



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0016

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

DAVID A. COLE
COMMISSIONER

May 13, 2008

Jeffrey D. Kobrock
City Manager, City of Gardiner
Gardiner, ME 04345

Dear Mr. Kobrock:

I am writing in response to your recent letter and City of Gardiner resolution regarding Route 126 and its need for full reconstruction, including pedestrian and safety improvements, between the New Mills Bridge and the middle school. I want to assure you that MaineDOT staff and I agree that this road is in significant need of improvement. As you are aware, MaineDOT has begun the engineering for a permanent improvement to this highway. Although the need to improve Route 126 is clearly understood, a change in nationwide transportation buying power versus infrastructure needs has delayed this and other critical projects statewide.

You may be aware that factors such as the price of gasoline and global changes in transportation costs have affected MaineDOT's ability to meet statewide needs as quickly as we would like. For instance, construction costs increased by a staggering 35% between state fiscal years 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. This means that MaineDOT would need an additional \$200 million today simply to have the same buying power as in 2004. Since transportation reconstruction projects take years to develop, MaineDOT has many projects that were financed for engineering, such as Route 126, under the prior funding paradigm that have yet to receive funding for construction. In regards to highways such as Route 126, early in this decade MaineDOT was able to reconstruct almost 30 miles a year. With the buying power of current resources, MaineDOT is reconstructing less than half this amount today.

MaineDOT staff and I agree with you regarding the importance of Route 126 and that delaying these types of improvements are unacceptable. Therefore, we will continue to work with the Legislature and other stakeholders on a long-term solution enabling us to accelerate improvements to these highways. In the meantime, MaineDOT is preparing its capital program for state fiscal years 2010 and 2011 and Route 126 will be reconsidered.



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MaineDOT will also be happy to honor your request for a meeting regarding Route 126 with City of Gardiner officials and other appropriate stakeholders to discuss this project and the prospect for funding in our next biennial Capital Work Plan. Please contact Martin Rooney in MaineDOT's Bureau of Transportation Systems Planning office at 624-3300 and he will coordinate this meeting with appropriate MaineDOT staff.

Sincerely,



David A. Cole
Commissioner

DAC/MR/jmf

cc: Bill Croce, BTSP
John Devin, MaineDOT Region 2
Joel Kittredge, MaineDOT Region 2
Martin Rooney, BTSP
Theresa Savoy, Legislative Team

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