



Town of Frenchville
Town Manager
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August 17, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

RE: Northern Maine US 1 Road Improvement Project

I am writing in support of the Maine DOT's application under the 2023 Rural Grant for the "Northern Maine US 1 Road Improvement Project." This project will complete an important transportation link between Madawaska and Fort Kent, which will provide improved alignments, paved shoulders and a more durable wearing surface as well as improved pedestrian and bicyclist safety measures.

There are many reasons to support the funding of this project:

- US Route 1 in Frenchville is part of the National Highway System that connects northern Maine to I-95 in Houlton. The Frenchville project will modernize one of the few remaining "unbuilt" sections of US Route I.
- o This section of US Route 1 provides the primary access to Northern Maine Medical Center in Fort Kent for residents of Madawaska, Frenchville, Saint Agatha and Grand Isle. The Madawaska Ambulance Service provides emergency medical services to these four communities often transporting patients to NMMC.
- Tourism is playing an increasingly important role in northern Maine's economy.
 - o The St. John Valley towns hosted the week-long 2018 Bike Maine event that brought greater than 450 cyclists to the Valley highways.
 - o US Bike Route 501 begins in Bangor, Maine and ends in Allagash, Maine. This entire section of US Route I is part of that experience.
 - o With increasing focus on bicycling and the quality experience that the Valley's landscape and culture offers, the improved shoulder width and other bicycle friendly signage will help to promote the Valley as a true summer tourist destination.

Last year the Federal Highway Administration announced the designation of the St. John Valley Cultural Byway and the Fish River Scenic Byway as one of the nation's newest National Scenic Byway - the St. John Valley/Fish River National Scenic Byway. This

section of US Route 1 is an important piece of that byway. Locally, a Heritage Park, an historical museum, and the historic St. Luce Catholic Church are located adjacent to this project. NOTE: St. Luce was the principal repository for recording births, marriages, and deaths from 1842 to 1859, the period following the boundary settlement between the USA and Britain (Canada). Prior to that separation, those records were kept in Canada.

- o The federally sponsored Acadian Archives is located at the University of Maine at Fort Kent and is accessed from US Route 1.
- The success of the agricultural and forest products industries is integrally linked to US Route 1, which is the critical link in the supply chain providing commodities to factories and consumers in southern Maine, New England and throughout markets in the United States. Twin Rivers Paper Company, one of only 5 remaining paper manufacturers in Maine, is built adjacent to US Route 1 and nearly all of their raw materials and finished paper products utilize US Route 1 as a prime route to and from the mill.
- Other forest products travel US Route 1 to provide lumber mills with raw materials along the northern tier of Maine and similar mills in New Brunswick.
- Fort Kent and Madawaska are the two primary service center communities for the region and US Route 1 connects them through Frenchville. All wholesale and retail commodities used to sustain community and living move across US Route 1. Its importance cannot be understated. From the hospital and the agricultural and forest products industry to the stuff of everyday life, this is a vital highway. Residents of adjacent towns such as St. Agatha, Sinclair and Grand Isle must use US Route 1 to get to work or school, and for access to grocery, hardware, restaurants, and other services.

In closing, I would ask for your support for this project. If there is one take-away from my request, it is to characterize the vital role this highway plays in the lifeblood of the St. John Valley. Due to the remote, rural nature of place, the multi-modal opportunities are severely limited, making US Route 1 and its connection to I-95 essential to the St. John Valley and all of Aroostook County.

Sincerely,



David D. Cyr
Town Manager

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