

Maine transportation officials deal with aging infrastructure crisis

By [Alyssa Thurlow](#) | Posted: Wed 5:18 PM, Jun 05, 2019 | Updated: Wed 9:21 PM, Jun 05, 2019

OLD TOWN, Maine (WABI) - Maine's infrastructure is in crisis. According to a recent report published by the Federal Highway Administration, Maine ranks number six in percentage of poor bridges.



Alyssa Thurlow sat down with the Chief Engineer for the Maine Department of Transportation to see what's being done to fix our aging infrastructure.

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"We are watching them. We know about them. We are planning for what we have to do in the future," explained Joyce Taylor, Chief Engineer of the Maine Department of Transportation.

Officials with the Maine Department of Transportation are dealing with an infrastructure crisis, especially when it comes to bridges.

Maine is one of many states across the country dealing with similar issues.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, there are 325 bridges here in Maine that are in poor condition. Many of them like this one in Old Town are deteriorating simply due to old age.

"There's generally a time frame that we are looking at where our bridge maintenance people are saying, hey, I think I can only keep this open 10 more years," said Taylor. "You guys need to start thinking about how to pay for a new bridge and planning how we are going to build it."

Bridge repair is also on the minds of lawmakers.

Senator Angus King has cosponsored a bill called the SAFE Bridges Act that would authorize an additional 2 point 75 billion dollars annual through fiscal year 2025 to enable states to make repairs and replace bridges in poor condition.

"We wanted to focus these funds specifically on bridges because if you lose a bridge on a major artery, it could be a real problem," explained King. "Which is why I wanted to jump on it as soon as I saw what the issue was."

Joyce Taylor, Chief Engineer for the Maine Department of Transportation, says their goal is to target bridges for more preservation.

"We've been doing a lot of fixing the joints between the bridge and the road where salt can get in. So, we're doing a lot of that kind of work," said Taylor. "That's what I would call meat and potatoes work versus necessarily replacing bridges and trying to get more life out of them."

Overall, Taylor says while there is work that needs to be done, they're doing their best to ensure everyone's safety.

"I really do believe that we have a robust bridge inspection program and that we have people here that are some of the best in the country, and so, I think people should feel safe crossing the bridges in the state," explained Taylor.

To learn more about bridge inspection here in Maine visit:

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/bridges/inspection/>

- At the same time: "Officials with the Maine Department of Transportation are dealing with an infrastructure crisis, especially when it comes to bridges." the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 Connector (2B-2) project lurks in the background. At least some \$25 million (originally \$39.625 million) of Maine's transportation funds are locked up in the INFRA grant process funds commitment against the \$25 million received from the federal government. There is money; there just isn't the resolve to spend it where it needs to be spent, on the unmet transportation needs of the state of Maine.