



**News Release for February 5, 2010
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MAINEDOT RECEIVES APPROVAL FOR CARIBOU CONNECTOR

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has given approval to the Maine Department of Transportation to move forward with the Caribou Connector project, a 4.28-mile connector that will loop around Caribou and connect Route 1 with Route 161. The FHWA gave its approval in the form of a Tier 2 Record of Decision (ROD) Thursday that identified the environmentally preferred route for the bypass.

The decision allows MaineDOT to move forward in developing the final design for the Caribou Connector. MaineDOT plans to advertise a portion of the Caribou Connector project for bid later this year, and anticipates construction beginning on that segment before the end of 2010.

Nearly one year ago, Governor John Baldacci gathered project stakeholders including Aroostook County legislators, MaineDOT and town and county officials in order to advance this project to the construction phase by the end of 2010.

When built, the Caribou Connector will improve traffic safety, provide traffic relief in downtown Caribou, improve connectivity and provide better access to areas north of Caribou's downtown. The enhanced travel mobility will also support increased economic growth by reducing travel times, separating local traffic from through traffic, as well as enhancing the marketability of the area and improving business conditions downtown.

The Caribou Connector is one segment of the much larger Aroostook County Transportation Study. Since 1998, Congress has designated \$50.4 million for the study and construction of a North-South Highway in Aroostook County.

Through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Aroostook County Transportation Study has identified four potential corridors for this North-South Highway, and has broken this down into 11 segments. Two of these segments are included in all four corridors. MaineDOT has advanced these two segments, segment 4 (Caribou) and Segment 7 (Presque Isle) for Tier 2 approval. MaineDOT has received a Tier 2 Record of Decision for Segment 4 (Caribou). MaineDOT continues to work with FHWA and other agencies to move forward with finalizing the Environmental Impact Statement process for Segment 7 (Presque Isle).

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