

Town Manager, Christine Almand

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Town of Skowhegan

Town Manager

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March 22, 2022

Bruce Van Note, Commissioner
Maine Department of Transportation
24 Child Street
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04330-0016

Dear Mr. Van Note;

As you aware, the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) and the Town of Skowhegan have been working together for the past three years on a second bridge feasibility study to meet the needs of the present and future growth for our Town. During that time many additional public, quasi-public, and private development projects have been brought forward that will or may have direct impact on our current road systems. Additionally, in that same timeline, a large collaboration of investors, agencies, and volunteer committees have been working behind the scenes on a long-range vision for Skowhegan as a recreational and ecological tourism destination. This maelstrom of ideas and plans has restored an incredible positive energy back into this great town. However, it has also emphasized our need to step back and reconsider the town in a more holistic way. On January 25, 2022 the Skowhegan Board of Selectmen met to discuss the next steps involving the above-mentioned feasibility study. At that time, Mr. Martin Rooney and Mr. Matt Drost presented the MaineDOT's new collaborative program the Village Partnership Initiative (VPI). The Board had concerns with moving forward with any further bridge study. Those concerns were presented in my letter to your office as issued January 27, 2022.

The Skowhegan Board of Selectmen met on March 8, 2022. At this meeting, I presented the MaineDOT response letter, as written by Acting Director for the Bureau of Planning, Mr. Dale F. Doughty, as issued February 22, 2022. Mr. Doughty's letter again presented the VPI as great collaborative opportunity between MaineDOT and the Town of Skowhegan. Based on that letter, the Board decided to put any further study of a second bridge on hold until they have more information concerning the Village Partnership Initiative. They also felt that any ongoing projects in the design and/or planning stages in respects to roadways, traffic or pedestrian movement and/or infrastructure should be put on hold until an all-inclusive master plan could be put together. In general, the Board felt that designs for projects in Skowhegan may not be taking into consideration other MaineDOT projects and non-MaineDOT projects currently being planned in Skowhegan; for example:

The Jewett Street/Madison Avenue project, the Commercial Street/Madison Avenue project, the Norridgewock Avenue sidewalk project, the new MSAD 54 school planned for Heselton Street, a relocated bus garage off of Jewett Street, the Skowhegan River Park project, the Public Safety Building project,

the Ballfield Compound project, the Skowhegan Opera House renovations, three large mixed-use properties located on Court Street, Island Avenue, and Mary Street, as well as the targeted pedestrian, bicycle, and recreational area linkage and continuity.

The Selectmen want to make sure that MaineDOT takes the Town, as a whole, into account when planning and designing all projects. They are excited about the Village Partnership Initiative, and are looking forward to improving vehicle and pedestrian safety in Skowhegan in the most prudent manner.

The Town met with MaineDOT representatives Dale Doughty, Matthew Drost, and Martin Rooney regarding the Village Partnership Initiative on March 10, 2022. Additionally, the Town met with MaineDOT representatives Aurele Gorneau, Stephen Landry, Robert Skehan, Meghan Russo, as well as State Senator Brad Farrin, local business and property owners about the Commercial Street/Madison Avenue traffic light project on March 11, 2022. The outcome of both of those meetings is that all who were involved in them appeared to be excited about working together on a true Skowhegan Village Master Plan.

Therefore, I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Selectmen, to ask that the Jewett Street/Madison Avenue project and the Commercial Street/Madison Avenue project be delayed so that we can get started with the Village Partnership Initiative and have a better understanding of how each of these projects fits into, and will manage, the flow of traffic in Skowhegan presently and in the future.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Christine Almand
Town Manager