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Representative Lawrence Bliss (D-South Portland)

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Representative Bliss Asks for Bridge Scheduling Bill

South Portland, January 16, 2007

Representative Lawrence Bliss (D-South Portland) has submitted a bill to the State Legislature asking the Department of Transportation to create a schedule for opening of the Portland-South Portland bridge. The bill, which does not yet have a "Legislative Document Number," will be sent to the Legislature's Committee on Transportation for debate and deliberation.

"When I'm sitting on the bridge at 7:45 in the morning, knowing I'll be late for work as I wait for a tanker to crawl across the water, I get multiple telephone calls on my cell phone from constituents who are, like me, sitting in their cars," says Bliss. "I understand that the ships need the high tide, and that it costs them money to sit and wait, but I'm sure a reasonable schedule can be created."

Bliss, who moved to Maine 20 years ago from San Francisco, is no stranger to driving across bridges. "When I worked in San Francisco, I lived in Berkeley for a few years," Bliss recalls. "I lived 24 miles from my office, and drove across the Oakland Bay Bridge every day. On a good day, I could make that twenty-four mile trip in 90 minutes. But that was time spent in gridlock traffic, not waiting for a tanker to take priority."

The bill offers no specific solution. Rather, it asks the Department of Transportation to find a solution that would set aside specific morning and evening rush-hour periods on weekdays when the bridge would not be opened, except for emergency situations.

"I love living in South Portland and being able to come into Portland to work," Bliss states. "But with so many commuters from South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, and Scarborough relying on the bridge every work day, I think a bill like this just makes sense."

"Remember," adds Bliss, "this new bridge was constructed higher than the old bridge, specifically so that traffic delay would be minimized. Lets see if we can actually make that happen."

