

Kennebec Valley

*Regional Transportation Assessment
2005*

Kennebec Valley Regional Transportation Assessment

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Kennebec Valley Regional Transportation Assessment

Executive Summary

Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) has prepared a Regional Transportation Assessment for the Kennebec Valley Region, under the direction of the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). The assessment is intended to identify transportation needs and issues, and relate them to land use and economic development issues, preparing a set of objectives that will put these three planning elements on parallel tracks. Through coordinated development and infrastructure planning, we may achieve a higher level of efficiency and public satisfaction.

The approach directed by the DOT involved the identification of a number of high-priority transportation corridors within the region, and planning for multiple objectives within each corridor. This would include coordination with neighboring regions and other local and regional entities. Each corridor would be characterized based on overall transportation movements, rather than strictly highway routes.

KVCOG identified six priority corridors in the region, coordinating this exercise with neighboring regions. Each corridor is profiled on the following pages, together with corridor objectives in transportation, land use, and economic development. DOT further requested that the six priority corridors be themselves prioritized. The methodology used to determine priorities included KVCOG ranking the corridors on eleven factors, and public input determining the weight of each of those factors. The corridors, in priority order, are as follows:

1. Lower Kennebec
2. Augusta Southwest
3. Upper Kennebec
4. Augusta Midcoast
5. Lakes and Mountains
6. East-west

Prioritization of the corridors and development of corridor objectives required a comprehensive examination including public input, incorporation of past transportation planning recommendations, and review of past and existing local and regional plans. Public input strategies are described in Appendix A, and included a series of four meetings around the region, a stakeholder opinion survey, face-to-face contacts, and publicity through conventional media and the KVCOG website. KVCOG's Regional Transportation Committee provided oversight, direction, and review during the process.

Appendix B provides a more detailed picture of each of the six priority corridors. Also included are detail maps of specific elements within the corridor.

Kennebec Valley Priority Corridor Overview

Upper Kennebec

The Upper Kennebec corridor links the Waterville area and I-95 with Canada to the north and southern Maine to the south. It lies entirely within the Kennebec Valley Region. The primary route is US Route 201. This is an historic commercial travel corridor, with increasing recreational traffic.

East-West

The East-west Corridor through the region is generally recognized to run through lower Somerset County. Components of this corridor include all of US Route 2 within the region and I-95 from Fairfield towards Bangor. The Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railroad should also be recognized as an east-west component of this corridor.

Lower Kennebec

The Waterville Area is the northern terminus of the Lower Kennebec corridor, which extends south to the coast, encompassing Augusta and Gardiner, and terminating in Bath and Portland. The primary route is I-95/295; US Route 201 is a secondary route. The “Lower Road” rail line is also part of this corridor.

Augusta Southwest

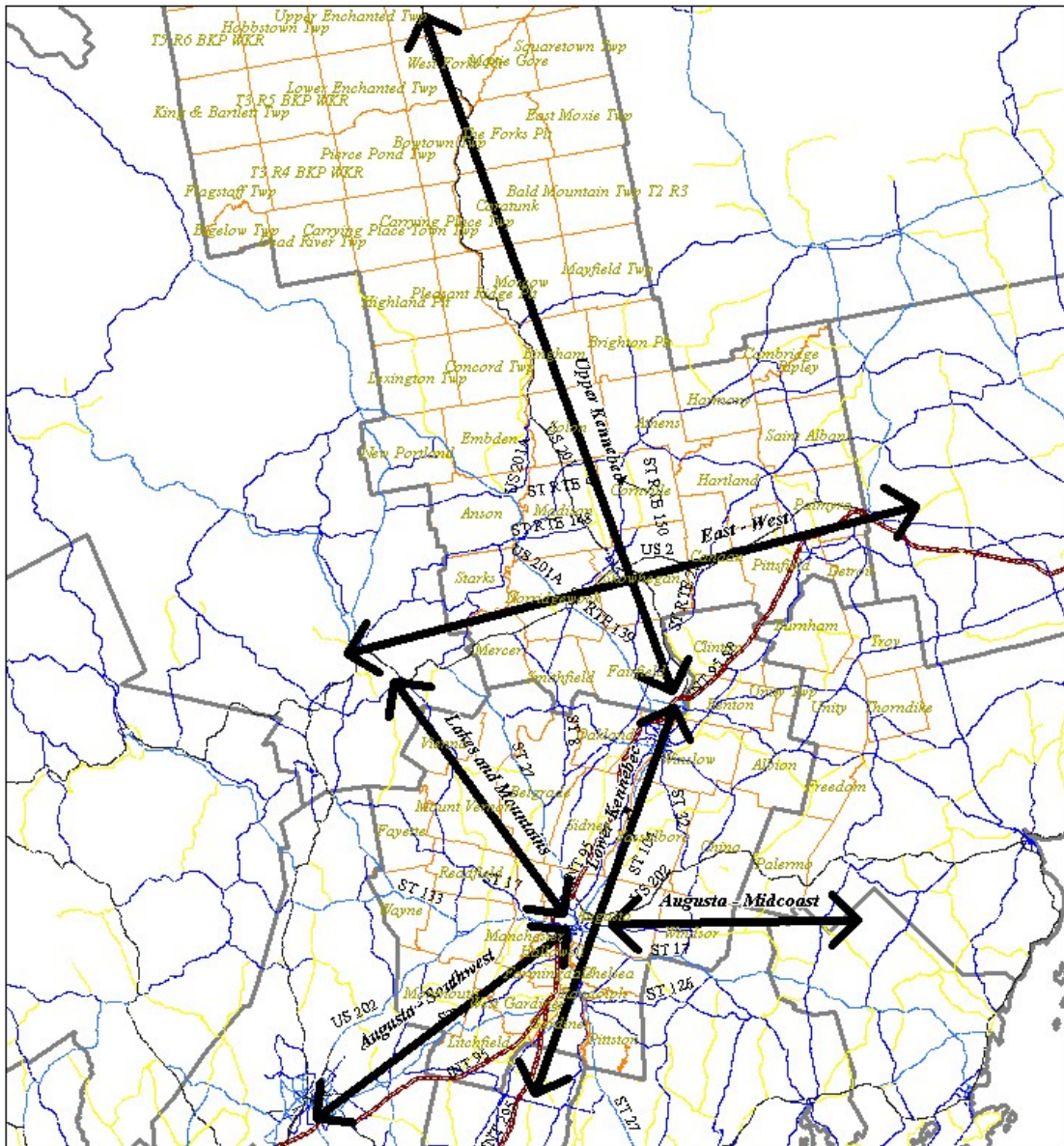
This corridor as it lies within the region originates in Augusta and extends southwest to the Lewiston-Auburn area. This corridor receives the heaviest traffic in the region. The primary highway routes include the Maine Turnpike and US Route 202. The “Back Road” rail line lies within this corridor as well.

Augusta-Midcoast

Augusta is the western anchor of this corridor, which encompasses dual routes to the midcoast region. These routes – ME Routes 3 and 17 – connect I-95 at Augusta with Belfast and Rockland. The Augusta “third bridge” is a new element of this corridor, and is changing its characteristics.

Lakes and Mountains

This corridor fans out northwest from Augusta, including most of western Kennebec County, accessing Franklin County and the “western mountains.” It connects I-95 and southern population centers with recreation areas in the Belgrade Lakes area and Western Maine. The primary route is ME Route 27, though travel is much more dispersed into collector roads in this corridor than others.



Upper Kennebec Corridor

The Upper Kennebec Corridor lies entirely within Somerset County in central Maine. The corridor connects on a north-south axis between Quebec City, PQ. and I-95 at Fairfield. The principal route within this corridor is US Route 201. This is the only transportation route running the length of the corridor.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation Elements: Traffic on the primary highway route can be grouped into three segments.

- The southern segment consists of the connection between the Interstate and Skowhegan, the largest town. Volumes exceed 8,500 AADT, with a growth rate of 4 percent per year. Usage is a mix of freight, commuter, and recreational. It is designated a mobility corridor.
- The central segment extends from Skowhegan to Bingham. Volumes are at least 4,000 AADT, with a growth rate of 1.6 percent per year. Freight and commercial traffic dominate this segment.
- The third segment consists of the area from Bingham to the Canadian border. This is the longest segment in mileage, but carries only 3,900 at its busiest point, and much less outside the two village areas (Bingham and Jackman). Recent history has indicated less than 1 percent per year growth in traffic. The highway has recently been designated a National Scenic Byway. Usage is split between heavy freight and recreational.

Supporting modes and routes are distinctly secondary to US 201. Rail freight connections are available at Fairfield and Jackman, with spurs to Hinckley and Madison. General aviation airports are scattered along the corridor. There are no passenger alternatives or carpooling support.

Economic Elements: The traditional manufacturing economy is mature, with the forest products component declining. Major employers include SAPPi Forest Products at Skowhegan and Madison Paper Industries in Madison. Skowhegan is a commercial center. Bingham, Jackman, and Fairfield are service centers. Route 201 from Solon north is designated as the Old Canada Road National Scenic Byway, with planning to accommodate recreational and tourist development.

Land use Elements: Somerset County in general and the Upper Kennebec Corridor is lightly-settled, with a corridor population of 30,000 and a growth rate of 0.5 percent per year. New development is primarily low-density residential, with growth most evident from Cornville and Madison southward. Recreation-oriented development is beginning to become a factor north of Bingham. Urban compact areas are located in Skowhegan and Fairfield, but the majority of development is outside those areas.

Regional Significance:

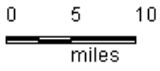
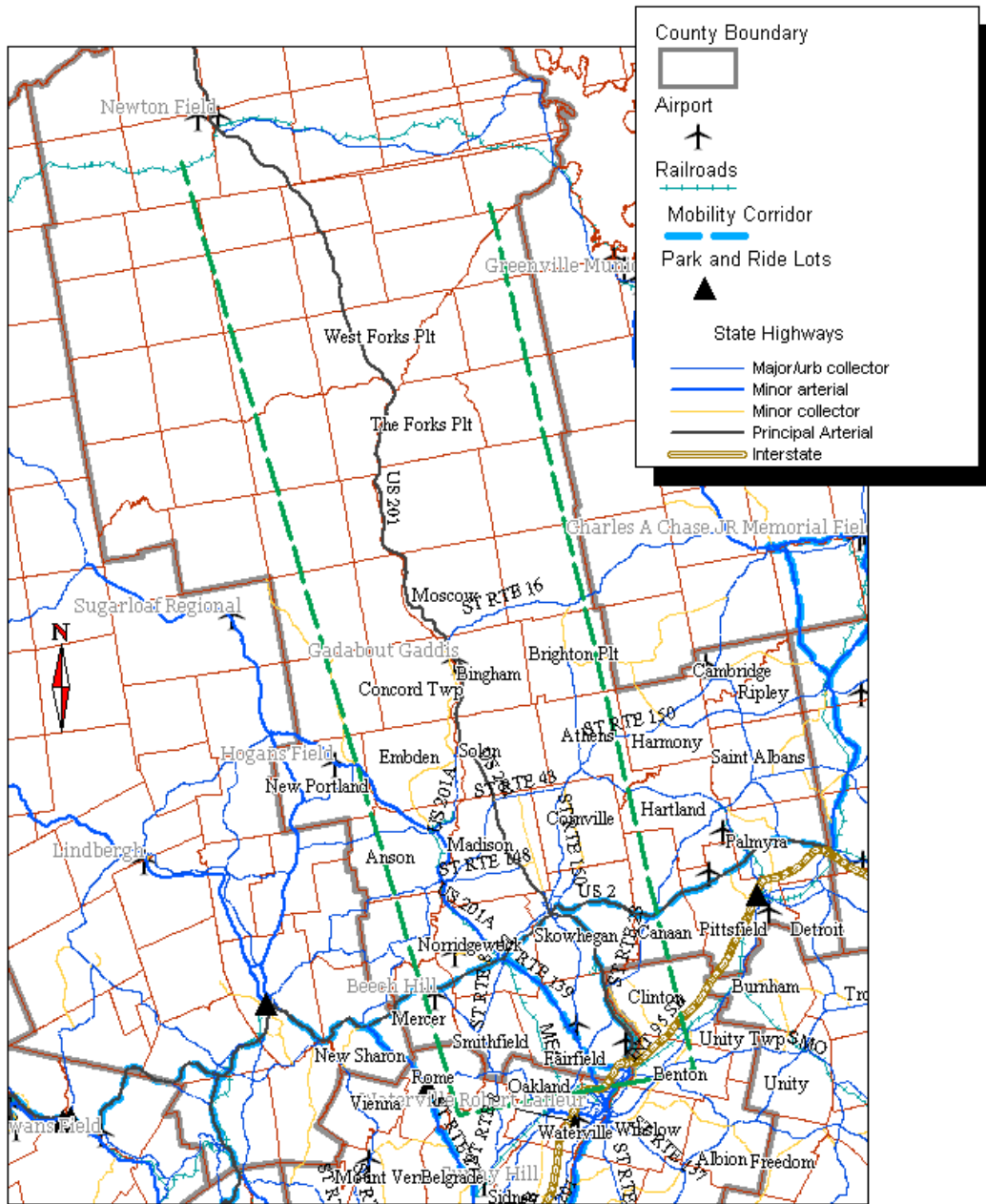
Because of its connections to I-95 and Canada, and the lack of alternatives in Somerset County, Route 201 has, for years, been ranked as the top priority transportation route in the Kennebec Valley Region. That designation has been made by successive Regional Advisory Reports from RTAC 4, CEDS Reports (Regional Economic Development Plan), and by the Executive Board of KVCOG. This analysis, however, is the first to separate the northern and southern segments of a road running the length of the Kennebec Valley.

Route 201 has been the subject of a corridor study and plan, issued 1991. There is no corridor committee extant, though the Old Canada Road Board of Directors acts in a similar capacity over a portion of the road.

Priority in this Assessment:

The Upper Kennebec segment of Route 201 ranks third in priority within the region, behind the Lower Kennebec and Augusta Southwest corridors. The corridor ranks at the top for local freight usage and destination tourism, but ranks low for traffic volumes and growth, and availability of alternatives.

Upper Kennebec Corridor Transportation Network



Upper Kennebec Transportation Issues Summary:

Due in part to its low population density, the transportation network consists almost entirely of a road system. US 201 provides essential freight access both locally and internationally, but is also designated as a scenic byway. Virtually all of the traffic accessing this corridor – including feeder roads, rail and air access, and I-95 at the southern end of the corridor – travels along Route 201. Skowhegan is a significant congestion point on the corridor.

Rail freight access is available to manufacturing nodes, including Skowhegan, Madison, and Jackman, but requires improvement on the Madison branch. There are extremely limited opportunities for other modes of travel, including bicycle (seasonal), snowmobile (seasonal), air, and boating (recreational).

Growth of traffic volumes south of Skowhegan will lead to congestion in the future, especially if access is not limited. A bridge replacement is necessary in Norridgewock, and a small portion of Route 201 remains below NHS standards. The planned second bridge at Skowhegan will create changes in traffic and land use patterns, probably alleviating downtown congestion but encouraging more outlying growth over the planning period.

Transportation Objectives:

- Reduce conflicts between heavy freight traffic and recreational traffic in northern segment of the corridor, through Route 201 capacity improvements.
- Encourage shifting of freight movements to rail or air within the region.
- Improve travel and support facilities for pedestrian, bicycle, and snowmobile travel.
- Expand park-and-ride and ride-sharing opportunities.
- Alleviate congestion within Skowhegan via new capacity (bridge), improved signage, and system management.
- Improve linkages to east-west movements in lower Somerset County and Jackman.
- Improve quality of collector roads for access to rural communities.

Upper Kennebec Economic Development Issues Summary:

The manufacturing economy continues to dominate the Upper Kennebec Corridor area, with wages from manufacturing amounting to 30 percent of all wages in Somerset County. But while manufacturing jobs decline, tourism-related activity is rising. Tourism is highly dispersed and sometimes unrecognizable, but tourism generates more VMT per dollar generated than manufacturing, and a different transportation profile. As the manufacturing and resource-dependant economy wanes, and is replaced by a service economy, corridor use will shift away from heavy freight and towards passenger vehicles. International freight, however, will continue to be a factor, and may grow, supporting the need for additional facilities to support long-distance trucking.

Service centers in the region include Jackman, Bingham, Skowhegan, and Fairfield. Despite population losses in Bingham and Jackman, employment growth continues in all service centers. Waterville is an employment draw, located just outside the corridor. Skowhegan is the employment center within the corridor. Continuation of low-density residential development together with service center concentration of job opportunities and commercial development will increase travel volumes, placing greater demands on commuter routes and collector roads.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Encourage growth in the recreation and tourism economy, with adequate facilities for both automotive and car-free experiences.
- Expand and connect the bicycle trail network to support recreational access.
- Provide viable alternative modes for freight movement to support the manufacturing economy in southern Somerset County, including rail and air facilities.
- Improve accessibility to jobs in the service centers and outside of the corridor, through road improvements and commuting facilities.
- Prioritize collector road improvements to emerging business and industrial locations in Skowhegan and Madison.

Upper Kennebec Land Use Issues Summary:

In general, the rate of growth and development in the corridor is very slow, with negative population growth in much of the area from Bingham north. There are indications, however, of growth in recreational development. Currently, the majority of land from Solon north is in timber production. Properties immediately adjacent to Route 201 are coveted for recreational use, with new access points proliferating (in relative terms). Residential development is at a very low rate, and is generally unregulated.

Except for Fairfield at the southern end of the corridor, there is virtually no regulation of land use and development that would affect the transportation system. North of Caratunk, most of the corridor falls under LURC jurisdiction. DOT mobility corridor standards apply only to Route 201 south of Skowhegan.

The Old Canada Road Scenic Byway has a management plan, which encourages regulation of new development through the byway area (but has no regulatory authority). All of the towns with the exception of Moose River and Moscow have comprehensive plans in place but very few have implemented land use elements of the plans. With potential pressure for development growing along the byway, a strong program of land use management is timely.

Land Use Objectives:

- Strengthen access management rules and local involvement in roadside development north of Skowhegan: DOT, LURC, and municipal.
- Encourage implementation of local comprehensive plan land use elements.
- Promote implementation of the Old Canada Road Management Plan recommendations for land use.

East-West Corridor:

The east-west corridor, for the purpose of this assessment, consists of the east-west flow of traffic through Somerset County. The corridor supports linkages with eastern Maine and the Maritime Provinces to the east, and northern New England, Quebec, and Ontario to the west. But it does not presuppose the development of a new, limited access east-west highway through the region.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation Elements: The most direct route for east west travel in Somerset County is US Route 2, from Mercer to Palmyra. Route 2 connects to Farmington and Franklin County to the west, and Bangor to the east. Traffic volumes are highly variable: AADT of 7,000 to 8,500 in proximity to Skowhegan, but only 4,000 to 5,000 east and west. Growth has averaged between 0 and 2 percent per year. In addition to inter-regional and regional freight, Route 2 supports commercial and recreational travel. The entire length of Route 2 is designated as a mobility corridor; a portion of it remains below NHS standards.

A highway alternative to Route 2 consists of I-95 from Bangor to Fairfield, onto ME Route 139 from Fairfield to Norridgewock. This route avoids Skowhegan congestion for through travelers. Traffic on I-95 at Fairfield is about 21,000 AADT; the Route 139 portion of the route is currently 7,000 to 9,500, increasing at 2 percent per year. Route 139 is classified as a mobility corridor.

East-west alternative modes are minimal. The Montreal, Maine, and Atlantic Rail line provides freight service through the very northern part of Somerset County.

Economic Elements: While economic growth overall is expected to be slow, a shift in business type away from manufacturing and into services is likely to create a more dispersed pattern of traffic movements. This is likely to increase the number of vehicle trips on the system overall, while reducing the volume of heavy freight and concentrations of traffic at manufacturing centers. However, there will continue to be increases in congestion-related problems in the primary service center of Skowhegan. Efforts to improve east-west flows statewide will result in more interstate freight.

Land Use Elements: The population of towns within the corridor is approximately 36,000, with a slow growth rate of 0.7 percent per year. While most land in the corridor is still undeveloped and used for forestry and agriculture, residential growth is dispersed and continuing to grow into rural areas. While local comprehensive plans are in place for most towns, only a few along the I-95 segment of the corridor have implemented zoning controls.

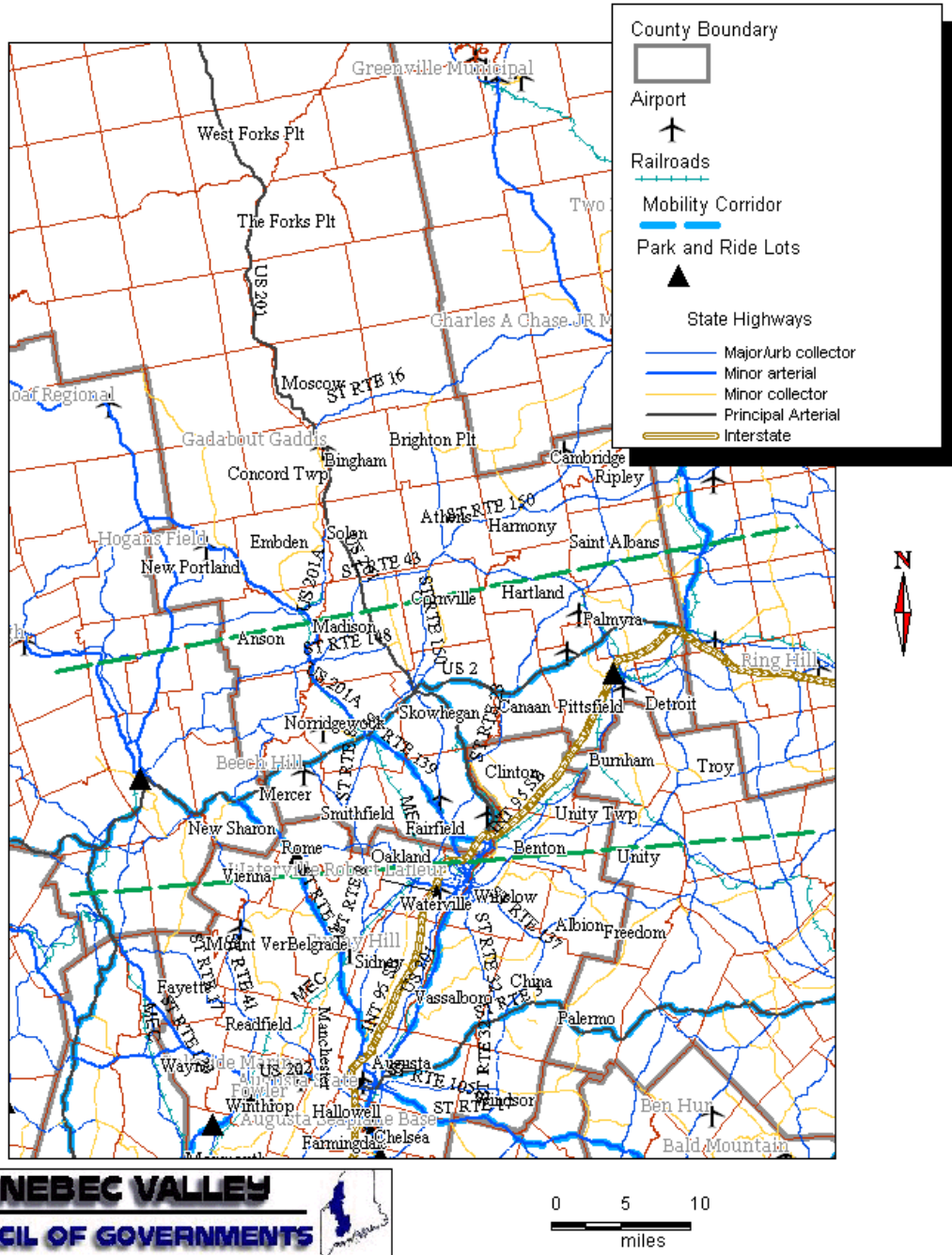
Regional Significance:

Due in part to the shape of the region, east-west traffic flows have historically been undervalued. The east-west corridor is perhaps more important on a statewide perspective, as connecting multiple regions spanning the state. As a NHS system arterial, Route 2 has received attention, though. A Route 2 Corridor Committee is in place, though inactive, and general public support in the region for an “East-west Highway” has been evident.

Priority in this Assessment:

The East-West Corridor is ranked last of the six priority corridors in the region. This ranking is based on its current importance and needs within the region, and does not consider inter-regional or international implications. The East-West Corridor ranks highly for the importance of local freight uses but low for commuter use, and low for traffic volume growth and safety problems.

East-West Corridor Transportation Network



East – West Transportation Issues Summary:

US Route 2, as a National Highway System component and mobility arterial, functions well for the most part, but has short segments that are not built to arterial standards, and experiences urban congestion problems in Skowhegan and other built-up areas. The congestion and road conditions in the Skowhegan area has probably contributed to the increasing use of the I-95 – ME 139 alternative. High crash nodes are located in Skowhegan and Norridgewock, and the segment in both towns is a retrograde arterial.

While the prospect of a new highway alignment through Somerset County has been under discussion for years, no suggestions for location have been put forward. A new alignment must primarily address congestion and safety in the Skowhegan – Norridgewock areas, and connect well with I-95 and US 201. Any new alignment is far enough into the future that improvement work on Route 2 and Route 139 should not be deferred.

As with the remainder of Somerset County, there is a lack of alternatives to the main highways. International rail freight is the primary customer of the MMA rail corridor through Jackman, but rail access for locally generated freight going east-west is limited to Waterville and Pittsfield. The Central Maine Airport has potential for expanded services.

Transportation Objectives:

- Reduce congestion and safety conflicts in the Skowhegan and Norridgewock areas.
- Build US Route 2 to arterial standards over its entire length, and include facilities for heavy-haul trucks.
- Begin planning for new highway alignment between I-95 and Route 2 west of Norridgewock.
- Facilitate better coordination of planning in the east-west corridor among affected regions of the state.

East – West Economic Development Issues Summary:

With the exception of the service center node of Skowhegan, and smaller concentrations of business development in Madison and Pittsfield, there is little significant new economic development activity on the corridor. The lack of economic opportunities has forced residents in the corridor to drive longer distances to work and shop.

The Waterville area to the south provides an employment and commerce draw. Most of the freight and commercial traffic that is not destined for Skowhegan is inter-regional. Usage will continue to shift away from locally-generated heavy freight to tourist, commuting, and commerce trips. Recreational travel consists primarily of tourist trips to/from the coast and western mountains.

Inter-regional freight trips may grow, but are inhibited by lack of trucking support facilities. Route 2 lacks adequate truck rest areas, service areas, climbing lanes, and other truck amenities, not to mention the congested travel conditions in Skowhegan.

Local economic development is also constrained by the lack of alternatives for freight movements. Central Maine Airport has potential for expansion, but no other airport inside the corridor can provide the same level of service. The east-west rail corridor through Jackman is too far north to support economic development in the corridor, though access to rail at Waterville is available.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Alleviate congestion and conflict points in the Skowhegan area.
- Provide improved heavy-haul truck infrastructure along Route 2.
- Improve access to rail and air modes for freight movements.
- Improve communications for economic development planning in other regions along the corridor.

East – West Land Use Issues Summary:

The principal land use issue over the planning period is likely to be the dispersed pattern of residential growth, occupying more road frontage and generating new traffic throughout the corridor. This trend will impede the movement of highway freight. Absent significant increase in capacity, freight efficiency will decline and haulers will seek alternate routes.

A sprawling pattern of development is most evident south of Route 2, with residents more likely to travel southward out of the corridor. Currently, this pattern affects flows on the alternative routes: Route 139 and I-95. However, sprawl is extending northward and is likely to become a corridor issue in the near future.

Land Use Objectives:

- Manage local growth in proximity to arterials to reduce traffic impacts.
- Improve local access management regulation and limitations on commercial access along Route 2.
- Plan for the land use impacts of the second bridge at Skowhegan.

Lower Kennebec Corridor:

The Lower Kennebec Corridor extends north and south from the Augusta -- Waterville urban areas, through Kennebec County, into Lincoln and Sagadahoc Counties. The transportation element of the corridor commences at the northern end with the junction of I-95 and US 201 in Fairfield, and proceeds south along I-95 and I-295, as well as US 201 and parallel highways. The corridor also includes portions of several rail ownerships.

This corridor is bisected by the Kennebec River. The nature of the transportation system differs dramatically on the east and west sides of the river. The west side of the river is the more heavily developed and mobile.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation Elements: This corridor links the two major urban areas in the region, and destinations to the north and south. I-95/I-295 carries intra- and inter-regional traffic, supported by US 201 urban alternative and other north-south alignments. Traffic on I-95 exceeds 25,000 AADT, well within capacity, but is growing at 2-3 percent per year. Traffic on Route 201 varies widely outside of urban compact areas, from 3,500 in some parts of Gardiner and Vassalboro, to over 17,000 in Farmingdale. Although Route 201 as far south as Gardiner is designated as a mobility arterial, the many urban areas it passes through discourage it from consideration as anything other than an urban access road.

Springfield Terminal rail supports north-south, inter-regional freight movements, with trackage south of Augusta owned by the DOT and operated by Maine Eastern Railroad. KV Transit supports urban passenger movements; however, insufficient facilities exist to support large-scale passenger movements.

Economic Development Elements: Economic activity is centered around the urban areas of the corridor – Waterville-Winslow in the north, Augusta in the center, and to a lesser extent Gardiner in the south. In Waterville, economic influences include service, retail, and a waning industrial sector. In Augusta, it is overwhelmingly governmental, but with a growing retail sector. Gardiner is similar to Waterville, on a smaller scale, but is beginning to be influenced by growth from Portland. All three centers are showing expansion on their westward fringes (interstate interchanges).

Land Use Elements: There is no overall population growth in the corridor. However, individual growth rates range from – 0.7 percent per year (Augusta and Waterville) to +2.7 percent per year (Sidney), indicating a significant population shift. This shift drives the demand for low-density residential development. Developed area will expand by roughly 6,000 acres by 2020, including roughly 85 miles of road frontage. Development will accelerate in low-service, low-tax suburban communities, e.g. Sidney, Vassalboro, West Gardiner.

Large-scale commercial development will continue to concentrate in Augusta, Waterville, Gardiner, and the near proximity. Most towns in the corridor have designated growth areas that include or adjoin existing built-up areas. The larger towns have designated separate areas for commercial and residential growth, but designations are designed to stimulate growth along primary roads.

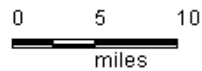
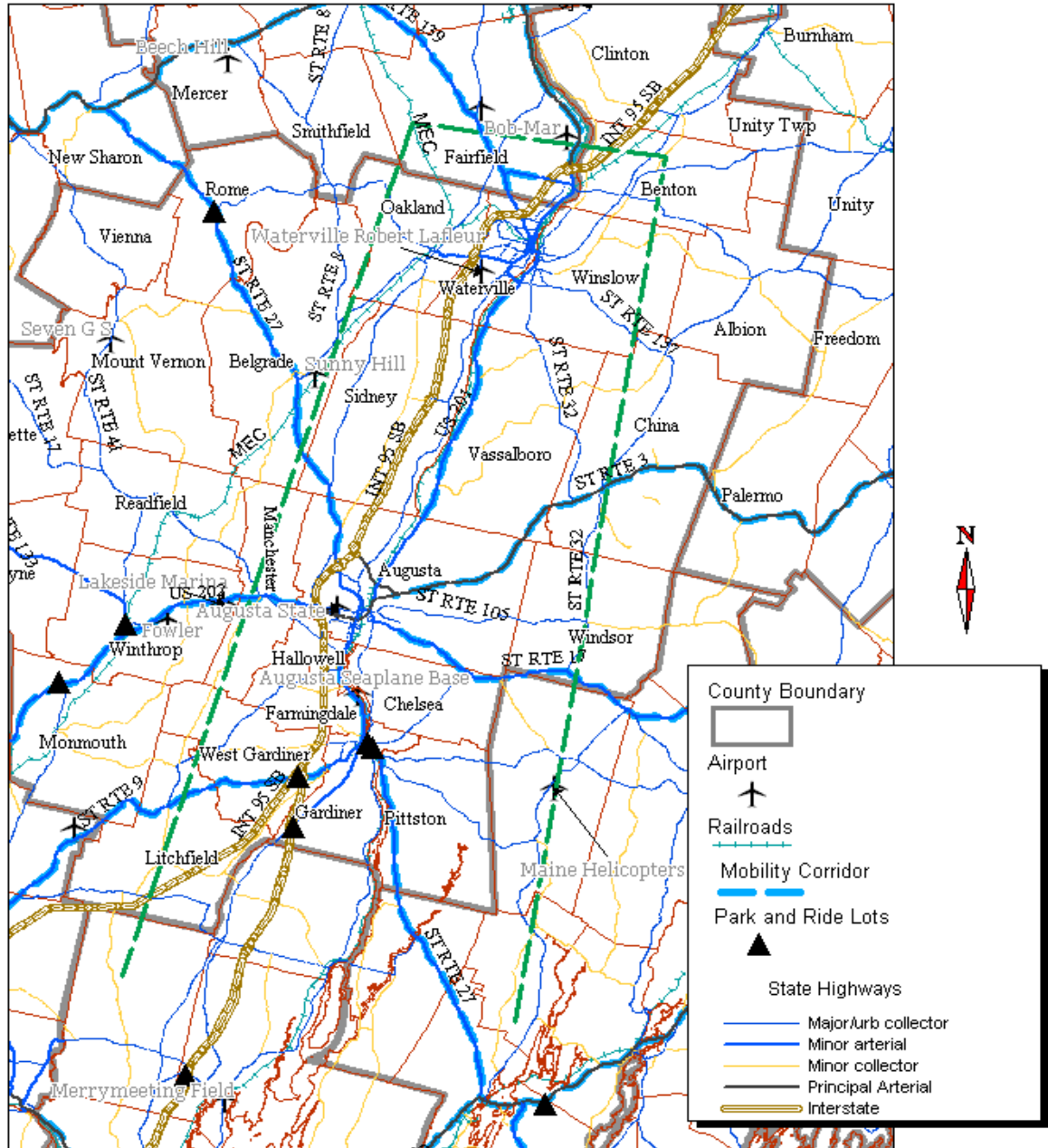
Regional Significance:

This corridor has the highest level of traffic volumes and economic activity in the region, connecting the three largest service centers. While the I-95 highway is generally not viewed as a planning corridor, Route 201 links four urban compact areas and serves as Main Street for seven communities. Portions of Route 201 were included in a corridor plan dating from 1991.

Priority in this Assessment:

This corridor is the top-ranked priority corridor in the region, by a wide margin. In addition to carrying the highest traffic volumes, it was at or near the top in volumes of long-haul freight, commuter traffic, and general commercial use. It also has the most safety issues, including high crash locations and retrograde arterials, though many of the HCLs are in urban compact areas. The only factor ranked at the bottom was local recreational traffic.

Lower Kennebec Corridor Transportation Network



Lower Kennebec Transportation Issues Summary:

Local and commuter traffic forms a significant segment of overall transportation within the region. Long-haul freight movement should be confined to the interstate, but federal weight limitations force some freight onto secondary and supporting highways. The weight restriction differential is a major concern in this corridor.

US Route 201 is an urban highway, passing through four urban compact areas. It has demonstrated congestion problems both within the urban areas and in Hallowell and Farmingdale. Traffic volumes have reached a practical maximum (LOS D or below) between Augusta and Gardiner, leading to the necessity to expand capacity or improve access to the interstate. Traffic on the east side of the river between Augusta and Gardiner (ME Route 9), is also heavy.

Although this corridor has the highest availability of alternate modes, there is still potential for expansion. This is the corridor of greatest population density. KVCAP provides limited general transit services within the urban areas. A bicycle trail network is under development in the Waterville area and the Augusta-Gardiner area. The State of Maine owns the rail corridor, but opportunities for freight and passenger service are limited by lack of access. Park-and-ride lots and carpooling opportunities are generally available only from Augusta south.

Transportation Objectives:

- Improve access to I-95
- Alleviate congestion through system management and demand management in urban areas.
- Equalize truck weight limits between the interstate system and state highways.
- Emphasize collector road improvements in local growth areas.
- Improve access to alternative modes, including park-and-ride lots, urban mass transit, and bicycle and pedestrian routes.
- Plan for better utilization of the rail corridor, including freight service and potential future passenger service.

Lower Kennebec Economic Development Issues Summary:

While not expanding overall, economic activity is clustering in the existing centers at the expense of small-town economies. This results in an increased travel component without an accompanying increase in the level of economic activity. At the same time, residential development is sprawling. The combination of the two trends leads to more and longer vehicle trips. Commuter travel, in particular, has contributed to congestion, travel times, and expense. Further centralization of business, retail, and service providers will exacerbate this trend.

The I-95 interchanges are attracting new commercial growth as is Route 201, the mobility corridor. The primary growth component of traffic is likely to be commuter and commerce (shopping) trips. Improvements to access east of the river (Fairfield bridge, Waterville/Carter Bridge, Augusta “third” bridge) may open up the east side for more economic activity. Despite public interest and investment in downtown areas, they are likely to continue to suffer from the twin (and contradictory) influences of congestion and lack of attention.

Kennebec River towns and promoters are interested in tourist and recreational development centered on the river. Depending on how this process is managed, it could create either more or less demand or other changes in the travel patterns of the corridor.

Despite rail service available almost throughout the corridor and air freight facilities at Augusta and Waterville, the alternatives to highway freight movements are viewed as not viable. The forcing of heavy freight onto state roads and off the interstate north of Augusta adds to the costs of doing business, and creates road maintenance and safety issues.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Improve infrastructure for the efficient movement of freight, including equalization of weight limits and access to alternative modes.
- Utilize improvements in telecommunications technology to reduce travel demand through decentralization of services.
- Increase commuter alternatives through park-and-ride and ride-sharing opportunities.
- Assist in managing the promotion and development of recreational travel opportunities.

Lower Kennebec Land Use Issues Summary:

The same issues in economic development also affect land use. Urban areas are losing residential units while gaining in commercial properties. Low-density residential development (sprawl) in the rural communities leads to greater separation of trip destinations, increasing VMT.

Downtown redevelopment is an issue within all of the urban areas. Waterville, Augusta, and Gardiner all have active downtown revitalization programs. Since downtown parking and congestion is generally seen as one of the chief impediments to downtown vitality, a successful revitalization program must be coordinated with improved transportation infrastructure.

High-density development is occurring in the vicinity of interstate interchanges all along the corridor. While this practice facilitates access, in the long term it will result in congestion in the interchange areas. The interchanges are already the locus of high crash locations up and down the corridor.

Despite growing indications of sprawl, and the fact that all but one of the communities in the corridor have comprehensive plans, the only significant regulation of development activities occurs in the already-urbanized areas.

Land Use Objectives:

- Work with downtown revitalization groups and urban communities to improve urban transportation infrastructure to alleviate congestion and improve access.
- Improve access to commuter alternatives and facilities in suburbanizing areas.
- Work with suburbanizing towns on methods to preserve mobility and limit access along state roads.
- Develop and promote land use planning mechanisms for preserving the mobility of interchange areas.

Augusta – Southwest Corridor

This corridor originates in Augusta and connects with Lewiston, Auburn, and Portland. The principal use of this corridor is intercity and interstate travel over the Maine Turnpike. People in Lewiston-Auburn area consider this corridor as an access to east-west travel and Canadian commerce. Overall, it is part of the larger, state-backbone corridor defined by I-95. However, the corridor also serves the most rapidly growing residential area of the region.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation elements: While the Maine Turnpike and I-95 provide an essential transportation element statewide, its utility in this corridor is limited to access in Augusta and West Gardiner for intercity and regional freight and passenger traffic. A new interchange in Sabattus will change traffic patterns in Monmouth and Litchfield.

US 202 carries a volume of traffic ranging from 9,000 AADT at the southwestern end of Kennebec County, to over 22,000 AADT outside the urban compact area of Augusta. Traffic growth is in the range of 1.3 percent per year. Route 202 is built to arterial standards with adequate capacity for growth, with the exception of a segment between Augusta and Manchester. It is a mobility corridor.

There are additional state highways that provide movement within the corridor. Several of these are experiencing significant growth, as motorists figure out alternatives to the principal routes. ME Route 9/126 is already designated a mobility corridor.

The “Back Road” Guilford/Springfield Terminal rail line operates between Waterville and Lewiston. It is accessible in Winthrop. The Augusta State Airport provides light passenger and freight service.

Economic Elements: Economic activity is oriented towards both Augusta and Lewiston along this corridor. Winthrop is a minor commercial center, and there are isolated major employers in Manchester, Winthrop, and Monmouth. High traffic volume and accessibility along US 202, however, is stimulating small-scale commercial growth along the arterial. The fact that Augusta and Lewiston, at either end of the corridor, are employment draws, means that commuter and commercial traffic travels both directions at all times of day.

There are no major infrastructure impediments to economic development in this corridor, although alternatives to highway-oriented freight and passenger movements are inadequate.

Land Use Elements: The overall population of this corridor is 45,000, with a negligible growth rate. The stable population, however, hides the dramatic shift in population to the low-density, suburban communities of Monmouth, Litchfield, and

Winthrop, where growth rates exceed 2 percent per year. With the new Sabattus interchange, the lower end of the corridor is now within easy commuting distance of three major employment centers: Augusta, Lewiston-Auburn, and Portland, and already-fast-growing Monmouth and Litchfield become easier to access. Every town in the corridor has a comprehensive plan, but there are no limitations on rate of growth, and few limitations on the location. Regulation that does exist tends to encourage expansion of existing villages.

Traditional, seasonal uses connected with corridor lakes and recreation areas will grow only slowly, but will continue to support many of the smaller towns in the corridor. The Augusta-to-Manchester segment of US 202 will continue to attract roadside development, and areas surrounding the West Gardiner Interchange may also see growth. The principal story in this corridor, however, is the emerging residential sprawl.

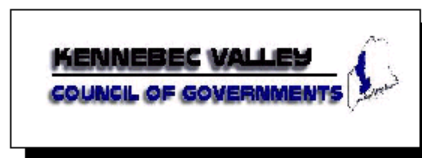
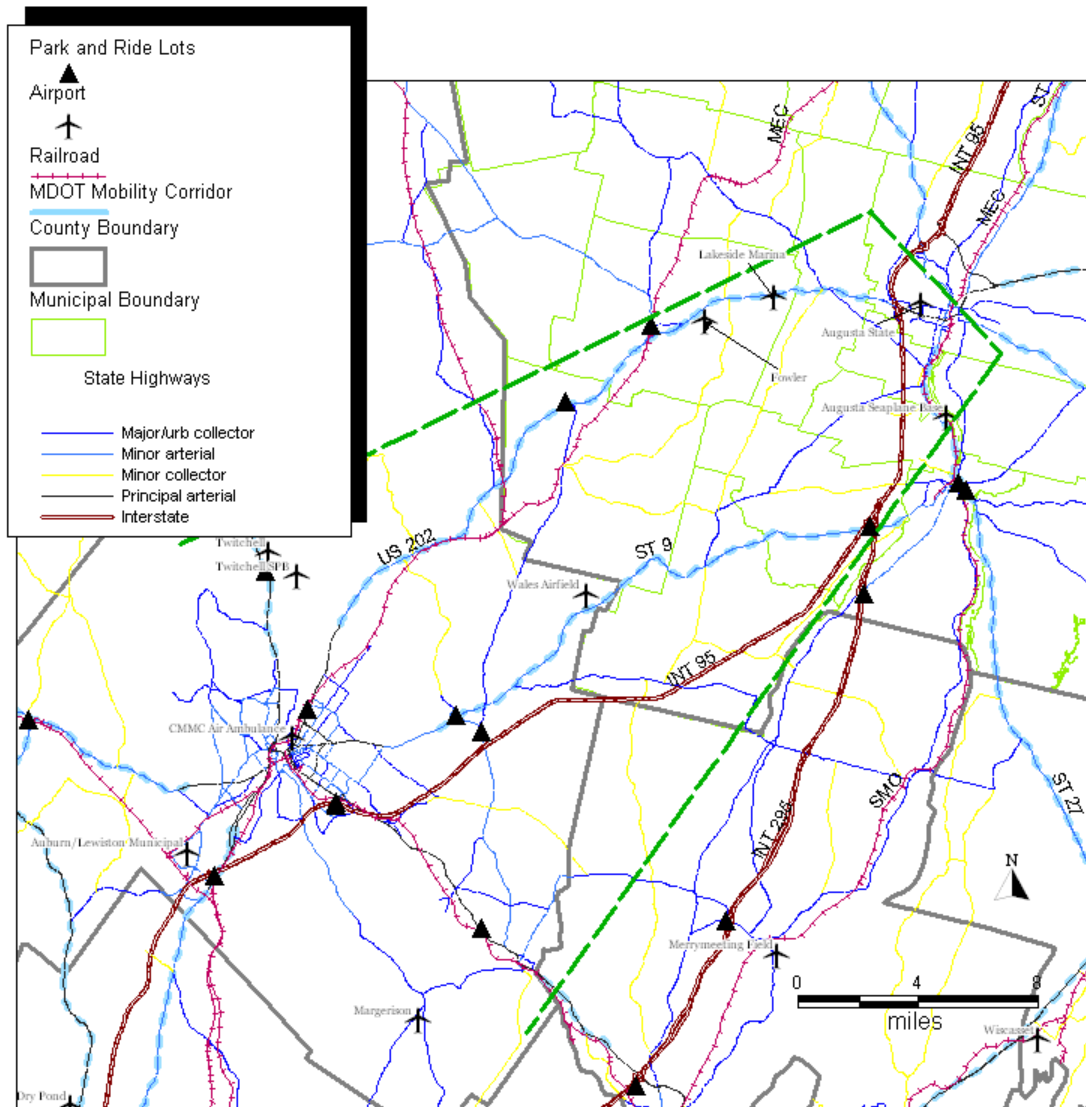
Regional Significance:

Despite being the fastest-developing corridor in the region, and carrying perhaps the highest traffic volumes, little attention has been paid to transportation issues. This is partly because the Maine Turnpike does its own planning. Route 202 is a very adequate road, except for a critical segment between Augusta and Manchester, so has not drawn a priority. There has been no serious corridor planning in this corridor.

Priority in this Assessment:

This corridor is ranked second among the priority corridors of the region. The corridor scored particularly high on factors of general commerce, traffic counts, and availability of alternatives, and highest among the six corridors in volumes of long-haul freight. The corridor ranked lowest on need for improvements to road conditions and use for tourism.

Augusta Southwest Corridor Transportation Network



Augusta Southwest Transportation Issues Summary:

The Maine Turnpike presents no infrastructure issues, though the new Sabattus interchange is likely to result in land use and development issues.

US Route 202 is adequate except for a notable segment between Augusta and Manchester. Not only is this segment inadequate for the volume of traffic, it creates a bottleneck for alternative modal travel and economic activity. Several road intersections on Route 202 have been identified as high crash locations, and the road itself is a retrograde arterial. It is likely that the problem stems from the conflicts between high travel speeds and vehicles attempting to enter.

There is significant interest among the stakeholders in this corridor in alternative modes of travel, in particular bus service. Bus service is not currently economical.

ME Route 9/126 is emerging as a major corridor, primarily because of growth in Litchfield and Androscoggin County towns. This roadway has more structural deficiencies than Route 202 and is designated as a retrograde arterial in West Gardiner.

Transportation Objectives:

- Improve the segment of Route 202 between Augusta and Manchester to add capacity. Include accommodation for bicycles.
- Make safety improvements to HCL intersections along Routes 202 and 9/126.
- Increase infrastructure for alternative modes along Route 202, including park-and-ride and bicycle travel.

Augusta Southwest Economic Development Issues Summary:

Economic activity in Augusta and Lewiston-Auburn overwhelm any local economic development initiatives. The exception is in Winthrop, where the traditional manufacturing economy has been lost, and the realigned US 202 has sapped some of the downtown economy. The Maine Turnpike does not provide sufficient access south of Augusta to stimulate commercial growth, except for the immediate vicinity of West Gardiner.

The corridor is heavily-used for commuting and commercial traffic to the urban centers. Commuting is bi-directional in the central portion of the corridor. Park-and-ride lots have the potential to accommodate many more vehicles than they do. Of particular concern is the overburdening of the unbuilt Route 202 segment between Augusta and Manchester.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Improve commuting options, including better access to park-and-ride, and employer programs to stagger work hours and other TDM measures.
- Work with communities to minimize strip commercial development along the Route 202 and Route 9/126 highways.
- Improve passenger and freight access to Augusta State Airport.

Augusta Southwest Land Use Issues Summary:

The principal story in this corridor is emerging residential sprawl. Nearly all of the residential development in the corridor is a sprawl pattern, and it is accelerating. The new Sabattus interchange will contribute to the pattern by opening up formerly-rural areas to development pressure.

The major highways in the corridor are also attractive for roadside commercial development. Traffic counts and available land parcels encourage this form of development, although on Route 202, vehicles tend to move too fast to safely enter and exit the highway.

Local comprehensive plans recognize these trends and propose strategies to address them, but fall short in implementation. Review of commercial development site plans is a common local regulation, but fails to limit their location in respect to travel corridors.

Land Use Objectives:

- Work with towns to better control development and access along state highways.
- Form a Route 202 corridor working group to consider issues of growth along the corridor and impacts of the Sabattus interchange. (including Androscoggin County.)

Augusta Midcoast Corridor:

This corridor connects Augusta and I-95 with the Penobscot Bay region, including the communities of Rockland, Belfast, and Searsport. This corridor is used for intercity commerce and commuting, recreational access, and freight movement. Within this region, the corridor is somewhat triangular, fanning out from Augusta, but outside of the region Routes 3 and 17 are separated enough to be viewed as distinct corridors.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation Elements: The principal east-west transportation route for the upper corridor is ME Route 3. It is also designated US 202 and Maine Route 9 from Augusta east to South China. Traffic volumes range from an AADT of 11,500 in eastern Augusta to 5,400 east of the US 202 junction in China. The route originates with a new (2004) I-95 interchange in Augusta. While it is expected that the facilitated access will accelerate traffic growth in the long run, no evidence is yet available. Pre-interchange historical traffic growth is substantial – about 3.4 percent per year at the Augusta end down to 2.5 percent where it exits the region.

The lower corridor is served by ME Route 17, from Augusta to Rockland. This highway tends to have fewer long-haul trucks, but higher levels of recreational and business traffic than Route 3. Traffic volumes for Route 17 range from 10,800 AADT at in Augusta to 8,330 west of Route 32. Traffic growth runs about two percent per year.

Route 3 will be significantly impacted when the Searsport facilities are upgraded. It accesses not only coastal recreation destinations but also lake regions in China and Knox County. The two east-west routes that define this corridor see heavy seasonal fluctuations but also pronounced daily fluctuations due to commuter traffic.

Economic Elements: Except for the major employment and service center at Augusta, economic activity within the corridor is very dispersed. There are no major employment or shipping centers outside of Augusta. Economic forces outside the corridor, however, contribute to the traffic profile. This includes the mid-coast region and Port of Searsport to the east and I-95 to the west. The connection of these forces was strengthened with the new interstate link, bypassing Augusta.

Land Use Elements: The corridor population is nearly 32,000. Excluding Augusta, local populations are growing at 2 percent per year, with substantial housing growth. Improved access from I-95 for commuting and business purposes will accelerate an already-attractive growth area along Route 3. Route 17 will experience lesser impacts from the bridge, but is already seeing moderate growth from development. Several towns are updating land use plans, which could lead to increased regulation of development along the corridor. Available land, convenient access to service centers, good roads, and attractive communities are reasons for expansion of land use activities in the corridor.

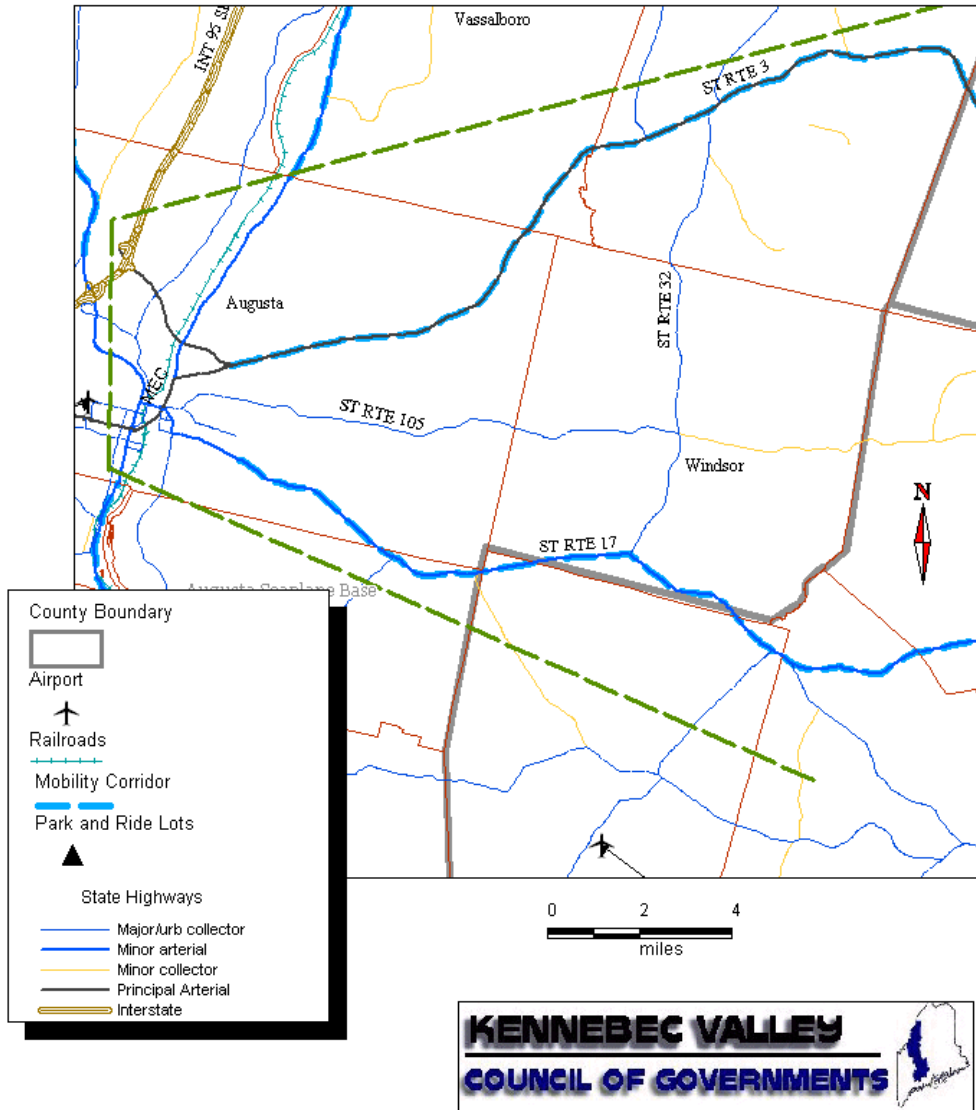
Regional Significance:

The Augusta Midcoast Corridor, in part because of the diversity of transportation values (freight, recreation, commuting) is emerging as a major factor in regional development, though located mostly outside of this region. The new bridge and interstate access in Augusta also contributes to priority consideration. ME Route 3 is the subject of a Corridor Management Plan (draft form) and a corridor committee was formed at that time.

Priority in this Assessment:

This corridor is ranked fourth in priority of the six regional priority corridors. This ranking does not take into account factors or influences outside of the region. The corridor was recognized as an important tourism and recreation route, but ranked low in use for local freight.

Augusta-Midcoast Corridor Transportation Network



Augusta Midcoast Transportation Issues Summary:

State Routes 3 and 17 carry a mixture of recreational, commuting, and short- and long-range freight. The roads have adequate capacity, except for climbing lanes, which are inadequately designed to separate slow and fast traffic.

Traffic volumes are growing at a healthy rate, partly from development in the corridor and partly from increased recreational travel. The addition of the new interstate connection will add to traffic volumes and change traffic profiles and patterns in unknown ways. It may also create greater travel demand on connectors between Routes 3 and 17. Currently, traffic leaving the interstate must use Cony Road or downtown Augusta, both with capacity constraints, to access Route 17.

There are few alternatives to highway travel. Both Routes 3 and 17 have wide shoulders for bicycles. No official park-and-ride opportunities are available.

Transportation Objectives:

- Make capacity improvements on Route 3 to lessen the conflicts between local, recreational, and heavy freight traffic.
- Improve connectivity between Routes 3 and 17 in Augusta.
- Monitor changes in traffic patterns and volumes as a result of new interchange.
- Increase opportunities for commuter options through ride-share and park-and-ride lots.
- Promote bicycle usage along Routes 3 and 17.

Augusta Midcoast Economic Development Issues Summary:

Economic activity in Augusta is the main driver within this corridor. Commuting to Augusta accounts for 1/4 of total traffic. Recreation and tourism in the mid-coast area bring large seasonal volumes of traffic. Employment opportunities in the mid-coast area have also improved recently, yielding a more bi-directional commuting pattern.

There is significant potential for commercial growth adjacent to Routes 17 and 3 – some local business, some tourist-related. The Port of Searsport is planned to expand at some point in the future. All of these traffic generators have the potential to contribute substantially to already-healthy traffic counts.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Make corridor capacity improvements to alleviate conflicts between recreational and freight traffic.
- Improve commuter options.
- Implement planning for impacts of future commercial development along Route 3 in South China, and Routes 3 and 17 in Augusta.

Augusta Midcoast Land Use Issues Summary:

Improved access to I-95 from Route 3 will increase the chance of new residential and commercial development in the corridor, in addition to already-substantial residential growth and sprawl. Potential growth nodes are at Riverside Drive and Church Hill Roads in Augusta, and in South China. Sprawl-style residential growth is likely to accelerate in Vassalboro, China, and Windsor. Strip-style commercial growth is likely to occur in Augusta and South China.

Augusta, China, and Vassalboro are all at some stage of updating their land use plans, and Windsor has recently completed the process. This makes for a good opportunity to incorporate corridor transportation issues into local planning.

Land Use Objectives:

- Implement strategies of the Route 3 Master Plan.
- Work directly with local governments and landowners on development design and access management along the corridor.
- Improve local and regional communication with eastern (Waldo/Knox Counties) portions of the corridor.

Lakes and Mountains Corridor

The Lakes and Mountains Corridor is unique within this region in terms of travel patterns and resource constraints. ME Route 27 provides the backbone, but the corridor is dominated by many small and traditionally-isolated areas connected by a system of collector roads of varying quality. Traffic flows into the corridor from all directions. Route 27 connects Augusta, at the southeastern corner, and Franklin County in the north and west.

Summary of Analysis:

Transportation Elements: The principal route in the corridor is ME Route 27, connecting Augusta with Farmington and the western mountains. Commuters from Sidney and Belgrade dominate the eastern end of the road, raising traffic counts as high as 19,000 AADT in Augusta, with an annual growth rate of 1.5 percent. Northwest of Belgrade, the highway carries only 2,700 AADT, but the 1993-2003 growth rate is 4.6 percent per year, indicating that through traffic is accounting for much of the growth. Route 27 is designated as a mobility corridor. The chief bottleneck is Belgrade Lakes village. This is the only segment of Route 27 not built to NHS standards, mainly because of development constraints inside the village.

An assortment of collector roads forms a network throughout the corridor, serving seasonal populations and small towns in the lakes region. Many of them carry resource-related traffic such as log loads or gravel. Some are growing in use from suburbanizing towns, accessing Augusta and Waterville service centers.

The Augusta State Airport facilitates access to the corridor. The “Back Road” Guilford/Springfield Terminal rail line cuts across the corridor, with a freight spur in Belgrade. One park-and-ride lot is located in Rome. Bicycling for recreation and access to villages has great potential, but is not supported by facilities other than Route 27.

Economic Development Elements: There is little large-scale economic activity – major shippers or employers – outside of the service centers anchoring the corridor. Small commercial enterprises are dependant on seasonal recreation or local business. A commercial development node (Pine Tree Zone) in Augusta at the southeastern apex of the corridor may encourage expansion along Route 27. Workers in the area commute to Waterville, Augusta, or Farmington. Oakland, with its developing Firstpark, may increase traffic flows towards the northeast of the corridor.

There is still a large volume of resource-dependant business in this corridor, resulting in locally based, heavy haul trucking.

Land Use Elements: Conversion from rural to suburban land uses is well under way in Sidney, Belgrade, Manchester, and Oakland. This is generating additional traffic demand without any corresponding increase in highway capacity. Traditional seasonal

development is a major factor in many communities. Topography and lakes form barriers to development (and movement) in much of the corridor.

Rome, Vienna, and Smithfield do not have local comprehensive plans, and in other towns, land use plans tend to favor expansion of existing villages and protection of lake water quality. Manchester and Winthrop have zoning, but no other towns limit the location of commercial development.

Existing development trends are likely to continue into the future. Open land in towns close to Augusta and Waterville is being consumed rapidly. Easy access to I-95 is a factor as well. Towns to the north and west are insulated from rapid development by the topography and lack of access.

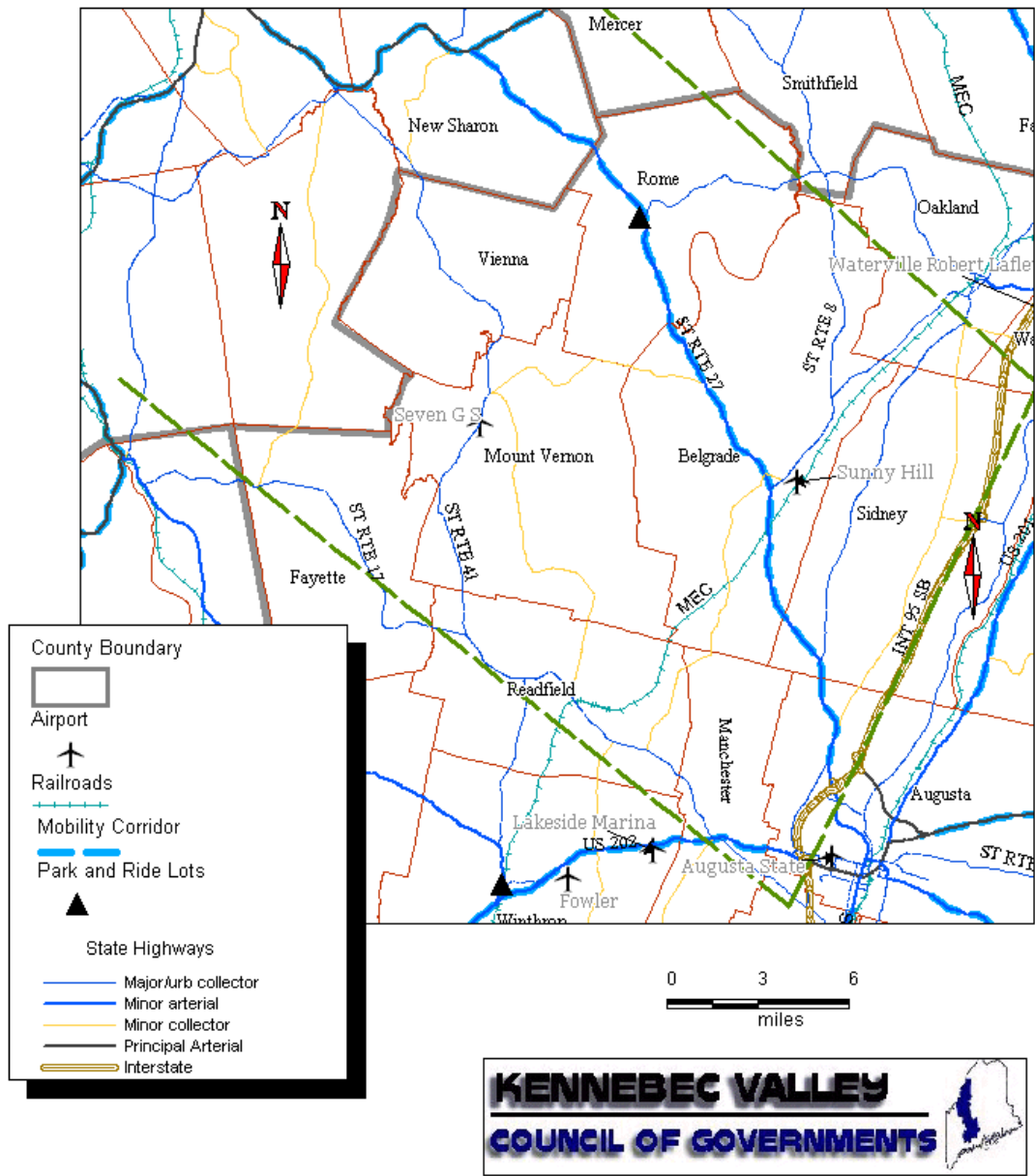
Regional Significance:

The Lakes Region historically has been a quiet, almost seasonal enclave, but is changing. Sidney and Belgrade are two of the fastest-developing towns in the region, and smaller rural towns are growing even faster, percentage-wise. These trends will continue to add to traffic growth and demand for additional transportation services, increasing the significance of this corridor to the region.

Priority in this Assessment:

The Lakes and Mountains Corridor ranked fifth among the six priority corridors in the region. The corridor was rated best overall in road conditions, based primarily on Route 27, but also ranked highest for traffic growth rates. It rated last for availability of alternative modes, even though it had the highest rating of usage for local recreation among the corridors.

Lakes and Mountains Corridor Transportation Network



Lakes and Mountains Transportation Issues Summary:

This corridor is experiencing conflict between its traditional isolation from transportation access and its potential for growth. Destination tourists and commuters increasingly dominate existing roads, which, in past years provided mainly local travel, resource access, and recreational access.

Route 27 provides sufficient capacity, except the congestion point at Belgrade Lakes Village. Lesser roads are becoming overwhelmed with new traffic. Many of these roads are unbuilt and deteriorated. ME Route 8 bears heavy volumes of local freight traffic, and is in particular need.

Because of the proximity to employment centers, and the large seasonal population, the eastern half of this corridor is ripe for development of bicycle trail networks. Otherwise, there are very few opportunities for alternate modes.

Transportation Objectives:

- Form a public advisory committee or other mechanism for planning to improve vehicular travel through Belgrade Lakes Village.
- Put a high priority on improvements to collector roads that will support heavy trucks as well as increasing commuter travel.
- Use the highest level of environmental standards in road improvements, to protect lake water quality.
- Promote bicycle travel on Route 27 and collector roads with adequate capacity.

Lakes and Mountains Economic Development Issues Summary:

Outside of the employment centers at the edges of the corridor, economic activity is highly dispersed. While there are some small service, manufacturing, and related businesses, the majority of local employment is in resource-dependant or recreation-oriented business. This means that the majority of growth will be commuters.

Increasing recreational and commuting traffic throughout the region may spur future strip-type development, particularly on Route 27 west of Augusta.

Economic Development Objectives:

- Ensure that collector road improvements and other facilities are adequate for frequent use by heavy haul trucks.
- Assist in implementing the streetscape plan for traffic calming in Belgrade Lakes Village.

Lakes and Mountains Land Use Issues Summary:

Growth in Sidney, Oakland, and Belgrade is attributable to easy access to employment centers. The pattern is one of sprawl, and none of the towns have taken regulatory steps to control it, despite good land use plans in place. Other than Route 27, the highways that service these areas are increasingly inadequate.

Many small villages in the corridor are maintaining their integrity, but are not expanding, despite local population growth. Seasonal development is focused around the many lakes, but is not growing.

Land Use Objectives:

- Assist towns in implementing local land use plans and limiting access points onto Route 27 and major collectors.
- Work directly with large landowners to assess and influence development planning.

Appendix A:
Public Involvement Strategies

STAKEHOLDER NAME	MULTI- REGION REGION CORRIDOR		CONTACT:	INTEREST:
Groups and Associations:				
Somerset Municipal Association 672-5519	x	x	Elaine Aloes	local roads, ED
Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce 1 Post Office Square Waterville, Me 04901 873-3315	x		Kim Lindlof	ED
Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce 21 University Dr. Augusta, Me 04330 623-4559	x		Peter Thompson	ED
Jackman-Moose River C of C 536 Main St. Jackman, Me 04945 668-4171		x		ED, snowmobiles
Somerset Economic Development Corp. 41 Court St. Fairfield, Me 04937 474-0166	x		Jim Batey	ED, shipping
KVCAP (transit) 91 Water St Waterville, Me 04901 859-1500	x	x	Jim Woods	transit
Southern Kennebec Healthy Comm. 230 Water St Gardiner, Me 04345 582-6738	x		Patrice Putnam alt.	Modes
Go Maine (GPCOG transit program) 68 Marginal Way Portland, Me 04101 1-800-280-RIDE	x		Carey Kish	transit
Time and Tide RC&D 9 Green St Augusta, Me 04330 622-7847	x			ED, rural access
Heart of Maine RC&D RR2 Newport, Me 04953 368-4433	x		Vaughn Raser	ED, rural access
Kennebec Valley Tourism Council 179 Main St. Waterville, Me 04901	x			passenger trans.
Maine Bicycle Coalition PO Box 5275 Augusta, Me 04332 207-623-4511	x			alt. Modes
Senior Spectrum Weston Court Augusta, Me 04330 622-9212				1 elderly, bussing
Kennebec-Messalonskee Trail Assn. 873-6443	x		Peter Garrett	bike-ped.
Old Canada Road Scenic Byway 672-3971		x	Bob Haynes	planning

Businesses: (Primary shippers/motor freight cos.)

Plum Creek Timberlands Marshall Yard The Forks, Me 04985 663-4406	x	Dick Chamberlain	resource movements
Sappi -- Hinckley Rt 201 Fairfield, Me 04937 453-9301	x	Steve Robe	resource/product movement
Moose River Lumber Talpey Rd Jackman, Me 04945 668-4193	x	Steve Banahan	resource/product movement
Madison Paper Box 129 Madison, Me 04950 696-3307	x	Dan Wallace	resource/product movement
Huhtamaki 242 College Ave Waterville, Me 04901	x		product movement
Irving Tannery 24 Main St Hartland, Me 04943 938-4491	x		product movement
Pottle's Transportation 212 Center Rd Fairfield, Me 04937 453-7984	x		trucking
Richard Carrier Trucking PO Box 718 Skowhegan, Me 04976 474-6293	x	Richard Carrier	trucking
Marden's 184 College Ave Waterville, Me 04901 873-6111	x	Paul LePage	product movement
Macomber Transport 181 Lewiston Road, W.Gardiner ME 04345 582-6322	x	Wayne Macomber	trucking

Individuals:

Jack Sutton (former RTAC) West Road, Belgrade 495-3498	x		rail
Harvey Boatman (former RTAC) Cross Hill Rd Vassalboro, Me 04989 923-3652	x		school busses
Guy Berthiaume (former RTAC) 622-0832	x		
Greg Dore (former RTAC) 474-6911	x		technical
Ed Hoyt (Benton) 453-6546	x		town official
Kathryn Ruth Pittsfield Town Manager 487-3136	x		economic development

Elery Keene
 1 Pat Street, Winslow, ME 04901
 872-5231

x

planning

Robert Moody (Gardiner PB)
 33 Harrison Ave., Gardiner, ME 04345
 582-5623

x

planning

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	MEDIA NAME	ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	POSTAL CODE
Glenn	Turner	Morning Sentinel	31 Front Street	Waterville	ME	04901
Tom	Groening		PO Box 327	Belfast	ME	04915
Mike	Laberge	Capital Weekly	PO Box 2788	Augusta	ME	04338
Rolling	Thunder Express		PO Box 480	Newport	ME	04953
Joe	Rankin	Kennebec Journal	274 Western Ave	Augusta	ME	04330
George	Manlove		17 Carlisle Ave	Augusta	ME	04330
Jeremiah	Stevens	Maine Eagle	142 North Dixmont Rd	Troy	ME	04987
Jessica	Lalberte	WABI Channel 5	93 Main St	Waterville	ME	04901
	News Dept.	WABK	150 Whitten Road	Augusta	ME	04330
Paul	Basham	Town Line	PO Box 89	So. China	ME	04358
Sharon	Mack	Bangor Daily News		Pittsfield	ME	04967