

SIPCRES
Strategic Investment Plan for
Corridors of Regional and Economic Significance
MaineDOT Region 4 Transportation Corridors

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Introduction and Background

As part of the Maine Department of Transportation's long range planning process, regional councils have been asked to recommend long range proposed transportation investments for Maine DOT consideration. We have done this through the use of our Regional Needs Assessment, adopted regional and municipal comprehensive plans, and through economic development, municipal and public outreach. The recommendations generated are long term investments that have been prioritized by multiple parameters under the general headings of economic vitality; safety and security; community and environmental preservation and enhancements; and transportation system sustainability. Currently-funded, deferred, and smaller-scale investments, for example, ongoing and needed road maintenance, are already part of Maine DOT's project planning and investment process.

The pages that follow summarize the goals, methods and findings of the SIPCRES program including a list of the recommendations and summaries of the Region Four Corridors as described in the Regional Needs Assessment. The preceding document, the Regional Needs Assessment, describes transportation corridors and transportation, land use and economic objectives. This report is available at: www.midcoastplanning.org and www.hpcme.org/transportation/needs.

The primary participating agencies in this program are:

- Maine Department of Transportation
- Eastern Maine Development Corporation
- Hancock County Planning Commission
- Midcoast Regional Planning Commission
- Washington County Council of Governments

Several supporting organizations have contributed to the definition of the priority corridors and identification of investments, including the Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS) Committee, local and county governments, area businesses and private voluntary organizations.

Study Methodology

The SIPCRES process is a refinement of the prior corridor-base Region Transportation Assessment or RTA. The RTA for Region 4, Eastern Maine is available online at: www.hcpcme.org/transportation/needs. The goal of the RTA was to identify land use, transportation and economic needs along Maine's most significant corridors dominated by the arterial highway system, but also including rail, water, air and trail connections. The SIPCRES seeks to implement the RTA through identifying feasible short-term as well as more challenging, long-term investments.

The investment identification process relied upon several sources of information:

- Findings from the RTA, including surveys, public meetings and technical analyses
- Municipal project requests submitted to MaineDOT in February, 2006
- Public input through a series of outreach meetings held in 2006 and summarized below
- Integration of numerous transportation project analyses

The list of potential investments was then scored by program staff using a consensus decision making process along a list of criteria provided by MaineDOT. The criteria are a modified Transportation, Economic and Land Use System (TELUS) scoring sheet. The criteria fall into four broad categories:

- Economic Development
- Quality of Life
- Safety
- Asset Preservation

Scores were assigned to each indicator as follows:

Scoring:

- 3 Major Negative Impact**
- 2 Moderate Negative Impact**
- 1 Minor Negative Impact**
- 0 No Impact or Not Applicable**
- 1 Minor Positive Impact**
- 2 Moderate Positive Impact**
- 3 Major Positive Impact**

Total scores were calculated for each of the broad categories. Because some categories had more individual indicators than others, a mathematical weighting procedure was employed to normalize the scores among the categories giving each category equal weight. The weighted totals for each category thus ranged from a possible -25 points to +25 points. The weighted scores were then added across the categories for a composite score with a theoretical range from -100 to +100 points. A summary sheet was prepared that shows the weighted scores for each investment.

Investment Options

The following list of investment options was created following the methodology described earlier and was modified during the course of the analysis as directed by public input and technical analyses.

Midcoast US Route 1 Corridor

1. Rockland Branch Railroad upgrades and improvements (rail line, fencing, grade crossing gates, signs and signals) in Rockland, Thomaston and Warren
2. Maine DOT Gateway 1 Strategic Corridor Preservation Planning Study (ongoing study with public and municipal participation, and funding of recommendations that are mutually agreed upon by municipalities, federal officials and Maine DOT)
3. Knox County Airport Runway/Taxiway upgrades for safety and sufficient capacity with consideration of local and regional environmental constraints
4. Belfast Route 1 intersection improvements for safety, mobility and capacity at Congress Street, Route 52 and Route 141 intersections
5. Route 52 upgrade in Camden, Lincolnville, Northport and Belfast to improve safety (current posted speed is difficult to drive given poor road surface conditions) and to alleviate congestion on Route 1, while respecting Lincolnville Center's historic character
6. Route 1 Road Safety Audit with a focus on high crash locations in Thomaston and Rockland
7. Rockland Maine State Ferry Terminal Parking Lot expansion/structure feasibility planning

Midcoast State Route 3 Corridor

1. Route 3 intersection improvements for safety, mobility and capacity at Route 220, Route 131N and Route 131S intersections
2. Route 3 access management study to maintain mobility/posted speeds, north-south crossings, and development opportunities

Midcoast State Route 17 Corridor

1. Route 17 intersection improvements for safety, mobility and capacity at Route 220, Route 131N and Route 131S intersections
2. Route 17 access management study to maintain mobility/posted speeds, north-south crossings, and development opportunities
3. Route 17 Road Safety Audit with a focus on high crash locations

Penobscot River Corridor (Rte 15, Rte 1A, Brewer-Bucksport RR, Penobscot River)

1. East Coast Greenway: Study and construct an off-road bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Penobscot River from the City of Brewer's waterfront to the Town of Bucksport

waterfront. The majority of the river front land is landlocked by the Maine Central Railroad line. The East Coast Greenway supports the concept and, pending the results of a routing study by PVCOC and HCPC, may designate this trail as the principal route between Brewer and Ellsworth.

2. Penobscot Narrows Transportation Plan: Implement transportation recommendations of the Penobscot Narrows Transportation Plan, including improved water access, transit services, trails and information program.
3. Improve Mobility and Safety on US Route 1A (Searsport to Bangor): This project will improve the efficiency and safety of the corridor. The corridor currently accommodates a mix of commuter vehicles and heavy truck traffic associated with the port at Mack Point in Searsport. Improvements may include implementing access management techniques and passing lanes.

Penobscot Valley Corridor (Route 95, Penobscot River)

1. Penobscot River Restoration and Trail Network: Develop bicycle and pedestrian trails along both sides of the Penobscot River from Orono to Howland. This trail system will connect with existing bike-pedestrian facilities in the BACTS area and would complement the Penobscot River Restoration's efforts to highlight the importance of the Penobscot River.

East West Corridor

1. I-95 Corridor Improvements: Improvements will include reconfiguration of the existing clover leaf interchange between I-95 and I-395. The current interchange configuration is insufficient to accommodate increasing traffic levels causing delays and vehicular accidents.
2. Increase Truck Weight Limits on I-95 and I-395 to 100,000 lbs.: This project would allow heavy truck traffic to legally travel Maine's interstate highway system in addition to secondary roads.
3. Bangor International Airport (BGR) Connector Road: The project will construct an access road between I-95 and BGR providing a more efficient link to the airport.

Sebasticook Valley Corridor

1. Improve Mobility and Safety on State Route 7/11/15/23 from Newport to Dover-Foxcroft and Greenville: This project will improve the efficiency and safety of the corridor. The corridor currently accommodates a mix of commuter vehicles, tourists, and heavy truck traffic. Improvements may include conducting a safety audit of the corridor and implementing access management techniques to preserve and enhance mobility and safety.

2. Tourism Infrastructure Improvements This project will improve tourism related transportation infrastructure in Piscataquis and northern Penobscot Counties such as directional, sight identification, and interpretive signage as recommended by the Piscataquis County Tourism Taskforce.

Downeast Coastal Corridor (Route 1, Route 9, Connector Roads, Calais Branch)

1. Downeast Regional Airport: Construct new airport in greater Machias Region to serve regional passenger and freight needs. Re-use existing airport for mixed use development.
2. Eastport Regional Connector Road and Bridge: Reconstruct the former bridge connecting Eastport mainland, improve highway connections to Meddybemps and Route 9.
3. North – South Connector Routes: Improve state highways connecting Route 1 with Route 9 including Route 46, Route 193, Route 192 and Route 191. These routes would safely move freight up to Route 9 and facilitate tourism connections with coastal Hancock and Washington County.
4. Route 1 Mobility and Safety: Complete road improvements on coastal Route 1 between Bucksport and Eastport. Add passing lanes, turning lanes, paved shoulders and other improvements to facilitate traffic flow and safety.
5. Downeast Sunrise Trail: Convert rails to multi-use trails between Washington Junction in Hancock and Ayers Junction. Add visitor information, way-finding signage, parking facilities and other support infrastructure.
6. Tourism Infrastructure Program: Implement transportation related recommendations of the Fermata Study, Flanagan Report and other studies to enhance visitation to Washington County.

Acadia Express Corridor (Route 1A)

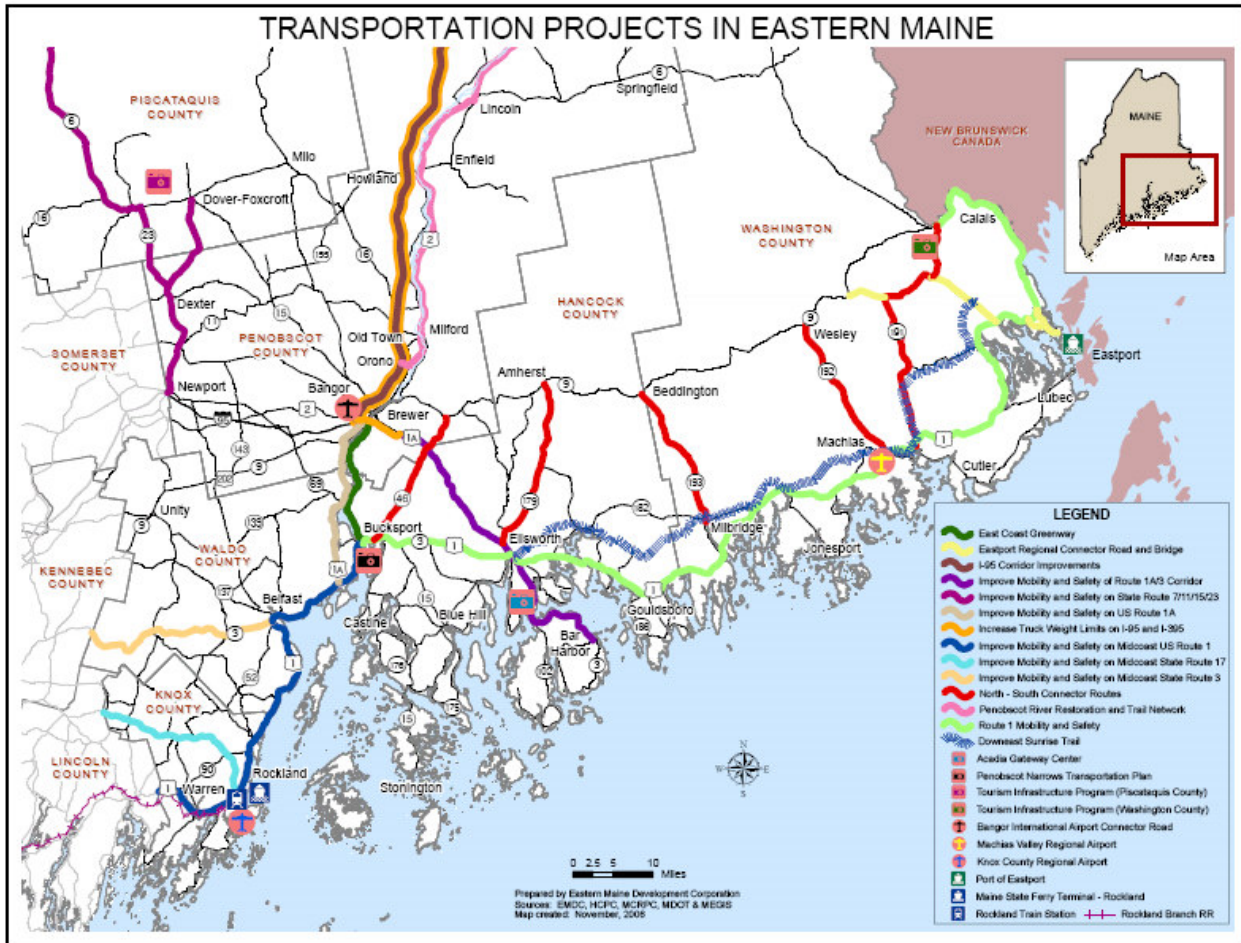
1. Improve Mobility and Safety of Route 1A/3 Corridor (Bangor to Bar Harbor): Complete road reconstruction in north Ellsworth to Ellsworth center. Increase transit services for commuters and visitors. Complete shoulder paving to permit safe use by bicycles of this corridor.
2. Acadia Gateway Center: Contributes funds to the construction of an intermodal facility and information center in the town of Trenton so serve visitors to Acadia National Park and surrounding areas.

Regional Corridor Priorities
Maine Economic Development District: Region 4- Eastern Maine
Priority Corridor (Name/#): Various

Corridor	Action/ Strategy	Investment	Econ. Dev (rank)	Quality of Life (rank)	Safety (rank)	Asset Preserve (rank)	Total
Policy Issues							
East-West	3	Increase Interstate Weight Limits	13.0	6.9	10.0	20.0	49.9
Planning Activities							
Rte 1 MC	2	Route 52 upgrade	9.3	5.1	10.0	0.8	25.2
Rte 1 MC	6	Route 1 Road Safety Audit	5.6	5.6	15.0	5.0	31.1
Rte 3 MC	2	Route 3 Access Management Study	10.2	6.5	6.7	7.5	30.8
Rte 17 MC	2	Route 17 Access Management Study	9.3	6.5	8.3	4.2	28.2
Rte 17 MC	3	Route 17 Road Safety Audit	4.6	6.0	15.0	5.0	30.6
Pen River	1	East Coast Greenway/ Penobscot River Trail	5.6	11.6	8.3	7.5	33.0
Pen River	3	Improve Mobility and Safety on US Route 1A	18.5	5.1	15.0	4.2	42.8
Pen Valley	1	Pen River Restoration/Trail Network	5.6	13.4	0.0	5.8	24.8
East-West	2	Bangor International Airport Connector Road	12.0	5.1	3.3	10.8	31.3
Sebasticook	1	Mobility and Safety Rte 7/11/15/23	18.5	6.0	15.0	4.2	43.7
Sebasticook	2	Tourism Infrastructure Program-Sebasticook	10.2	13.0	3.3	11.7	38.1
DE Coast	2	Eastport Regional Connector Road and Bridge	19.4	4.2	11.7	-5.8	29.4
DE Coast	3	North South Connector Routes	17.6	6.5	10.0	11.7	45.7
DE Coast	4	Route 1 Mobility and Safety	18.5	5.6	15.0	10.0	49.1
DE Coast	6	Tourism Infrastructure Program	7.4	10.2	3.3	5.8	26.8
Acadia Exp	1	Improve Mobility and Safety on US Route 1A/3	18.5	3.2	13.3	5.8	40.9
Capital Needs							
Rte 1 MC	1	Rockland Branch Railroad upgrades	18.5	10.2	8.3	5.0	42.0
Rte 1 MC	3	Belfast Route 1 intersection improvements	9.3	6.0	13.3	4.2	32.8
Rte 1 MC	4	Knox County Airport Runway/Taxiway upgrades	17.6	3.2	6.7	8.3	35.8
Rte 1 MC	5	Gateway 1 Corridor Planning Study	5.6	12.0	3.3	15.8	36.8
Rte 1 MC	7	Rockland Maine State Ferry Terminal Parking	11.1	10.6	5.0	0.0	26.8
Rte 3 MC	1	Route 3 Intersection Improvements	9.3	6.0	11.7	5.0	31.9
Rte 17 MC	1	Route 17 Intersection Improvements	9.3	6.0	11.7	4.2	31.1
Pen River	2	Penobscot Narrows Passenger Plan	10.2	12.5	3.3	8.3	34.4
East-West	1	I-95 Corridor Improvements	11.1	2.8	23.3	10.8	48.1
DE Coastal	1	Downeast Regional Airport	13.9	3.2	3.3	7.5	28.0
DE Coastal	5	Downeast Sunrise Trail	7.4	10.6	6.7	10.8	35.6
Acadia Exp	2	Acadia Gateway Center	11.1	13.4	5.0	18.3	47.9

The detailed TELUS table is available on request, and along with this report is posted to www.hpcme.org/transportation/needs

Investment MAP



(Larger map included in Appendices)

Public Input

SIPCRES Program staff attended and/or sponsored a number of meetings throughout the six-county region. The following table lists the meetings.

Regional Meetings (Region 4)	
• CEDS Committee (Transportation Project) Meeting	May 5, 2006
• CEDS Committee final meeting	June 16, 2006
Hancock County Planning Commission	
• Blue Hill Peninsula Transportation Meeting	July 25, 2006
• Mount Desert Island League of Towns	October 17, 2006
• Healthy Hancock Coalition	September 20, 2006
• Penobscot Narrows Bridge Event (Kiosk)	October 14, 2006
• Schoodic Area Futures	October 13, 2006
• Downeast Sunrise Trail Committee	October 23, 2006
Midcoast Regional Planning Commission (Knox, Waldo)	
• North Haven and Union municipal officials	August 2006
• Midcoast Regional Planning Commission Executive Board Meeting	August 23, 2006
• Rockland and Belfast municipal officials	September 2006
• Liberty and Waldo municipal officials	October 2006
• Midcoast Regional Planning Commission Fall Commission Meeting (with municipal officials from Appleton, Belfast, Belmont, Camden, Rockland, Rockport, Lincolnville, Northport, Union, and Washington)	October 26, 2006
• South Thomaston and Owls Head municipal officials	November 2006
Penobscot Valley Council of Governments (Penobscot, Piscataquis)	
• Penobscot Valley Council of Governments Executive Committee (with municipal officials from Stockton Springs, Hermon, Hampden, Clifton, Stetson, Bangor, Milford, Glenburn, Bradley, Dexter, Brewer, Greenbush, Veazie, Searsport, Orono, and Holden and the Superintendent of the greater Bangor area's transit system, the BAT).	October 2006
• Bangor Area Transportation System (BACTS) Policy Committee	October 2006
• Piscataquis County Economic Development Council officials, Maine Highlands and Piscataquis County Tourism Taskforce officials	October 2006
Washington County Council of Governments	
• Sunrise County Economic Council	November 28, 2006
• Washington County Council of Governments	November 28, 2006

These events provided persons attending an opportunity to comment on investment proposals and suggest additional investments. The meetings were not uniform in design, and in many

cases the SIPCRES was only a portion of a longer meeting dealing with many, at times unrelated topics. The Penobscot Narrows Bridge event entailed staffing an information booth throughout the day for the first bridge opening for pedestrians. Minutes from each of the public meetings are included in the appendices.

Several themes were repeated in our public meetings:

- Tangible improvements to the highway network get high marks in the public’s eye, even when they do not score well in the TELUS process.
- There is a range in participants’ geographic region of interest from very local to larger regions. Few participants were ready to look at the whole of region 4, instead aligning themselves with smaller one and two county areas.
- Interest groups, such as trail advocates and freight advocates, are very clear about their priorities and are prepared to mobilize around them.
- Several concepts gain broad support in their abstract form
 - Safety – programs to improve roads and shoulder paving are supported
 - Choice – most participants advocated broadening transportation choices, though some have clear priorities about which choice should be funded first.
 - Funding – participants all supported adequate funding for transportation programs

Issue Identity	Broad Concern	Local Government	MaineDOT RPC
	Specific Issue	Local Project Advocate	Trail Coalition
		Local	County
		Geographic Identity	
			Regional

Conclusions

The Strategic Investment Plan for Corridors of Regional and Economic Significance begins the process of implementing the 2005 Regional Transportation Analysis. Over the course of five months program staff used a variety of data sources to identify feasible short-term and long-term transportation investments. The projects were assembled in an excel spreadsheet, rated using a group consensus process and taken to public meetings for additional input. This report summarizes the process and products realized during our five month program. The summary table provides a snapshot of potential investments for the region, divided into policy, planning and capital investments.

A number of caveats about the process merit note:

- This process is new to the program staff, MaineDOT and the public. As a result several steps have faltered, including long debates about scoring criteria, confusion over roles, wide variations in specificity, scope and cost of investments, uneven public participation and results that require additional analyses and public input.
- The TELUS scoring process is a bit too complex for a general audience to absorb in one short presentation. As a result, participants looked only to the final scores and not the reasons behind the scores. This contributed to skepticism about the process.
- Ranking investments requires active collaboration of elected leaders, MaineDOT staff and regional planners. In this cycle we did not successfully engage elected leaders to the extent we had hoped.
- Most public participants only addressed transportation investments that affect their communities, including the arterial highways used for inter-municipal travel. Investments on more remote corridors do not draw much interest. The six-county Region Four is too large to be considered as a whole by most participants.

Appendices

Detailed TELUS Table

– see attached Excel file [region4telus.xls](#)

Detailed SIPCRES Map

– see attached PDF file [investmentmap.pdf](#)

Municipal Project Requests

– see attached PDF file [municipalrequest2006.pdf](#)

Public Meeting Summaries

Blue Hill Peninsula Transportation Meeting

July 25, 2006

This meeting was attended by representatives from each of several towns on the Blue Hill Peninsula. The meeting was originally called in order to discuss improving bus service in the region. Other issues were not a primary focus.

- Concern was expressed about minimal transit services in the Blue Hill Peninsula area. Seeking extended hours and greater frequency of service from Downeast Transit.
- Questions were raised about how to contact MaineDOT regional staff regarding transportation issues.
- Safe Routes to School proposal submitted. Interest in reducing conflicts between automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians.

Mount Desert Island League of Towns

October 17, 2006

The MDI League of Towns meets monthly, with one representative from each of the towns as well as Acadia National Park. Also attending this meeting were Rep. Ted Koffman, Terry Hannan with MaineDOT Bangor and Stephanie Clement, Friends of Acadia. My presentation followed a presentation by Friends of Acadia on a recent bicycle fatality. As such, discussion tended toward issues of sharing the road.

- Most discussion concerned shoulder paving policies, plans for improving roads on MDI
- What can be done to encourage road improvements: local referenda, support for the gas tax and other revenues, helping to resolve right of way issues, working with legislators.
- Concern expressed about lost opportunities, when road reconstruction should be done, but is missed due to slow administrative procedures.

- Concern expressed about maintenance paving when reconstruction is needed.
- Concern expressed about loss of Ellsworth Division office leading to less contact between towns and MaineDOT.
- Questions were raised about the implementation plan for the Acadia Gateway Center. Can this facility be a resource in the event of emergencies, island evacuations, etc?

Healthy Hancock Coalition

September 20, 2006

Discussion was limited by time and lack of familiarity with many of the transportation investments.

- Support expressed for alternative modes projects, such as trails, passenger transportation and intermodal facilities for buses.
- Support expressed for safety improvement planning and projects.

Penobscot Narrows Bridge Event (Kiosk)

October 14, 2006

Jim Fisher set up an information kiosk at one end of the bridge. The table included maps, investment proposals, and detailed information about the Penobscot Narrows Plan. Visitors to the booth were encouraged to describe what they felt was important, but were not provided with a detailed description of the TELUS process.

- Widespread support for improving access to the area for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Support for providing better boat access, including a tie-up at Fort Knox
- Support for increasing bus services to the region
- Support for improving road connections between Bucksport and Bangor

Schoodic Area Futures

October 13, 2006

Jim Fisher presented an overview of the process to Schoodic Area Futures, a non-profit forum organized to unite Steuben, Gouldsboro, Winter Harbor, Franklin, Sorrento and Sullivan. The presentation was not detailed and only a few responses were received.

- Need to improve connections of all sorts between Schoodic Area with Ellsworth and Bangor.
- Need to balance road improvements with protection of regional character.
- Support for safety planning and investments.

Downeast Sunrise Trail Committee

October 23, 2006

This two-county coalition is very focused on creating multiuse trails connecting Hancock and Washington Counties.

- Strongest support for pursuing trails initiatives – including Downeast Sunrise Trail and Penobscot River and Valley trails.
- Support for shoulder paving and other safety improvements on Route 1 and the Route 1-Route 9 connector roads.
- Support for intermodal projects in Ellsworth and Machias.

Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation Study

October 17, 2006

(BACTS) Policy Committee

BACTS is the federally designated metropolitan transportation planning organization for the urban area consisting of Bangor, Brewer, Veazie, Hampden, Orono, Old Town, Indian Island (Penobscot Indian Nation), and parts of Orrington, Eddington, and Bradley.

EMDC/ PVCOG staff distributed modified TELUS score sheets and accompanying SIPCRES project descriptions and gave a presentation of the SIPCRES process. The TELUS score sheets were modified for use as a tool to score and rank projects of regional importance by MaineDOT and regional planning organizations. MaineDOT personnel also offered an overview of the SIPCRES process and its relationship to the MaineDOT's Long Range Plan. Meeting attendees were in general agreement that increasing the interstate highway truck weight limits to 100,000 lbs. should receive the highest priority. Below is a list of comments and suggestions made by meeting attendees:

- Pen Narrows project received too high a score which takes points away from other projects that provide real economic development opportunities.
- Ongoing capital and operating costs for a Pen Narrows type project will be high and negate some of the economic development benefit.
- Pen Narrows project should not be higher than the Eastport Regional Connector Road and Bridge. This project could offer significant economic benefits to Washington County and Maine.
- Projects should be ranked according to the type of project. Example: a policy project should be scored or ranked separately from capital or planning projects so "like" projects can be more accurately compared.
- Weight limits should be the #1 priority.
- The weight limit project will not require high levels of funding to complete whereas other projects will have high capital costs associated with it such as the Eastport Regional Connector Road and Bridge.

PVCOG Executive Committee

October 13, 2006

PVCOG is a regional planning organization with over 40 member municipalities including the Penobscot Indian Nation. There are 81 municipalities in PVCOCG's service area which includes Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties.

Staff distributed modified TELUS score sheets and the accompanying project descriptions and gave a presentation of the SIPCRES process. The TELUS score sheets were modified for use as a tool to score and rank projects of regional importance by MaineDOT and regional planning organizations. Below is a list of comments and suggestions made by meeting attendees:

- Project list should include a stronger focus on areas west of Bangor.
- Potential impacts resulting from Plum Creek's proposal should be included in MaineDOT's Long Range Plan.
- The Acadia region receives too much emphasis.

- Transportation funds are limited and therefore available funds should be focused on existing infrastructure.
- MaineDOT's Long Range Plan should concentrate on more important projects than trails.
- There needs to be projects in northern Piscataquis County.
- The process should compare similar projects – not comparing policy projects with capital or planning projects.
- MaineDOT has done a good job in attempting to do something different and include all areas. Gateway 1 is a good example.
- Route 2 should be included in the Long Range Plan because of heavy commuter and truck traffic.

**Interviews Piscataquis County Economic Development
Council, Piscataquis County Tourism Task Force, and
Maine Highlands**

October 2006

Below is a list of comments or suggestions received:

- Increasing truck weight limits to 100,000 lbs. on the interstate system should be a high priority. Getting trucks onto the interstate will help make our secondary roads safer and last longer.
- Add and improve directional and tourism related signage throughout northern Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties.
- Improve Routes 7, 23, and 15 from Newport to Dover-Foxcroft and Greenville.