the project would cross near the pristine freshwater rivers and lakes that dot the center of the state, and would require significant study, analysis, and involvement under existing law by both state and federal environmental regulators.

Additionally, the project would require users to pay tolls, not to the Maine Turnpike Authority, which uses toll revenue to fund infrastructure projects on I-95, but to a private corporation – for its own profit. As we all were reminded this summer, there is an existing freight rail network across the center of the state. It is my view that we need to be spending public dollars and time working to improve the safety and stability of our aging rail system.

Thank you for your work on this important issue. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts. Please feel free to contact me, or my office in the future if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress