

PRESENTATION TO FRIENDS OF MID-COAST MAINE

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NATIVES AND NEWCOMERS

Based on a random sample telephone survey conducted in early 2006 of 521 year-round residents in the 21 towns and cities that make up the Gateway 1 corridor, from Brunswick to Prospect; supplemented by 2000 Census data for the 3-county region that makes up most of the mid-coast.

1. HOW MANY?

“Newcomers” are now nearly 1 of every 2 year-round residents in the mid-coast. A significant milestone probably will be reached over the next 5-10 years, when, for the first time in maybe 150 to 175 years the majority of year-round residents of the region will be people who were not born in Maine. In one sub-region of the mid-coast – Camden-Rockport-Lincoln-Northport – the majority, in fact approaching 2/3 of year-round residents, migrated to Maine from out of state.

Newcomers are arriving in the mid-coast at a rate of about 2,000 people per year. They account for about 1 in 10 of all newcomers to Maine. At any given time, about 10% arrived within the past 5 years; and close to 1 in 5 arrived within the past 10 years.

Once here, many stay. Some 44% of all “newcomers” have been here for 20 years or more, which means we probably ought to call them something besides “newcomers.”

Newcomers come to the mid-coast from all over. One in 5 comes from Massachusetts and another 14% from elsewhere in New England. Quite a few – 13% -- come from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Another cluster comes from the mid-Atlantic region around Washington, D.C. Survey respondents included newcomers from 32 states, and from 10 other countries on 4 continents.

20% of in-migrants were summer residents of Maine before becoming permanent residents. There is no question that the summer experience in Maine, whether as seasonal home owner or just visitor, is an important feeder for permanent residency.

2. WHO ARE THEY AND HOW DIFFERENT ARE THEY DEMOGRAPHICALLY COMPARED WITH MAINE NATIVES?

First, an overall profile of the in-migrant. If “average” or “typical” can be taken to mean the most prevalent situation percentage-wise:

She (56%) is middle-aged, 45-64 years old (51%). She has lived in Maine for between 10 and 20 years. She is employed in a professional, technician, or similar white collar position (45%). She works for an employer (39%), although she also has a strong

propensity toward self-employment (25%). She is married or at least has one other adult living with her (60%) but has no children under 18 living at home (72%). She has a college degree (71%) and is financially better off than the average Mainer.

Average profiles only take you so far, so let's look a little more closely.

Age: The first thing to note is that “in-migrants” living in the mid-coast are no more likely to be retirees than are native Mainers living in the mid-coast. In both cases, about a quarter are 65 years old or older, and in both cases just over a quarter (27%) describe themselves as retired. This is a high percentage, but in-migrants and native Mainers in the mid-coast are the same in this regard.

The big age difference comes in the middle-age or late-middle-age-years. More than half (51%) of persons who were born outside of Maine and who now live in the mid-coast are between 45 and 64 years old. By comparison, only 38% of native born residents of the mid-coast are in this stage of life. Conversely, only about a quarter of persons who were born outside of Maine are today under 45 years old. By comparison, more than a third of native born residents are in this stage of life. **HIGHLIGHT:** Majority of “in-migrants” are currently at a stage of life usually associated with height of career, earning power, and discretionary income, and with community involvement.

Employment: Most “in-migrants” – two-thirds -- are gainfully employed. As mentioned, about 27% are retired. And while most of those who are employed work outside the home for an employer, it is noteworthy that a quarter are self-employed. Newcomers are twice as likely as native Mainers to be self-employed.

About 45% of in-migrants are employed in professional, technical, or similar white collar positions. Another 30% are in service occupations. Fewer native Mainers are in professional and white collar positions (34%), and more are in service (37%), construction (8%), manufacturing and other blue collar (11%) occupations. It also is noteworthy that native Mainers in the mid-coast are about 3 times more likely than newcomers to have a disability that keeps them from working (7% vs. 2%). **HIGHLIGHT:** In-migrants are very active participants in the region's economy. They likely came and are coming here by choice, or as the children of parents who came here by choice.

Formal education: Probably the major demographic difference between in-migrants and native Mainers – a difference that shapes other economic differences – is degree of formal education. More than 70% of newcomers have college diplomas. Only about 1 in 10 ended their formal education at high school or less. By contrast, half of native born Mainers in the region ended their formal education at high school. About one-third have college diplomas. This compares favorably with the State of Maine as a whole, but it is less than half the rate of the in-migrants. **HIGHLIGHT:** To summarize and underscore this important point: 70% of in-migrants have college degrees and 30% don't. The converse is true for native Mainers in the mid-coast: 30% have college degrees and 70% don't. I don't think it is the difference in formal educational levels, per se, that defines

the differences between native Mainers and in-migrants in questions of public policy. Rather, I think this difference correlates with other characteristics that may help to define the differences. More of this a little later.

3. CONCERNING THE ROUTE 1 LIFELINE, WHAT DO THEY WORRY ABOUT?

Native Mainers and In-Migrants tend to have the same perspective on certain Route 1 conditions:

- ◆ Both worry equally about certain safety issues – for example, the ability to walk and bicycle safely, and the ability to drive cross-town safely, across Route 1; and both are equally concerned about traffic speed.
- ◆ But some notable differences, too:
 - Native Mainers are more likely to think that traffic conditions have worsened over time and that traffic levels are a very serious problem.
 - In-Migrants, on the other hand, are much more likely to think that the scenic quality of Route 1 has worsened, that the loss of visual appeal of development along Route 1 is a serious problem, and also more likely to think that the loss of open space along Route 1 is a serious problem.
- ◆ These differences are often a matter of degree rather than opposing differences, but the emphases of what is a problem and what is not helps to define public policy and some of the tensions we've seen in the corridor. There is a utilitarian aspect to the concerns of native Mainers, and an experiential aspect to the concerns of in-migrants. Both are part of quality of life – one relating to the quality with which a system functions--how easily a resident can move from one place to another -- and the other relating to the quality of place. But the different thresholds of concern can lead to very different perspectives on public initiatives. If you worry mostly about worsening traffic congestion, the impulse is to expand the capacity of the system. If you worry about the scenic aspects of the transportation corridor and the scale of the environment, the impulse is to protect the existing character of the place, which may mean opposing the expansion of the system.
- ◆ There also are some similarities and some differences in transportation behavior.
 - For example, during the summer months, the same proportions – about 2/3 – of native Mainers and in-migrants say they drive on Route 1 daily.
 - Both groups are distributed across the landscape in the same proportions— in both cases, for example, about 35% live within ½-mile of local stores and services, and in both cases about 32% live more than 2 miles away from any local store or service.
 - On the other hand, only a quarter of native Mainers say that during good weather they walk or bicycle to a local store or service at least once a week, compared with more than a third of in-migrants. This despite the fact that both groups are located in similar proximity to local stores where you can buy milk or other convenience items.

4. WHAT ARE SOME OF THEIR CORE VALUES?

Demographics and statements of concern suggest that there may be a different outlook on public resources like transportation systems and scenic quality from public spaces, but it takes a closer look at core values to understand whether the differences are fundamental or not.

Economic development vs. Scenic quality and character of Rt. 1:

First let me say that there are a lot of similarities in the outlooks of native Mainers and in-migrants in how they see and what they want for quality of place. But when push comes to shove and a choice has to be made, Native Mainers in the mid-coast are far more likely than in-migrants to favor economic development along Route 1, and In-migrants are far more likely to worry about strip development and the loss of scenic quality in this corridor.

- ◆ Native Mainers are twice as likely to believe that economic development along Route 1 in their towns is more important than the way Route 1 looks. In-migrants are twice as likely to strongly disagree with that notion.
- ◆ Two-thirds of in-migrants worry that large portions of Route 1 are becoming ugly strips of development, while just under half of native Mainers say they are worried about this.
- ◆ A majority of native Mainers regard Route 1 as the best place in town for business development that will increase the tax base. Fewer than half of in-migrants think so.

When asked, both native Mainers and in-migrants overwhelmingly agree that the appearance of Route 1 is vital to keeping their respective communities an appealing place to live and do business. But if and when public policy requires trade-offs, native Mainers are more likely to lean in one direction and in-migrants are more likely to lean in another. There is overlap in the way each group sees things, but not an automatic consensus; the perceptions are different enough that those charged with making public policy around big questions like transportation, land use, economic development and environment have to constantly think about how to find and tap into the common values.

Home rule and the ability to manage growth along Rt. 1:

One of the interesting results of the Route 1 attitude survey is a finding that residents at large are surprisingly willing to consider multi-town management of development along the Route 1 corridor. In this regard, they seem to be ahead of common notions about the inviolability of home rule. But there are important shades of differences between native Mainers and in-migrants.

- ◆ For example, close to half of native Mainers think local towns are well equipped to manage growth and development along Route 1, whereas fewer than one-third of In-migrants think so.

- ◆ Native Mainers are also more likely to think that both the towns they live in and neighboring towns are doing an excellent job of managing growth and development along Route 1. In-migrants are ambivalent about whether towns in the corridor are managing growth and development well.

Property rights and regulation of land use:

An important measure of core values is the matter of property rights. The natural tension is between the basic idea that property owners have the right to use their land as they see fit, versus the equally basic idea that government has a duty to regulate the use of land to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

- Let me say at the outset that, overall, the survey found that most citizens occupy a large center on this question, and appear to be searching for the right balance between the rights of property and the duty to regulate. About a fifth of the total sample are strongly in the property rights camp and nearly a fifth are strongly in the need-to-regulate camp. But a majority swirl around in the center, looking for the right combination of freedom to use property unimpeded and of regulation in the public interest. Likely this is because in a world that is less rural than it used to be and more urban and especially more suburban, individuals rely on regulation to protect their own interests and are willing to give up some freedom of property in the knowledge that they will gain protections in return. Regulation is not a blank check, in this view, but a useful tool to be applied judiciously.

But, again, there are differences between native Mainers as a whole and in-migrants as a whole.

- ◆ Nearly two-thirds of those born in Maine strongly believe that property owners have a basic right to use their land as they see fit. In contrast, only about 40% of in-migrants strongly hold this belief.
- ◆ It is important to know that this is not a black-and-white question for most. Thus, even though there is a difference in their intensity of belief about the rights of property, many who hold strongly to property rights also recognize the government's duty to regulate, and vice versa. Thus, the sense that many are searching for the right balance, and this may be decided only on a case-by-case basis – ordinance by ordinance, rule by rule.
- ◆ It is notable, for example, that both native Mainers and in-migrants agree that, to save open spaces, development should be allowed in certain agreed upon places along Route 1 and prohibited elsewhere. This a basic tenet of Maine's Growth Management Act – the designation of areas for growth and of other areas for rural purposes. And in theory there is strong support for this idea at least in the Rt. 1 corridor.
- ◆ But ideas and beliefs are only meaningful if they can stand up to trade-offs, such as some reduced freedom to use property unimpeded in order to achieve some larger purpose. Here, reflecting the complexity of these values and the ambiguous way they get translated into public policy, close to half of those born in Maine think that

businesses themselves, not government regulations, should make the final decision about the best locations for development along Route 1. Only a quarter of in-migrants think so. This represents sufficient disagreement that you can understand why there are inconsistent results, for example, on the questions of where and how to locate big box stores.

5. DO THEY THINK MORE LIKE NATIVE MAINERS OVER TIME?

An interesting question is whether time affects the values of in-migrants. Do they think more like native Mainers as their time in Maine lengthens? There is evidence in the survey that attitudes do shift some over time. Those who have lived in Maine for more than 20 years on several attitude scales fall between those who were born in Maine and those who have been in Maine a shorter time. Overall, however, where there are differences, attitudes of in-migrants who have been here a long time are closer to the overall in-migrant profile than to the native Mainer profile.

6. WHAT IT MEANS FOR HARMONY IN PUBLIC POLICY

Re-emphasize something I said at the beginning – where there are differences, they frequently are a matter of degree than a matter of opposition. For example, one group may hold a certain attitude by a large majority, while the other by a small majority – both are majorities, but there is a difference in degree.

Also caution that you can't lump either all in-migrants or all native Mainers together demographically or attitudinally – there is plenty of variation in each group. Any given native Mainer and any given in-migrant might trade places in the attitude scales I've described.

Still, it would be foolish not to acknowledge the differences and to acknowledge that the differences can cause tension in public policy as regards transportation, land use, and environment.

In thinking about the differences and why they exist, I seem to come back to two of the demographic differences we've mentioned this evening.

One is the stark contrast in formal level of education. I think this on its own has little to do with the differences in values and attitudes of native Mainers vs. in-migrants. In the end, the knowledge and insights that any of us holds comes from life experiences, and the differences between those who are street wise and those who are worldly wise probably diminishes over time.

But what formal level of educational attainment does often dictate is earning power and degree of economic opportunity, and ultimately income. And I think this is one of the drivers behind the differences in outlook we find in the mid-coast and elsewhere in Maine. Those with earning power and income and financial security simply have more discretion than those who do not have the same earning power and income and financial

security. This, in turn, affects ideas about financial security, about debt and health care, about the future – and ultimately about land use policy that can open and close doors to economic opportunity, both in terms of employment and in terms of consumer choice. Those with less choice naturally would like to expand economic opportunities unless there is a very good, immediate, and tangible reason not to.

While I haven't done the analysis, my reading of our survey results leads me to think that the division of values and attitudes is not so much Maine v non-Maine as it is low vs high level of formal educational attainment, and the implications for lifelong earning power and job choice.

The other important variable is place of birth itself, and whether one has migrated to the mid-coast or was born here. The implications for land use policy, when you think about it, are important. Those born here, for example, have a higher likelihood of being part of long-time property ownership, whether of farmland, a woodlot, a vacant field, a downtown business, or a Route 1 tract or enterprise. That property undoubtedly means many things to the owner, including the idea of property as an asset to be converted to cash if and when the time is right and conditions dictate. If that property is in a place that the community, for a host of reasons in the public interest, believes should be limited in terms of development, you can understand why there can be conflict. The one wants to keep all options open and the other wants to close down some of them.

In-migrants, on the other hand, particularly if they have arrived at middle-age or older, may have a different outlook. This has nothing really to do with their politics – whether they are conservative or liberal in terms of property rights and such matters. Rather, part of the decision to move to the mid-coast for at least some of the in-migrants has to do with the spectacular character of this place. Their interests will naturally include protecting the reasons they came here, and that may include protecting from development the very lands or areas that long-time landowners hope one day will be able to be developed. Most in-migrants are property owners, too, but their financial interests may be in keeping things the same – because it is character of place that counts rather than the development of open lands.

We see this tension playing out in different parts of the mid-coast along Route 1. It is not, per se, native Mainers vs. in-migrants, but rather people trying to protect the long-term financial potential of land vs people trying to protect the long-time character of place. It is just that the former are more likely to be native Mainers and the latter are more likely to be in-migrants.

These are just two ways to try to understand the seeds of differences between two large groups of people. Perhaps they are too grounded in economics. There probably are important explanations grounded in social networks, in traditional systems of local government, and other things, too. I'll look forward to your ideas on this.

Let me conclude with a final point.

I did not see in the survey results any predictor of “smart growth.” On certain smart growth issues, like more choice in transportation, both native Mainers and in-migrants want it. On other smart growth issues, like residential density, both native Mainers and in-migrants on the whole are wary; both groups need to hear more about this before accepting it.

In sum, the differences between those who say they are native Mainers and those who say they moved to the mid-coast from away are often a matter of degree rather than a matter of opposing views. But the differences do matter, and we need to understand them. There is much accumulated wisdom in both groups, and much to learn from the experiences and outlooks of the other. In any case, those who need to think about public policy in transportation, land use, economic development, and environment have no choice but to build on the common values of each group, because today each comprises about 50% of the population.