

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2012

CONTACTS: Glen Brand, [207-749-3896](tel:207-749-3896)

PROPOSED EAST-WEST HIGHWAY ACROSS MAINE RANKS AS ONE OF THE WORST TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS IN U.S.

PORTLAND—The proposed East-West Highway across Maine is featured in a new Sierra Club national report as one of the worst transportation projects in the United States.

The report, "Smart Choices, Less Traffic: 50 Best and Worst Transportation Projects," cites the proposed \$2 billion, 220-mile, four-lane freight truck highway's serious negative impacts on Maine's air and water quality and critical wildlife habitat.

"The proposed East-West freight truck highway would permanently destroy Maine's central landscape, threatening local communities, landowner private property rights, forests, air and water quality, and potentially leaving Maine taxpayers on the hook for this risky project," said Karen Woodsum, representative of Sierra Club's Maine Woods campaign.

The report notes that similar highway proposals have been studied and rejected numerous times in the past, and that the privately-funded highway connecting the Canadian provinces of Quebec and New Brunswick through forested regions in Maine would serve large industry and trucking interests at the expense of Maine communities.

Sierra Club Maine is advocating that the state consider revitalizing the existing freight rail line which parallels the proposed highway route.

"If there is a need to move more goods across the state, it makes more sense to revitalize the existing freight rail line," said Glen Brand, Sierra Club's Maine Chapter Director. "Trains are cleaner, more affordable, and dramatically less destructive than building a major highway through the Maine Woods region."

Last year, the state of Maine allocated \$300,000 of tax-payer dollars towards a feasibility study of this privately-funded highway, despite widespread opposition to the project. That study will not examine the highway's impacts on waterways and water quality; wildlife habitat and threatened and endangered species; private property and eminent domain; local communities' environment and economies; public recreational lands; taxpayer risks; and noise and other pollution.

The full report is available online at: <http://content.sierraclub.org/beyondoil/content/smart-choices-less-traffic>. Concerned citizens can learn more about the Sierra Club's efforts to stop the East-West highway by contacting maine.chapter@sierraclub.org or [207-761-5616](tel:207-761-5616).

The Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization with 1.4 million members and supporters and chapters in all 50 states. The Maine Chapter (maine.sierraclub.org) is celebrating its 20th anniversary next year.

###