

Gorham turnpike connector plans dormant, but not dead

The town will await the results of a pending Maine Department of Transportation study on solutions to traffic as developments rise.

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The Gorham intersection of routes 22 and 114 with Blue Ledge Road on Monday afternoon. The Maine Department of Transportation identifies the intersection as a high-crash site with 43 accidents for the three-year period ending in 2024. (Robert Lowell/Staff Writer)

Gorham remains hopeful for a traffic-easing solution in the aftermath of Maine Turnpike Authority [shelving its plans](#) this year for a connector. Rush hour congestion in the heavily traveled routes 22 and 114 commuter corridor and neighborhood roads will likely accelerate as high-density housing projects in Gorham come online.

“Gorham officially supports a transportation project that will substantially relieve congestion for the entire region west of Portland,” Gorham Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak said July 14 in an email to Westbrook-Gorham Now.

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Pictured about 4:30 p.m. Monday, Gorham's nearly vacant Park and Ride lot adjacent to the Rines Bypass roundabout and South Street (Route 114) reflects little interest in carpooling on the busy commuter corridor. (Robert Lowell/Staff Writer)

The Maine Turnpike Authority had proposed a four-lane toll relief route to Gorham aimed at reducing traffic on local roads and improving safety. The 4.8-mile connector was intended to link Gorham's Rines Bypass that skirts the town's village with Turnpike Exit 45 in South Portland. An opposition campaign decried the proposal that would have cut a swath through [Smiling Hill Farm](#) on County Road (Route 22).

Also, [Scarborough](#) and [Westbrook](#) councils walked back their initial support of the connector. The turnpike in February yielded its efforts to the Maine Department of Transportation.

"They plan to do a corridor study to evaluate what holistic, modally balanced solutions might be feasible," Erin Courtney, turnpike spokesperson, said in a July 9 email. "The connector is not off the table as part of the study, but it is not something MTA is planning or pursuing currently."

An effort in Legislature this spring [failed to repeal](#) a 2017 act authorizing the turnpike to build the connector.

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"Both the House and Senate accepted the committee's 'Ought Not to Pass Report,' so the bill (L.D. 1020) is dead," Ben Barry, communications director for the Senate Majority office, said in a July 3 email.

Now, a traffic solution for Gorham and neighboring communities appears to be back to square one.

The Maine Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the opening of the Rines Bypass in 2008, constructed a Park and Ride lot next to the roundabout at its intersection with South Street (Route 114). Commuters, however, appear to have shown little interest in car pooling resulting in more traffic on the way to the corridor.

Large-scale developments in Gorham include construction of the first phase of [391 housing units off Robie Street](#) in Gorham Village; a Gorham Town Council [approved contract zone](#) in March to extend a public sewer for a proposed 824 units at the former Gorham golf course on McLellan Road in South Gorham; and Tuesday the Gorham Planning Board was to view a site of 102 condominium units proposed for residents age 55 and older off Newton Drive in South Gorham.

“We’re looking forward to working with our municipal partners of Westbrook, South Portland and Scarborough, as well as MDOT and MTA, on the pending study to identify long-term capacity solutions,” Paraschak said.