



Welcome to the 2nd quarter of 2019 in the 19th year of the I-395/Rte. 9 study—how the DOT plans to build a new road from a twice removed alternative that the MaineDOT acknowledged as potentially hazardous in 2003 that met only 20% of the study's five purpose and needs in 2009 that had decade-long long-term needs deferred for 20 years from commissioning in 2010 for the new low price of only \$79,250,000.00!



Work Plan

Calendar Years 2019-2020-2021

February 2019

The [MaineDOT 2019-2020-2021 Work Plan](#) states: “we are losing ground to the capital goals established in 23 MRSA §73(7). In the near term, the needs of the transportation system in Maine, as in all other states, continue to outpace available federal and state resources...in any event, there is clearly a substantial unmet need. Depending upon policy goals to be established, it is anticipated that the amount of this need is in excess of \$125 million per year. Maine is currently in the fourth year of a 10-year bonding plan...this Work Plan also assumes...approval for \$100 million in G.O. bonding in CY 2020 and \$100 million again in CY 2021.”

KEY FACTS ABOUT MAINE'S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND FEDERAL FUNDING | March 2019 | TRIP

Current Road and Bridge Conditions, Travel Trends and Traffic Congestion:

- Fifty-four percent of Maine's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition.
- Driving on roads in need of repair costs Maine motorists \$541 million a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs – \$529 per motorist [per year].
- Thirteen percent of Maine's bridges are structurally deficient, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge.

These are the latest facts—yet the MaineDOT plans to squander \$79.25 million of limited state and federal funds on one single project!!

Portland Press Herald

Proposal to increase Maine gas tax in summer going nowhere fast

By Peter McGuire Staff Writer | April 2, 2019

[Click here to view on-line.](#)

[Highlighted to reveal hypocrisy; where was this gentleman's concern, as the co-chair of the JSC on Transportation, when LD783 was unanimously rejected last month?]

A proposal to increase the state gas tax during the summer met broad opposition in the State House on Tuesday.

But even though a seasonal gas tax differential is unpopular, speakers signaled a willingness to address **Maine's chronically underfinanced transportation system** during public testimony on a handful of funding bills.

"We don't drive on Democratic or Republican roads, we drive on Maine roads," said Rep. Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, sponsor of the seasonal gas tax bill. "Solving the problem is too important for partisanship and narrow interests to get in the way."

The state's highway maintenance budget has a \$108 million shortfall annually, roughly one-quarter of the need for paving, bridges, road repair and construction, and mobility improvements, the Maine Department of Transportation said.

That shortfall persists even though the state borrows \$100 million a year to cover spending gaps – a strategy McLean considers unsustainable.

"In the short term, we know that we simply need to spend more on maintaining and upgrading the system," McLean said. "Simply put, the policy answer is more money."

Two bills McLean proposed this session address that issue. The first would increase the gas tax to 37 cents a gallon between June 1 and Oct. 31, but reduce the tax to 27 cents a gallon – 3 cents less than the present tax – during the rest of the year. That bill would help "export" the cost of taking care of Maine's highways to out-of-state visitors, he said.

That plan was criticized by the tourism industry, wary of the public relations impact of a fee that targets its customers. The Maine Potato Board and the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine also opposed the proposal.

"Seasonal assessments just seem like we are sticking it to the tourists," said Greg Dugal, director of government affairs for Hospitality Maine, a trade group representing hotels and restaurants. A tax during the busy summer travel season would affect Maine residents, too, he said.

“Why would you create this tax seasonally when it should be on all gas taxes year round?” Dugal said. “It has been too long since we raised the gas tax.”

Dana Doran, executive director of the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine, concurred.

“I oppose the bill because I do not think it goes far enough,” Doran said. “We feel like the fuel tax has to be socialized across the spectrum of users.”

Even though more cars are on the road in the summer, Maine doesn’t make much more money from the gas tax in the summer than it does in the rest of the year, Department of Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said, noting that boosting the seasonal tax might not raise more money and could scare off tourists and cause fiscal woes.

“It appears the benefits of seasonal variation are outweighed by those other concerns,” he said.

Maine’s primary highway revenue, a 30-cent per gallon gasoline tax, has not changed since 2011. The 18-cent per gallon federal gas tax hasn’t increased in 26 years. Higher fuel efficiency and hybrid-electric and all-electric vehicles cut further into fuel tax revenues.

Twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have implemented gas tax increases to address budget shortfalls since 2013, according to the National Conference of State Legislators.

Maine can afford to improve and rebuild only about 650 miles of state roads in the next three years, 7 percent of the state’s highway inventory, according to the transportation department. Almost half of state roads are scheduled only for a light repaving every seven years.

Another bill McLean is proposing, L.D. 1034, would broaden transportation funding by increasing Maine’s gasoline tax to 36.5 cents a gallon, hike fees on at least 20 different licenses, tests, documents and applications, allocate 5 percent of state sales tax on transportation-related purchases to the state highway fund and bump the tax on rental cars from 10 percent to 12 percent.

That bill is among a handful trying to move Maine toward a solution to its longstanding highway funding problem. Others proposals include a blue ribbon commission, a consensus funding plan from the transportation committee and fees on plug-in electric vehicles.

How can the same people continue to claim that the sky is falling when they see no problem in spending \$79.25 million of our limited state and federal transportation dollars on a controversial project that many of us oppose? Shame on these people...

Wednesday, April 10, 2019: [Crumbling infrastructure](#)

More than half of Maine's roads are "in poor or mediocre condition" according to CNBC's 2018 look at "[The 10 states with the worst infrastructure](#)."

Maine ranked sixth in the percentage of structurally deficient bridges (followed by Louisiana and Puerto Rico) in an [April 1 report](#) by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

It doesn't stop there.

Our infrastructure "[Report Card](#)" grade is C-, according to an American Society of Civil Engineers analysis in 2016, its latest report. The worse grade? "D" for roads. Dams, waste water and transportation all received a "D+." The highest grades? Ports, with a "B-."

Our roads never fare well after a harsh winter, but they've been neglected for so long by budget shortfalls that we are jolted and jarred as we maneuver our vehicles [around cavernous potholes and ragged patches-on-top-of-patches](#).

Gov. Janet Mills and the Legislature are working to bring the state out of the previous administration's eight-year slide. Even though nearly [\\$200 million in general obligation bonds](#) and federal funds were approved at the end of 2018, it will take years to catch up.

It's unconscionable to borrow annually to pay for regular maintenance. The highway account is mostly funded through the state's tax on gasoline, which hasn't been raised in nearly a decade. That means raising taxes at the pumps, but borrowing adds interest — so we would pay even more.

Improving our crumbling roads and bridges (as well as providing broadband to rural areas) needs to be a priority. Otherwise, be prepared for years of teeth-rattling driving on Maine's roads.

Connie Sage Conner

Harpswell

New Bridge Data Supports [C+ Report Card Grade](#)

April 03, 2019 By: [Joe Brady](#)

The American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) released its Bridge Report based on the data in the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) 2018 National Bridge Inventory database. ARTBA's Bridge Report confirms the "[C+](#)" grade given in ASCE's [2017 Infrastructure Report Card](#). Both reports illustrate that while the overall number of bridges deemed structurally deficient is decreasing, a significant amount of work remains as many of the nation's bridges are approaching the end of their design life.

Key ARTBA Bridge Report highlights include:

- 47,052 out of the nation's 616,087, or 7.6%, bridges are rated "structurally deficient" and need urgent repairs. In 2016, 56,007 out of the nation's 614,387, or 9.1%, of our bridges were rated structurally deficient. The Infrastructure Report Card noted the trend that the number of structurally deficient bridges was decreasing steadily.
- The nation's 47,052 structurally deficient bridges are crossed 178 million times a day.
- The average age of a structurally deficient bridge is 62 years and for a non-deficient bridge, the average age is 40 years, illuminating the point that many bridges are beyond their useful life.
- 235,020, or 38%, of our nation's bridges have identified repair needs.
- 18,842, or one in three, interstate highway bridges have identified repair needs.

The states with the most structurally deficient bridges, as a percent of their total bridge inventory, are Rhode Island (23%); West Virginia (19.8%); Iowa (19.3%); South Dakota (16.7%); Pennsylvania (16.5%); **Maine (13.1%)**; Louisiana (13%); Puerto Rico (11.7%); Oklahoma (10.9%); and North Dakota (10.7%).

States with the largest number of structurally deficient bridges are Iowa (4,675 bridges); Pennsylvania (3,770); Oklahoma (2,540); Illinois (2,273); Missouri (2,116); North Carolina (1,871); California (1,812); New York (1,757); Louisiana (1,678); and Mississippi (1,603).

The subpar condition of our bridges is a result of an inability to properly fund our current bridge needs, with the most recent estimate putting our nation's backlog of bridge rehabilitation needs at \$123 billion. ASCE recommends that if we want to raise our bridge grade from a "C+", we must:

- Fix the federal Highway Trust Fund by raising the federal motor fuels tax by 25 cents. States must ensure their funding mechanisms (motor fuels taxes or other) are sufficient to fund needed investment in bridges.
- Increase funding from all levels of government to continue reducing the number of structurally deficient bridges, decrease the maintenance backlog, and address the large number of bridges that have passed or are approaching the end of their design life.
- Have bridge owners consider the costs across a bridge's entire lifecycle to make smart design decisions and prioritize maintenance and rehabilitation
- States should ensure their funding mechanisms (motor fuels taxes or other) are sufficient to fund needed investment in bridges.
- States and the federal government should consider long-term funding solutions for transportation infrastructure and potential alternatives to the motor fuel taxes, including further study and piloting of mileage-based user fees.

As the legislative push continues on Capitol Hill, ASCE's government relations team remains actively engaged. [We urge you reach out to your Members of Congress and tell them to put forward a long-term plan to improve our infrastructure systems.](#)

—end of article—

- There are 203 bridges scheduled for repair/rehab for \$427 million per the [2019/2020/2012 MaineDOT Work Plan](#). At an average \$2.1 million per bridge project, 2B-2's total construction cost of \$79.25 million could finance the repair of 38 bridges.

Portland Press Herald

Construction prices that have ‘blown past estimates’ force state to ditch road projects

With bids coming in much higher than anticipated, the [Department of Transportation will cut tens of millions of dollars in planned improvements.](#)



BY [PETER MCGUIRE](#) STAFF WRITER | APRIL 30, 2019

Critical highway work will be canceled this year as Maine’s transportation agency is priced out of a superheated construction market.

The Department of Transportation will cut tens of millions of dollars in projects from its 2019 plan for roadway and bridge work as it struggles with bids from private contractors that are coming in far higher than expected. This week the agency rejected three bids it cannot afford.

One of the rejected bids, \$1.1 million for new signals and sidewalks at five Congress Street intersections in Portland, was double the state estimate.

Nationwide, construction costs have reached a 10-year high, driven up by expensive materials and a shortage of skilled labor.

To compensate for what it expected to be a pricey year, Maine added 10 percent to its construction estimates before advertising 2019 projects.

It turns out that wasn’t enough.

“The prices we have received to date this year and especially this last month have just blown past those estimates,” Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said in an interview Tuesday. Overall, bids for construction have come in 30 percent higher than last year and in some cases 60 percent higher or more.

“We need to make a midcourse correction,” Van Note said.

To start with, the state is rejecting bids for three projects, an extraordinary step for an agency that prides itself on consistency and clear communication with its vendors.

“When we reject a bid, it is a big deal for us,” Van Note said.

Canceled bids are a \$2.1 million paving project in Brewer, Old Town and Orrington that came in 60 percent over estimates; a \$4 million paving and culvert project on Route 1 in Rockland that came in 90 percent over estimates; and the Congress Street project.

The department was set to advertise 120 more bids this year, about half the total projects included in the \$393 million 2019 work plan. It will keep opening bids as scheduled through May 8 and evaluate awards on a case-by-case basis.

The department intends to meet with members of the construction industry Friday. By next week, it hopes to have a list of specific projects that are going to be eliminated. High-ticket items like new roads and bridges will be likely targets. Van Note estimates that 40 percent of the road construction work and 20 percent of the bridge work could be cut.

“We may only be deferring only 10 (projects), but they will be big ones worth millions of dollars,” Van Note said.

It is also likely that cheaper work such as light paving will substitute for expensive jobs like full-on road reconstruction as the department reviews projects.

Decisions on which projects will be cut will be based on safety, highway priorities, the condition of the road or bridge under review, how much the bids came in over estimates and other considerations.

“We hate it, by the way,” Van Note said. “This is not who we are and what we do. We like to put out plans and do them and prove we did them.”

Other state and transportation agencies are beginning to feel the pinch of high-priced construction, partially the result of Trump administration tariffs on steel and aluminum, and a skilled worker shortage that is driving up wages. Two weeks ago, bids to renovate and expand the Lyseth Elementary School in Portland [came in](#) nearly \$3 million over the \$11.7 million estimates.

“Unfortunately, this is something we’ve been warning about,” said Ken Simonson, chief economist for the Associated General Contractors of America, a national trade group representing the construction industry.

“It is really coming home to roost in terms of both labor and materials costs that the construction firms feel they have no choice but to pass on,” he added. “Public agencies generally have budgets set well in advance of when they go out to bid. If the budgets don’t reflect current conditions, they are going to get squeezed.”

According to the Federal Highway Administration, prices for American road work rose almost 13 percent in 2018, the biggest annual increase since 2008. Prices are expected to

go up again this year, at least 4 percent for materials and 3 percent for labor, Simonson said.

Proposal to increase Maine gas tax in summer going nowhere fast

According to the Maine Department of Labor, the median wage for a construction occupations in Maine last year was \$19.81 an hour.

In Maine, high prices are tied directly to labor scarcity, said Tom Sturgeon, president and CEO of Crooker Construction in Topsham. His company performs heavy construction work like moving earth, installing underground utilities and paving roadways. Sturgeon said Crooker has increased wages by at least 30 percent in the last few years, to find and keep employees and still doesn't have the workforce it needs.

"These last couple years are the worst I've seen it without question," he said. "It's extreme for Maine DOT to do something like this, but I can't blame them."

Crooker bid on four state projects so far this year. Sturgeon might have bid on more, but without enough workers, the company can't be positive it will meet deadlines.

Plus, state contracts require companies to work at night or take other measures so the public is not inconvenienced. That's good for traffic management, but makes everything more expensive, Sturgeon said.

"You have to relax some of these schedules," he said. "The only way you can do this is if you don't restrict our work hours."

It is unclear how Maine will budget road and bridge work if construction prices stay as high as they are. The state already [underfunds highway maintenance](#) by at least \$108 million a year. Now, the market is forcing the state to do even less with what it has, said Rep. Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, the House chairman of the Legislature's Transportation Committee.

"This is not about government doing things inefficiently, these are companies that are submitting competitive bids and they are still driving up the cost," he said.

"We need more money to fix our roads and bridges, that is the answer to this problem," he added. "I hope the commissioner doesn't have to make more cuts and reject more bids, but if he does, it is going to get very real, very quickly."

Maine DOT calls off \$45M in roadwork as costs surge



Gabor Degre | BDN

State transportation officials planned to put the replacement the Ohio Street bridge over I-95 in Bangor out to bid this year. It's one of **11** projects the state has pulled from consideration this year amid surging road construction costs.

By [Eesha Pendharkar](#), BDN Staff • May 9, 2019 4:35 pm

The Maine Department of Transportation has called off more than \$45 million in roadwork that it planned to advertise to construction firms this year.

Among the projects the department is putting off are the replacement of interstate highway overpasses in Bangor and Brewer, road resurfacing in Portland and the reconstruction of about 3 miles each of major state roads in Abbot and Van Buren.

The department said Thursday that most of the **11** projects on the list will be completed in future years, but that there's no guarantee the work will happen.

"Prudent fiscal management requires us to make this revision," the department said in a statement released Thursday. "We cannot pay the prices we have been seeing."

The cancellations come as the state is receiving unexpectedly high cost estimates from construction firms bidding for state roadwork. Already this year, the department [has](#)

rejected four bids for separate projects — in the Bangor and Portland areas and Rockland — after quotes from interested construction firms exceeded the Department of Transportation’s project cost estimates by at least 60 percent.

“Every project in Maine DOT’s plan represents needed work; there are no easy choices,” the department said in its statement.

Bridge replacements in Bangor and Brewer are two of the 11 infrastructure projects the Maine Department of Transportation is calling off this year.

The department expected to advertise the work of replacing the Ohio Street bridge over I-95 in Bangor, a project the state estimated would cost \$6.2 million. It also expected to advertise the replacement of the Wilson Street bridge over the end of I-395 in Brewer, which was expected to cost \$11.9 million.

Even though the department hadn’t yet advertised that work to construction firms, transportation officials said they removed projects similar to ones for which they had received unexpectedly high bids. They also considered the priority of the work, impact on safety and drivers and the condition of the existing infrastructure.

A shortage of available workers is a primary cause of the surging construction prices, the department said based on conversations with construction firms.

Aside from the Bangor and Brewer overpasses, the called-off road projects off are:

- Portland: India Street resurfacing, estimated at \$400,000
- Abbot: 3 miles of Route 6 reconstruction on Route 6, \$7.1 million
- Waterville: 1.3 miles of Trafton Road rehabilitation, \$3.7 million
- Van Buren: 2.7 miles of Route 1 reconstruction, \$7.9 million
- Hampden: replacement of Twin Bridge over Souadabscook Stream, \$1.3 million
- Auburn: replacement of Taylor Brook Bridge, \$1.7 million
- Belfast: replacement of Sheldon Bridge, \$700,000
- Belfast: replacement of Goose River Bridge, \$2.4 million
- Fort Kent: replacement of Perley Brook Bridge, \$2.2 million

Portland Press Herald

LOCAL & STATE

Climbing costs drive state to pass up 12 more road and bridge projects

[The Maine Department of Transportation has now canceled more than \\$59 million worth of work](#) for this year because it cannot afford the construction prices.

BY PETER MCGUIRE | STAFF WRITER | MAY 9, 2019

The Maine Department of Transportation has slashed more than \$59 million in road and bridge projects from its annual work plan in an effort to stay within budget amid sharply rising construction costs.

The department Thursday said it rejected a bid for paving and safety improvements on Interstate 295 through Portland and canceled 11 other planned construction projects. Last week, it rejected bids for three plans after receiving bids from contractors that were [at least 40 percent](#) more than what the agency had estimated the projects would cost.

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- [Construction prices that have 'blown past estimates' force state to ditch road projects](#)
- [Portland scales back infrastructure upgrades because of soaring construction costs](#)

Overall, the cuts represent 15 percent of the department's \$393 million annual highway maintenance budget.

Canceled projects were selected based on safety and user impacts, highway priority, physical condition, extent of bid overages and lack of bidding competition. Since the department began advertising projects for the year, bids for state highway work have come in 30 percent higher on average than budgeted.

"If you asked me back in January if I would have been talking about canceling a lot of work, I would have said no," Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said. The state built a 10 percent cushion on its estimates this year to cover expected increases.

“We hate doing this, but there is simply no choice,” Van Note said of the cuts. “We want to be very reliable and part of that is when something is not adding up and not working, you make a correction.”

Nationwide, construction costs hit a [10-year high](#) last year, driven up by a shortage of skilled labor and high materials costs. Highway construction costs rose almost 13 percent in 2018, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

In southern Maine, the problem is exacerbated by an acute labor scarcity and a surplus of work, including private construction and major highway projects from the [Maine Turnpike Authority](#).

In effect, the Maine DOT has been priced out of the local construction market.

PRESERVING PUBLIC SAFETY

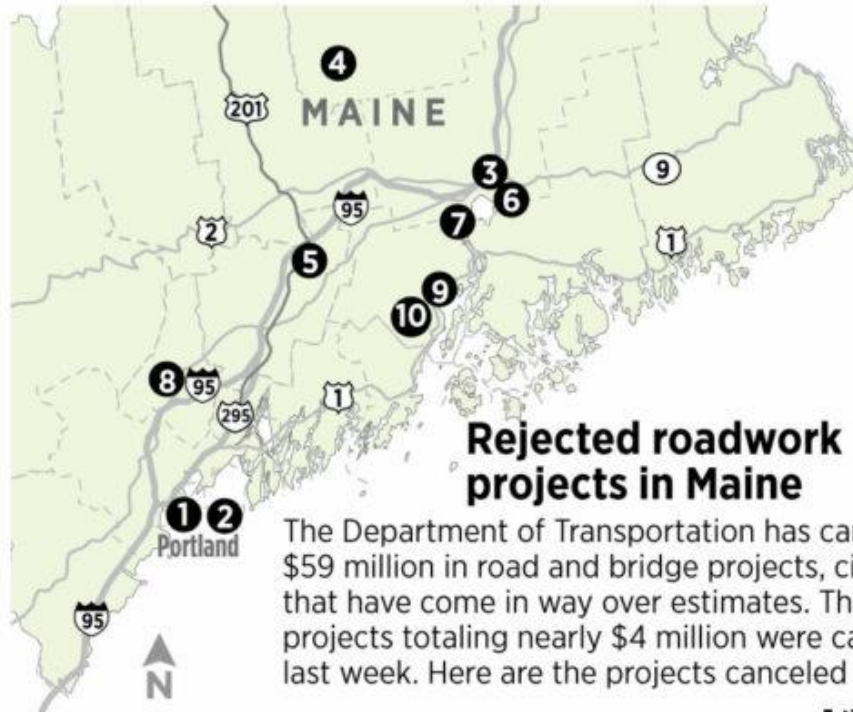
The state budgeted \$9.8 million for work on a heavily traveled stretch of I-295 between South Portland and Falmouth. Pike Industries was the only company that bid on the contract, for \$19.4 million – almost double what the state estimated it would cost.

In total, the state plans to cancel \$59.2 million worth of work. Most of the work will be moved into the next year’s work plan, but nothing is guaranteed, Van Note said. If the department keeps seeing spiking costs, it may have to reject more bids or cancel other work, he said.

Half the canceled projects are bridge replacements. The Department of Transportation prioritized bridge [replacement and maintenance](#) in the past 10 years to address the state’s aging and deteriorating inventory of more than 2,700 bridges statewide. Much of the remaining expensive work the department had to advertise this year was for bridges, Van Note said.

Canceled bridge replacements include a \$6.2 million plan for an Interstate 95 bridge on Ohio Street in Bangor; a \$11.9 million project on Interstate 395 in Brewer; and a \$1.7 million bridge over Taylor Brook in Auburn. None of those bridges has immediate safety issues, according to a review of 2018 state bridge reports.

“We wouldn’t cancel anything that is required to preserve public safety,” Van Note said.



Town and project		Estimated cost (in millions)
1	Portland, South Portland and Falmouth – I-295 and portions of the Falmouth Spur and ramps Scope of work: Road resurfacing and bridge joint replacement	\$9.8
2	Portland Scope of work: India Street Road resurfacing	\$0.4
3	Bangor Scope of work: Ohio Street, I-95 Bridge Bridge replacement	\$6.2
4	Abbot Scope of work: Route 6 Nearly 3 miles of road reconstruction	\$7.1
5	Waterville Scope of work: Trafton Road About 1.3 miles of road rehabilitation	\$3.7
6	Brewer Scope of work: Wilson Street, I-395 Bridge Bridge replacement	\$11.9
7	Hampden Scope of work: Twin Bridge over Soundabscook Stream Bridge replacement	\$1.3
8	Auburn Scope of work: Taylor Brook Bridge Bridge replacement	\$1.7
9	Belfast Scope of work: Sheldon Bridge Bridge replacement	\$0.7
10	Belfast Scope of work: Goose River Bridge Bridge replacement	\$2.4
	Van Buren Scope of work: Route 1 2.74 miles of road reconstruction	\$7.9
	Fort Kent Scope of work: Perley Brook Bridge Bridge replacement	\$2.2

SOURCE: Maine Department of Transportation

STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

Planned road reconstruction on Trafton Road in Waterville, Route 1 in Van Buren and Route 6 in Abbot also is off the table and so is a \$400,000 repaving plan on India Street in Portland.

Waterville City Manager Michael Roy said he was notified Thursday about the Trafton Road project, which would include widening and leveling the road, and improving drainage.

“It, of course, is very disappointing, but we have every reason to believe DOT is going to keep this project higher on their list,” he said, “and we certainly understand what prices have done to them because we’re starting to see some of those concerns about pricing locally.”

Roy said the city’s share of the approximate \$2 million project is \$500,000.

In a meeting with Maine transportation officials last week, more than two dozen executives from the state’s largest construction companies said that labor costs were the primary reason for soaring construction prices.

But scheduling conflicts, inflexible construction deadlines and work hour restrictions, and a highway funding deficit are making the labor shortage even harder to deal with, companies said.

Since most roadwork is done in the summer, peak travel time on Maine roads, state contracts sometimes require night work or other measures to keep traffic flowing. But finding enough people willing work at night is difficult and expensive, said Matt Marks, president and CEO of Associated General Contractors of Maine.

“Maine has been very fortunate in that traveling in the last few years you don’t get a lot of delays even in construction,” Marks said. “We go out of our way to make sure it does not impact traffic flows – that is a cost.”

MANY CONCURRENT PROJECTS

Van Note doubts work restrictions are the primary cost driver, but said the department may have to revisit some of its rules if it tips the balance back to low prices.

Another contributing factor is an abundance of other infrastructure projects. In addition to booming private development in the Portland area, the Maine Turnpike Authority has an

unusual amount of construction work this year. That work includes a \$39.5 million toll booth replacement in [York](#) and two highway bridge replacements to make room for a multiyear turnpike [widening](#) through Portland. Those jobs sucked a lot of workers away from highway work in southern Maine, Peter Mills, the turnpike authority's executive director, said in an interview last week.

"We're part of the problem," Mills said. "We have a lot of work out there, there is only so much oxygen in the industry."

Some regard canceled road projects as a disappointing but unsurprising consequence of [persistent budget shortfalls](#) that have lasted decades.

"Anyone who follows funding at Maine DOT, no one should be shocked at this," said Maria Fuentes, executive director of the Maine Better Transportation Association. "There have been so many indications over several years that the department is in severe financial constraints."

State officials acknowledge Maine spends \$108 million less a year than it should to meet the needs of its aging transportation infrastructure. The state covers some of the transportation funding gap by borrowing \$100 million a year, a practice some lawmakers call [unsustainable](#).

"We can blame it on the worker shortage and that is part of it now," Fuentes said. "But it is much more systemic, it has been coming for a long time."

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MaineDOT cutting planned projects



By News Desk | Posted: Thu 8:53 PM, May 09, 2019 | Updated: Fri 12:19 AM, May 10, 2019



AUGUSTA, Maine (WABI) - Rising costs have forced the Maine Department of Transportation to cancel more construction projects.

Last week, the department said it had rejected three bids on projects because they exceeded anticipated costs. Maine DOT officials said Thursday that another 12 projects for this year have been canceled.

Among them, replacing the Wilson Street - 395 Bridge in Brewer with a planned price tag of nearly 12 million dollars.

The more than 6 million dollar Ohio Street Bridge project in Bangor and work on Route 7 in Abbot which would have cost 7 million.

In all, nearly 60 million dollars in projects have been cut from the Maine DOT's construction schedule.

According to the DOT the projects being cut could be performed in future years, but it is not guaranteed.

Officials said after talking with contractors, the shortage of workers is a primary cause of the increase in construction costs.



MGN Image

[Click here to view video clip online.](#)

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/advertise/plan/>

Revisions to Construction Advertising Schedule May 9, 2019

As the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) indicated last week, it is revising its Construction Advertising Schedule. This is part of MaineDOT's efforts to reconcile surging construction costs with available funding.

Last week, we announced that we were making a course correction. We rejected bids on three projects because the low bids had greatly exceeded our anticipated costs. Since then, we have seen bids come in significantly higher, on average, about 30 percent higher than last year. Estimates had already been increased by 10 percent in January 2019.

On Friday, we invited our industry partners to join us for a conversation about what has been driving this superheated bidding environment. Our conversation with these contractors was helpful. They confirmed that the shortage of workers is a primary cause. They are our partners in this, and we continue to have an open dialogue with them.

Prudent fiscal management requires us to make this revision. We cannot pay the prices we have been seeing – nor would Maine taxpayers want us to.

As part of this course correction, we have rejected bids already received on the following project because the low bid was more than double our estimate:

- **Portland, South Portland, and Falmouth – I-295 and portions of the Falmouth Spur and ramps – planned \$9.8M (22420.00, 22422.00, and 23615.00)**
Scope of work: Road resurfacing and bridge joint replacement

Additionally, the following eleven projects that were due to go out to bid this year, totaling \$45.5M as estimated in January 2019, have been removed from MaineDOT's Construction Advertising Schedule. This represents 11.6% of the value of projects that were originally planned to go out to bid this year.

- **Portland – India Street – planned \$0.4M (024037.00)**
Scope of work: Road resurfacing
- **Bangor – Ohio Street, I-95 Bridge – planned \$6.2M (018722.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Abbot – Route 6 – planned \$7.1M (022646.00)**
Scope of work: Nearly 3 miles of road reconstruction

- **Waterville – Trafton Road – planned \$3.7M (023246.00)**
Scope of work: About 1.3 miles of road rehabilitation
- **Brewer – Wilson Street, I-395 Bridge – planned \$11.9M (018915.20)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Van Buren – Route 1 – planned \$7.9M (020421.00)**
Scope of work: 2.74 miles of road reconstruction
- **Hampden – Twin Bridge over Soundabscook Stream – planned \$1.3M (018959.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Auburn – Taylor Brook Bridge – planned \$1.7M (022224.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Belfast – Sheldon Bridge – planned \$0.7M (021666.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Belfast – Goose River Bridge – planned \$2.4M (021874.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement
- **Fort Kent – Perley Brook Bridge – planned \$2.2M (021882.00)**
Scope of work: Bridge replacement

Every project in MaineDOT's plans represents needed work; there are no easy choices. Projects removed from the advertisement schedule for this year are being selected based upon several factors including safety and customer impacts, highway priority, asset condition, the extent of the bid overages in projects of that type, and the lack of bidding competition.

Most projects cut from the Construction Advertisement Schedule will be performed in future years, but that is not guaranteed, especially in the case of highway reconstruction and new alignment projects. Further, MaineDOT must reserve the right to reject bids on the projects being advertised if bids come in too high. All projects will be reviewed as we assemble our next three-year Work Plan to be published in early 2020 in the context of available revenue, system needs, and bidding climate.

We pride ourselves on our reliable delivery of work. To be reliable, we need to make sure we live within available funding and ensure that taxpayers are receiving good value for their investment.

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I-395 Protected Wetlands

Below is a screenshot of the [MaineDOT website](#) from 5.14.2019, identifying the \$11.9 million Wilson Street/I-395 bridge project cut from the MaineDOT Construction Advertising Schedule on May 9, 2019. This project is the first phase of the 2B-2 construction.

Note the large green block marked I-395 Protected Wetlands—when we questioned a similar map back in 2012, we were told that they (MaineDOT) were unable to validate that protection, thus decided that protection did not exist and plowed 2B-2 straight thru it.

- Why is this map still being used on an official state of Maine website if it is not valid? If this map is invalid—where was/is the mitigation for the original I-395 project?
- 2B-2 should have never been in contention with the existence of these I-395 Protected Wetlands, let alone become the preferred alternative.
- I believe the map to be valid as it makes logical sense to protect that specific wetland following the original project. Someone thought that protection was valid enough to map it—why was the DOT so eager to ignore it—maybe because it didn't fit their narrative??

The screenshot shows the MaineDOT Construction Advertisement Plan website. The browser address bar indicates the URL is mdotapps.maine.gov/dataviewer/?app=cap. The page title is "MaineDOT Construction Advertisement Plan".

On the left side, there is a search bar with "Find Projects:" and a dropdown menu set to "In a Town". Below it, the "Town:" is set to "Brewer".

Below the search bar, it says "Construction Advertise Plan" and "Found 2 Projects in the Town of Brewer".

The first project listed is:

018915.20	
WIN	018915.20
Project	BREWER, WILSON STREET/I395 BRIDGE #1564
Plan	09/25/2019
Advised Date	
Description	Wilson Street/I395 Bridge (#1564). Located 0.35 of a mile west of Dirigo Drive.
Total Project Estimate	\$11,900,000
Program Manager	Wayne Frankhauser
Phone	624-3490
Work Type	Bridge Construction

The second project listed is:

022410.00	
BREWER, SOUTH MAIN STREET	

The map on the right shows a topographic view of Brewer, Maine. A large green area is labeled "I-395 PROTECTED WETLANDS". The map includes a scale bar (Scale: 1:18055, 0.2mi) and a small inset map of Maine in the bottom right corner.

Funding pothole swallows Maine road construction projects



Seth Perlman | AP

By The Editorial Board. The BDN Opinion Section operates independently and does not set newsroom policies, or contribute to reporting or editing articles elsewhere in the newspaper or on bangordailynews.com. • May 14, 2019 1:31 pm

As Maine drivers can attest, many of the state's roads are in **bad shape**. So, it was distressing to learn that the Maine Department of Transportation is **shelving several construction projects** this year because they would cost much more than anticipated.

A bid for road and bridge resurfacing on Interstate 295 in the Portland area was rejected because it was more than twice the department's estimate. The department put another 11 projects on hold last week.

"Every project in MaineDOT's plan represents needed work; there are no easy choices," the department said in **a statement**.

"Most projects cut from the Construction Advertisement Schedule will be performed in future years, but that is not guaranteed, especially in the case of highway reconstruction and new alignment projects," it added.

This isn't a one-year bump in the road that will be smoothed by changing economic or political conditions. Rather, it is **a stark warning that, given current resources, Maine can't afford to maintain, let alone improve, its roads and bridges.**

There are many reasons for the higher than expected costs. An increasing amount of transportation construction work is done at night because it is less disruptive to the public. Night work is more expensive in part because workers have to be paid more because the overnight shifts are less attractive.

The state has turned to a thinner mix of materials to repave and repair roads to save money. But fixed costs for construction companies, such as their equipment and labor, don't decrease with the type of paving material they are using.

Most significant, contractors report having to pay higher wages because of the difficulty finding qualified workers, which echoes long-time warnings of Maine's workforce challenges. In the construction business, this is compounded by **a shortage of truck drivers.**

This also is a multifaceted problem. Like the rest of Maine's workforce, many construction workers and truck drivers are nearing the end of their careers and they are not being replaced quickly enough by younger workers. The industry has also been hit by Maine's addiction crisis as some companies **can't find workers** who can meet licensing requirements or pass drug tests. In addition, thousands of men are simply **missing from the workforce.** Efforts are underway to recruit more transportation construction workers, but that work must take on a new urgency if Maine is to keep its roads safe.

"Maine has not done enough to attract, recruit, and train skilled workers in industries we rely on every day," Gov. Janet Mills said in a statement to the Bangor Daily News. "The shortage of construction workers, which is already threatening our ability to repair critical infrastructure, is proof that we cannot wait any longer to act."

"We will continue to encourage Maine people to enter the trades, support education that helps them obtain a credential to do so, and in the long-run, I have charged the Department of Economic and Community Development with devising a long-term plan to solve this crisis and spur economic growth," she added.

Beyond building a bigger workforce, it is clear that the state will have to spend more money each year to address its maintenance backlog and to pay for new construction. **More than 19 percent of the state's bridges are functionally obsolete, and 18 percent of state highway miles are rated poor or unacceptable.**

Yet, combined **state and federal funding falls short of meeting transportation goals set in state statute by more than \$100 million per year,** Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note **told lawmakers** earlier this year. **That gap will only grow as projects continue to exceed state cost expectations.**

The Department of Transportation gets the bulk of its funding from three sources: the state highway fund, which is funded largely by state fuel taxes; bonds; and the federal government.

In recent years, state lawmakers and voters have approved **\$100 million bonds annually** for transportation work and the Department of Transportation expects this to continue. This is a critical source of funding, but **borrowed money should not be used for repair projects that may not last as long as the interest payments.**

Some lawmakers, especially Republicans, have suggested devoting more state general fund money to transportation work. This is an important discussion, but consistently devoting more general funds to transportation means less money for other departments or a tax increase to bring in more revenue, both difficult choices.

Although politically unpopular, lawmakers should consider raising the gas tax. The tax, which makes up a substantial portion of the state's highway fund revenue, is now 30 cents per gallon for gasoline and 31 cents per gallon for diesel fuel. This is unchanged since 2011.

These tax rates were adjusted annually for inflation until 2011, when **indexing was repealed**. Now, like federal fuel taxes, the state gas tax is not keeping pace with transportation needs.

Simply put, Maine needs more money to pay for its transportation needs. Lawmakers will have to make difficult — and sometimes unpopular — decisions to cover the rising costs of maintaining and improving the state's infrastructure.

[Click here to view editorial on line.](#)

REPAIR



PRIORITIES

The nation's road conditions have worsened as many states, given wide latitude and flexibility by Congress, prioritized expansion over repair.

[Read the report](#)

Repair Priorities 2019

The nation's roads are deteriorating, contributing to a looming financial problem, yet the condition of the nation's road network is a direct reflection of states deciding to underinvest in repair for decades.

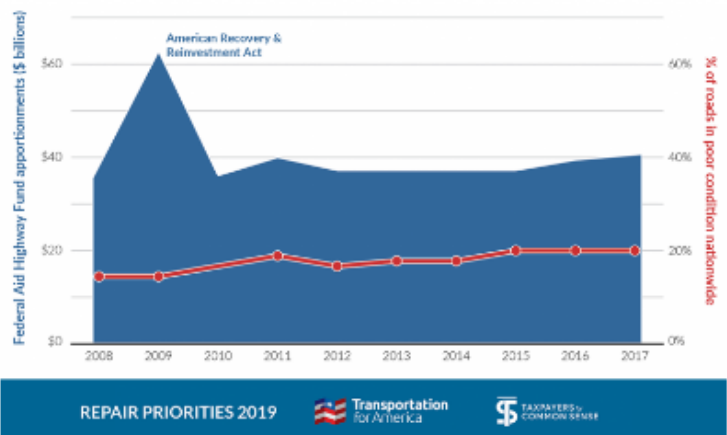
[Register for a webinar on Wednesday May 15 at 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT to learn more >>](#)

Between 2009 and 2017, the percentage of the roads nationwide in poor condition increased from 14 to 20 percent.

Policymakers continue to pay lip service to the notion of prioritizing repair and "fix-it-first," yet we have little to show for all the rhetoric. The latest data in Repair Priorities shows that the conditions of our roadways have not improved, perpetuating a costly backlog of roads in poor condition. Congress provides states with billions in formula funding that they are free to use for maintenance. Yet, despite the backlog, states continue to spend a significant portion of funding to build new roads, creating costly new maintenance liabilities in the form of new roads and lane-miles.

This is especially concerning given that Congress provided additional federal funding for transportation infrastructure twice over that time period. We also benefited from the one-time boost provided by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which significantly increased the funding available for road repair for several years. Despite these injections of funds, states prioritized new or expanded roads and failed to make a dent in the backlog of roads in poor condition.

Percentage of roads in poor condition vs. federal appropriations



REPAIR PRIORITIES 2019



This is more than a money problem—it's a priorities problem

The latest available data shows states have made some slight improvements in their spending since we released the first edition of *Repair Priorities* in 2011. **Despite those improvements, states are still spending just as much on expansion as repair**—states spent \$21.4 billion on average on road repair annually and \$21.3 billion annually on road expansion between 2009-2014.

These investments in expansion don't just redirect funds away from much needed investments in repair; they continually grow our annual spending need, widening the gap. Every new lane-mile of road costs approximately \$24,000 per year to preserve in a state of good repair. By expanding roads, we are borrowing against the future.

Between 2009-2017, the full public road network has grown by
223,494 lane-miles...



...that's
enough to
drive across
the U.S.

83 times



The \$5 billion per year required to maintain just the lane miles added between 2009-2017 is more than **Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Arkansas** receive together in federal highway apportionments each year.

REPAIR PRIORITIES 2019



Transportation
for America



TAXPAYERS
for
COMMON SENSE

We face a looming spending gap

As of 2017, we estimate that we would need to spend **\$231.4 billion per year** just to keep our existing road network in acceptable repair and bring the backlog of roads in poor condition into good repair over a six-year period. By comparison, all highway capital expenditures across all government units totaled **\$105.4 billion** in 2015, only a portion of which goes to repair. It is significantly more expensive to rehabilitate roads that have fallen into poor repair than to preserve roads in good condition on an ongoing basis through routine pavement preservation.

THE COST TO MAINTAIN THE NATION'S ROADS

\$169 billion

per year just to keep our good roads "good."



\$62 billion

per year on top of that to address the backlog of poor roads.



That's a total need of **\$231.4 billion** per year just to keep our existing road network in acceptable repair.



For comparison, all highway capital expenditures across all government units totaled **\$105.4 billion** in 2015, only a portion of which goes to repair.

Roads are major financial liabilities. They come with guaranteed costs over their life cycles.

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \$24,000 & \times & 223,494 = \$5 \text{ billion} \\ \text{annually per lane mile} & & \text{needed annually to} \\ \text{to keep roads in a} & & \text{maintain these recently} \\ \text{state of good repair} & & \text{added lane miles} \end{array}$$

lane miles added to the full public road network 2009-2017

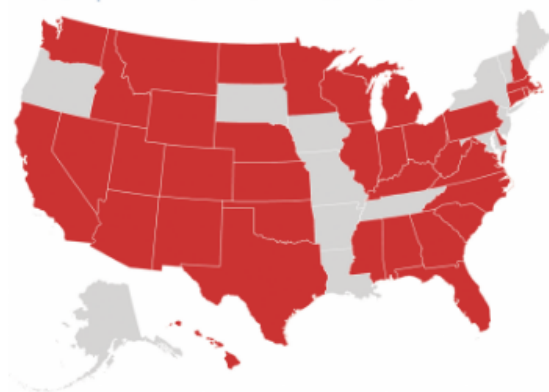
State spending priorities

Some states are *still spending to expand their road networks* at the expense of their existing roads—an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars. While pavement conditions worsened slightly at the national level between 2009-2017—even with billions in federal and state spending devoted to repair—the outlook is worse for many states, **thirty-seven** of which saw an increase in the percentage of roads in poor condition.

West Virginia, for example, devoted 31 percent of the state's highway capital budget to road expansion between 2009 and 2014 and just 19 percent to road repair, and saw the percentage of roads in poor condition increase from 28 percent to 31 percent between 2009 and 2017. Yet on a state-by-state basis, the story is also more complex:

- Some states are spending a significant portion of their available funding on repair and are seeing pavement conditions improve over time—like **New Jersey**.
- Some states are devoting more of their available funds to road repair, but are still seeing worsening pavement conditions because the backlog is too great; for example, **Michigan**. These states may need additional funds to keep their roads in good condition.
- Other states, like **Tennessee**, have been able to maintain a large percentage of their roads in good condition with their available funding, allowing them to devote funds to road expansion without compromising the quality of their existing system.

Thirty-seven states saw an increase in the percentage of roads in poor condition between 2009-2017.



REPAIR PRIORITIES 2019

Transportation
for America

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

Highway capital spending on state-managed roads, 2009-2014 (thousands)

State	Annual avg. capital spending	Roadway expansion as % of total capital spending	Roadway repair as % of total capital spending	Other capital expenditures as % of total capital spending
Maine*	\$276,535	11%	65%	23%

*These states did not provide data to FHWA for at least one year of the analysis. Therefore, results may be skewed.

State road conditions

Thirty-seven states saw an increase in the percentage of roads in poor condition between 2009 and 2017. A number of states also saw their roads improve between 2009 and 2017. Arkansas, Kansas, Maryland, New Jersey, and Vermont saw the biggest decreases in the percentage of their roads in poor condition.

Eleven states have at least 30 percent of their road network in poor condition as of 2017. California, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Rhode Island had the highest percentage of roads in poor condition. These states are highlighted in red in the table below.

By contrast Georgia, Idaho, Nebraska, Oregon, and Tennessee had the lowest percentage of their roads in poor condition as of 2017. And Georgia, Maryland, Nebraska, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Wyoming had the highest percentage of roads in good condition as of 2017.

Percentage of public roads across jurisdictions in good, fair, and poor condition, 2017

Search:

State	Public centerline miles of roads reported	% in poor condition	% in fair condition	% in good condition	% with unreported condition
Maine	6,169	22%	36%	41%	0%

So what will it take to fix the system?

Transportation for America is calling on Congress to address this in any infrastructure package they consider, including the upcoming 2020 federal transportation bill. Congress should take the following actions in the 2020 transportation bill to get us back on track:

Guarantee measurable outcomes for American taxpayers with any new funding

The next transportation bill should set clear, quantifiable outcomes the program is expected to accomplish. Congress could set a goal for repairing all roads in poor condition and write a bill that clearly moves the ball forward toward that goal. If it cannot be done in the next six-year authorization bill, Congress should make clear what is feasible.

Require that states repair their existing systems before expanding

Congress should require that states dedicate available highway formula funding to repairing the existing system first. Historically, states have used this formula funding for new road construction. Congress could grant states additional flexibility if they are able to demonstrate that they are keeping their roads in good condition above a certain percentage threshold.

Require project sponsors to demonstrate that they can afford to maintain new roadway capacity projects

To supplement this formula funding now dedicated to repair and maintenance, Congress should create a competitive program to fund highway capacity expansion projects similar to the New Starts transit capital program. Projects should be evaluated for funding based on clear performance criteria to ensure that funded projects produce substantial benefit for the cost, and project sponsors should demonstrate that they can operate and maintain the asset throughout its useful life, ensuring a plan for long-term upkeep.

Track progress and require that FHWA publish results

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act in 2012 established a requirement that states and metro areas set performance targets for the pavement conditions of the interstate and non-interstate highways they maintain. Yet FHWA did not make those targets publicly available until spring 2019, seven years after passage of the law. The new transportation bill should establish stronger reporting requirements to ensure that our investments produce the needed results.

[Click here to view complete un-excerpted report.](#)

Key Points to fix the system from this report:

- **Require that states repair their existing systems before expanding.**
- **Congress should require that states dedicate available highway formula funding to repairing the existing system first.**
- **Require project sponsors to demonstrate that they can afford to maintain new roadway capacity projects.**
- **Projects should be evaluated for funding based on clear performance criteria to ensure that funded projects produce substantial benefit for the cost, and project sponsors should demonstrate that they can operate and maintain the asset throughout its useful life, ensuring a plan for long-term upkeep.**

We should not spend one more dime of our limited state and federal transportation dollars on any new project when existing infrastructure repairs are delayed by new high dollar projects such as the controversial 2B-2 connector.

RURAL CONNECTIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND



MAY 22, 2019



[Click here to review the most recent statistics on Maine's roads and bridges.](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, May 22, 2019
Report available at: tripnet.org

Contact: **Rocky Moretti** (202) 262-0714
Carolyn Bonifas Kelly (703) 801-9212
TRIP office (202) 466-6706

MAINE'S RURAL ROADS & BRIDGES HAVE SIGNIFICANT DEFICIENCIES; REPAIRS & MODERNIZATION NEEDED TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS, BOOST SAFETY & SUPPORT GROWTH & CONNECTIVITY

Eds: This report contains data for all 50 states for the percentage of rural roads in poor condition, the percent of deficient rural bridges, rural traffic fatality rates and the number of rural traffic fatalities. Click [here](#) for infographics.



Washington, D.C. – America's rural transportation system is in need of repairs and modernization to support economic growth in the nation's Heartland, which is a critical source of energy, food and fiber. With increases in population and growing employment, rural America is heavily reliant on the quality of its transportation system to sustain further growth. This is according to a new report released today by **TRIP**, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report, *Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland*, evaluates the safety and condition of the nation's rural roads and bridges and finds that the nation's rural transportation system is in need of immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity. The chart below shows the states with the highest rate of rural pavements in poor condition, states with the highest share of rural bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient, and states with the highest fatality rates on non-Interstate, rural roads.

Washington, D.C. – America's rural transportation system is in need of repairs and modernization to support economic growth in the nation's Heartland, which is a critical source of energy, food and fiber. With increases in population and growing employment, rural America is heavily reliant on the quality of its transportation system to sustain further growth. This is according to a new report released today by **TRIP**, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report, *Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland*, evaluates the safety and condition of the nation's rural roads and bridges and finds that the nation's rural transportation system is in need of immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity. The chart below shows the states with the highest rate of rural pavements in poor condition, states with the highest share of rural bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient, and states with the highest fatality rates on non-Interstate, rural roads.

RANK	STATE	Rural Pavements in Poor Condition	STATE	Rural Bridges Poor/Structurally Deficient	STATE	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on Rural Non-Interstate Roads	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on All Other Roads
1	Rhode Island	39%	Rhode Island	23%	South Carolina	3.60	0.98
2	California	32%	Iowa	21%	California	3.16	0.77
3	New Mexico	30%	West Virginia	20%	Arizona	2.94	1.31
4	West Virginia	30%	Pennsylvania	18%	Rhode Island	2.57	0.92
5	Hawaii	30%	South Dakota	18%	West Virginia	2.55	0.97
6	Oklahoma	30%	Louisiana	15%	Tennessee	2.55	0.93
7	Mississippi	27%	Maine	14%	Kentucky	2.54	1.02
8	Alaska	22%	New York	12%	Louisiana	2.48	1.21
9	Maine	22%	North Carolina	12%	Kansas	2.47	0.85
10	New Hampshire	21%	Oklahoma	12%	Oregon	2.44	0.68
11	Washington	21%	Michigan	12%	North Carolina	2.43	0.70
12	Pennsylvania	21%	North Dakota	11%	Texas	2.38	1.11
13	Missouri	21%	Mississippi	10%	Alabama	2.38	0.87
14	Connecticut	20%	Alaska	10%	Georgia	2.36	1.00
15	Louisiana	19%	Nebraska	9%	Virginia	2.34	0.57
16	Wisconsin	19%	Missouri	9%	Delaware	2.33	0.74
17	Texas	18%	New Hampshire	9%	Indiana	2.32	0.68
18	Massachusetts	17%	Massachusetts	9%	Oklahoma	2.24	0.86
19	Michigan	16%	New Jersey	9%	Florida	2.23	1.32
20	Vermont	16%	California	9%	Pennsylvania	2.18	0.79
US AVERAGE		15%	US AVERAGE	9%	US AVERAGE	2.14	0.88

Fourteen percent of Maine's rural bridges are rated as poor/structurally deficient, the seventh highest share in the U.S. Bridges that are poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge and are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles. The report finds that 22 percent of Maine's rural roads are rated in poor condition – the ninth highest rate in the nation – and 21 percent are rated in mediocre condition. The rate of traffic fatalities on Maine's non-Interstate, rural roads is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state – 1.6 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel vs. 0.66.

[Click here to view above excerpted press release.](#)

RURAL TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES: DEFICIENT ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS

The nation's rural roads, highways and bridges have significant deficiencies and deterioration. Fourteen percent of the nation's rural roads have pavements in poor condition, and nearly one-in-ten of the nation's rural bridges need rehabilitation, repair or replacement.

- In 2017, 15 percent of the nation's major rural roads (arterials and collectors) were rated in poor condition, 21 percent were rated in mediocre condition, 17 percent were rated in fair condition and 47 percent were rated in good condition.
- The chart below ranks the 25 states with the greatest percentage of rural roads in poor condition in 2017. Rural pavement conditions for all states can be found in [Appendix D](#).

RANK	STATE	Percentage of Rural Pavements in Poor Condition
1	Rhode Island	39%
2	California	32%
3	New Mexico	30%
4	West Virginia	30%
5	Hawaii	30%
6	Oklahoma	30%
7	Mississippi	27%
8	Alaska	22%
9	Maine	22%
10	New Hampshire	21%
11	Washington	21%
12	Pennsylvania	21%
13	Missouri	21%
14	Connecticut	20%
15	Louisiana	19%
16	Wisconsin	19%
17	Texas	18%
18	Massachusetts	17%
19	Michigan	16%
20	Vermont	16%
21	Colorado	14%
22	South Carolina	14%
23	Idaho	14%
24	Utah	14%
25	Minnesota	12%

- In 2018, nine percent of the nation's rural bridges were rated as poor/structurally deficient. Forty-six percent of rural bridges were rated fair and forty-six percent of rural bridges were rated in good condition. A bridge is rated poor/structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Poor/structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, agricultural equipment, school buses and emergency services vehicles. A fair rating indicates that a bridge's structural elements are sound but minor deterioration has occurred to the bridge's deck, substructure or superstructure.

TOP 25 STATES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR RURAL ROADS IN POOR CONDITION



TRIP
a national transportation research group

tripnet.org

- The chart below ranks the 25 states with the highest share of rural bridges rated poor/structurally deficient in 2018. Rural bridge conditions for all states can be found in [Appendix E](#).

RANK	STATE	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Poor/Structurally Deficient	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Fair	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Good
1	RHODE ISLAND	23%	58%	19%
2	IOWA	21%	42%	37%
3	WEST VIRGINIA	20%	52%	28%
4	PENNSYLVANIA	18%	50%	32%
5	SOUTH DAKOTA	18%	51%	32%
6	LOUISIANA	15%	36%	50%
7	MAINE	14%	55%	31%
8	NEW YORK	12%	49%	39%
9	NORTH CAROLINA	12%	49%	39%
10	OKLAHOMA	12%	44%	44%
11	MICHIGAN	12%	47%	41%
12	NORTH DAKOTA	11%	36%	53%
13	MISSISSIPPI	10%	27%	63%
14	ALASKA	10%	45%	44%
15	NEBRASKA	9%	39%	51%
16	MISSOURI	9%	47%	44%
17	NEW HAMPSHIRE	9%	41%	50%
18	MASSACHUSETTS	9%	56%	35%
19	NEW JERSEY	9%	61%	30%
20	CALIFORNIA	9%	39%	52%
21	SOUTH CAROLINA	9%	48%	43%
22	HAWAII	9%	55%	36%
23	WYOMING	8%	62%	30%
24	WISCONSIN	8%	40%	52%
25	ILLINOIS	8%	40%	53%

Appendix D - TRIP Rural Connections Report 2019

Rural Pavement Conditions, 2017

STATE	POOR	MEDIOCRE	FAIR	GOOD
Alabama	9%	14%	17%	60%
Alaska	22%	20%	14%	44%
Arizona	9%	18%	15%	58%
Arkansas	9%	18%	26%	47%
California	32%	24%	17%	27%
Colorado	14%	25%	22%	39%
Connecticut	20%	28%	24%	28%
Delaware	6%	12%	22%	61%
Florida	2%	16%	8%	73%
Georgia	3%	14%	18%	65%
Hawaii	30%	32%	14%	24%
Idaho	14%	23%	9%	54%
Illinois	6%	21%	21%	51%
Indiana	7%	13%	16%	64%
Iowa	7%	15%	17%	61%
Kansas	9%	26%	8%	56%
Kentucky	6%	21%	24%	49%
Louisiana	19%	21%	18%	43%
Maine	22%	21%	15%	43%
Maryland	2%	5%	12%	81%
Massachusetts	17%	19%	18%	47%
Michigan	16%	18%	15%	51%
Minnesota	12%	19%	14%	55%
Mississippi	27%	27%	15%	31%
Missouri	21%	27%	20%	33%
Montana	9%	17%	17%	57%
Nebraska	8%	12%	10%	70%
Nevada	7%	15%	15%	62%
New Hampshire	21%	18%	11%	50%
New Jersey	6%	33%	29%	32%
New Mexico	30%	25%	12%	33%
New York	2%	8%	18%	73%
North Carolina	8%	18%	23%	51%
North Dakota	7%	12%	14%	67%
Ohio	6%	15%	14%	65%
Oklahoma	30%	22%	16%	32%
Oregon	9%	19%	15%	58%
Pennsylvania	21%	20%	19%	40%
Rhode Island	39%	31%	13%	17%
South Carolina	14%	26%	20%	40%
South Dakota	11%	29%	17%	42%
Tennessee	1%	5%	7%	87%
Texas	18%	28%	19%	34%
Utah	14%	23%	18%	45%
Vermont	16%	17%	16%	51%
Virginia	7%	17%	25%	51%
Washington	21%	30%	20%	29%
West Virginia	30%	25%	19%	25%
Wisconsin	19%	21%	20%	41%
Wyoming	6%	12%	14%	68%
U.S. Total	15%	21%	17%	47%

Source: TRIP Analysis of Federal Highway Administration Data.

Appendix E - TRIP Rural Connections Report 2019

Rural Bridge Conditions, 2018

State	Percent Poor/Structurally Deficient	Percent Fair	Percent Good
ALABAMA	5%	51%	44%
ALASKA	10%	45%	44%
ARIZONA	2%	39%	59%
ARKANSAS	5%	43%	52%
CALIFORNIA	9%	39%	52%
COLORADO	6%	54%	39%
CONNECTICUT	7%	58%	35%
DELAWARE	4%	70%	26%
DIST. OF COL.	0%	100%	0%
FLORIDA	5%	41%	54%
GEORGIA	4%	56%	40%
HAWAII	9%	55%	36%
IDAHO	8%	65%	27%
ILLINOIS	8%	40%	53%
INDIANA	6%	53%	40%
IOWA	21%	42%	37%
KANSAS	6%	42%	52%
KENTUCKY	7%	56%	37%
LOUISIANA	15%	36%	50%
MAINE	14%	55%	31%
MARYLAND	7%	58%	35%
MASSACHUSETTS	9%	56%	35%
MICHIGAN	12%	47%	41%
MINNESOTA	5%	31%	63%
MISSISSIPPI	10%	27%	63%
MISSOURI	9%	47%	44%
MONTANA	8%	62%	31%
NEBRASKA	9%	39%	51%
NEVADA	2%	56%	42%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	9%	41%	50%
NEW JERSEY	9%	61%	30%
NEW MEXICO	6%	55%	38%
NEW YORK	12%	49%	39%
NORTH CAROLINA	12%	49%	39%
NORTH DAKOTA	11%	36%	53%
OHIO	6%	35%	59%
OKLAHOMA	12%	44%	44%
OREGON	5%	57%	38%
PENNSYLVANIA	18%	50%	32%
RHODE ISLAND	23%	58%	19%
SOUTH CAROLINA	9%	48%	43%
SOUTH DAKOTA	18%	51%	32%
TENNESSEE	4%	49%	46%
TEXAS	2%	49%	50%
UTAH	3%	45%	52%
VERMONT	2%	45%	53%
VIRGINIA	5%	62%	33%
WASHINGTON	5%	42%	53%
WEST VIRGINIA	20%	52%	28%
WISCONSIN	8%	40%	52%
WYOMING	8%	62%	30%
TOTALS	9%	46%	46%

Source: TRIP Analysis of Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory Data.



Conclusion

Rural roads and bridges are a critical link in the nation's transportation system, providing access to natural resources and the energy, food and fiber that drives the nation's economic engine. In a rural America that is experiencing economic and population growth and that is highly transportation reliant, the transportation system plays a critical role in connecting communities to America's urban areas, supporting commerce, commuting and tourism. The nation's rural transportation system, particularly its roads and bridges, faces significant challenges. The rural transportation network carries increasing levels of traffic, fails to provide adequate connectivity for many communities, has significant deterioration and has significantly higher rates of serious traffic crashes than other roads.

Providing the nation with a rural transportation system that will support the economy and future development will require that the U.S. invest in a rural transportation system that is safe, efficient, and well-maintained, and that provides adequate mobility and connectivity to the nation's rural communities.

###

Conditions/statistics as stated in this report:

Maine's bridges: 14% Poor/Structurally Deficient

55% Fair

31% good

Ranked #7 (worst) nationwide

Maine's roads: 22% Poor

21% Mediocre

15% Fair

43% good

Ranked #9 (worst) nationwide

What you need to know about Bridge #1564:

MAINE PUBLIC BRIDGE STRUCTURES IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF **Brewer**

[Link to Map Viewer](#)

IDENTIFICATION

Town	Brewer	Town2	No Town2
Bridge Name	WILSON SREET / I395	Location	ROUTE 1A OVER I-395
Bridge Number	1564	Route Number	0001A
Feature On	WILSON ST-RT 1A	Bridge Region	4 - Eastern Region
Feature Under	I-395	Border Bridge	
Bridge Road Width (Feet)	51	Bridge or Minor Span	Bridge on State Highway

CLASSIFICATION

Owner	MaineDOT	Maintainer	MaineDOT
Structure Length (Feet)	128	Federal Bridge Indicator	Y

AGE AND CONDITION

Deck Condition	7 - Good Condition (some minor problems)	Culvert Condition	N - Not Applicable
Superstructure Condition	7 - Good Condition (some minor problems)	Channel Condition	N - Not Applicable
Substructure Condition	6 - Satisfactory Condition (minor deterioration)	Approach Condition	8 - Equal to present desirable criteria
Year Built	1984	Annual Average Daily Traffic	15,824

INSPECTION AND APPRAISAL

Date of Inspection	05/30/17	Federal Sufficiency Rating	77
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STRUCTURE TYPE AND MATERIAL

Span Material	Steel	Span Type	Stringer/Multi-beam or Girder
Number of Main Spans	1		

LOAD RATING AND POSTING

Posting Status	Open	Posted Weight (Tons)	
POSTING TYPE			
4-Axle			
One-Truck			
Spacing			

10 of 18

Produced by MaineDOT Bridge Maintenance
October 10, 2018

[Click here to view MaineDOT online data.](#)



The Wilson Street/I-395 Bridge is only being replaced because of the suspect decision by state and federal officials to select 2B-2 as the preferred alternative for this controversial project.

45 other alternatives, out of 79+ studied routes, satisfied the original-decade-long “Route 9 east of Route 46” system linkage need and did not require this bridge to be replaced.

2B-2 does not satisfy the “Route 9 east of Route 46” system linkage need, thus an \$11.9 million replacement of a perfectly good bridge is required as the first phase of the 2B-2 project.

The DEIS/FEIS concedes that 2B-2 meets the system linkage need only in the near-term (20 years from commissioning), while documentation in September 2010 changed the original “Route 9 east of Route 46” system linkage need to a long-term need. The DOT refuses to discuss the near-term vs. long-term needs of 2B-2 and the unfunded cost of that long-term need.

- Maine’s bridges are rated as 14% poor/structurally deficient in their May 2019 TRIP report.**
- The average age of Maine’s bridges is 52+ years old. Bridge #1564 was built in 1984 and at 35 years old is a relatively new bridge when compared to the rest of Maine’s bridges.**
- Bridge #1564 is rated as good to satisfactory by the DOT.**
- Why replace this bridge while other older and deficient bridge repairs or replacements go unfunded? Isn’t it time to halt this controversial project and allocate all remaining funds to the unmet transportation needs of the state of Maine??**

Here's a contest that should have plenty of contenders: Worst Road in Maine

This year's contest by the Maine Better Transportation Association is focused on state highways, bridges and state-aid roads.

COURIER GAZETTE

[Click here to view complete article online.](#)

AUGUSTA — The Maine Better Transportation Association has announced its Worst Road in Maine contest.

Residents are invited to submit a brief story or description of a bad road and the negative impact it has had. The grand prize winner will receive \$529, the amount researchers have estimated that every Maine resident pays in extra maintenance, repairs and accident costs because of bad roads. The statewide total is \$541 million.

According to the most recent Maine Infrastructure Report Card issued by the Maine Section, American Society of Civil Engineers, about 18 percent of Maine highways—or 1,530 out of 8,645 miles of state highway—are rated poor or worse.

To make progress fixing Maine's highways, state-aid roads and bridges, it has been estimated the state needs more than \$100 million in additional highway funding beyond the money raised by the gas tax, voter-approved bonds and other funding sources.

The contest will continue until midnight on May 1. For this year's contest, the association is focusing on state highways, bridges and state-aid roads.

No purchase or payment of any kind is necessary to enter or win the contest. To enter, complete a contest entry form, including the route number and town/city where the bad section of road is located, a brief story or description of the bad road and its negative impact and submit a photo at fixmaineroads.org or at fixmaineroads@mbtaonline.org.

Contest rules are also available at mbtaonline.org.

Mills unveils \$189M bond package

Borrowing plan targets roads, bridges, conservation, jobs, broadband

BY MICHAEL SHEPHERD
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — Gov. Janet Mills wants Maine lawmakers to send bond questions totaling \$189 million to voters in November in a package centered on road and bridge funding, conservation and workforce development while targeting \$30 million more for broadband.

The package unveiled by the Democratic governor on Tuesday is her bid to shape Maine's borrowing roadmap, balancing a transportation department plan that assumes annual borrowing with more than \$1.5 billion in borrowing proposals floated by the Democratic-led Legislature. A top Republican lawmaker took a dim view of the package of items that may not be palatable alone.

Mills wants to ask voters in 2019 to approve \$105 million in transportation borrowing that would be matched by \$137 million in federal funds alongside \$65 million for conservation, wastewater and renewable energy projects. She seeks another \$19 million for workforce development and renovations to the state's three National Guard facilities.

"My administration is tackling the challenges we have head-on through targeted, reasonable investments that will strengthen the economy, develop a strong, skilled workforce, support a clean energy environment and help replace our aging infrastructure," Mills said.

The Legislature must approve the package of bonds by two-thirds majorities in both chambers before adjournment later this month to put them on the November 2019 ballot. They will appear on the ballot separately, though Mills wants lawmakers to consider them together.

Mills also wants to place \$50 million in future bonding on the ballot in 2020. Of that, \$30 million would go to broadband with the rest going to research and development and fishing and farming infrastructure. Overall, the package is a mix of familiar and novel borrowing approaches that would go before voters in either June or November 2020.

It would be the fifth straight year Maine would ask voters to approve transportation bonds. Another \$30 million slated for the Land for Maine's Future program comes after former Gov. Paul LePage held up \$11.5 million in bonds before striking a 2016 deal to issue them.

The borrowing proposal focused on high-speed internet access is the first of its kind in Maine, where nearly 90 percent of people have broadband coverage but operate at speeds that are second-slowest in the nation, according to a 2018 report from Broadband Now.

It would allow the ConnectME Authority, the quasi-state agency charged with expanding rural broadband service, to focus on larger expansion projects rather than smaller ones in places with next to no broadband access that they're limited to under their current budget and scope.

Maine State Treasurer Henry Beck, a Democrat, has said the state has the capacity to issue \$300 million in borrowing over the next two years, a mark that has been initially approved by the legislative committee negotiating the state's two-year budget due by June 30.

However, Sen. Jim Hamper of Oxford, a leading Republican negotiator on the Legislature's budget panel, said the widely popular transportation bond was being married with other proposals to ensure their success and he wants the Legislature to be able to consider them individually.

"I would like to break it up into maybe even the four packages that the voters will see and let us go on that way," Hamper said. "But there are still games to be played."

###

- Last year's transportation bond will cost Mainer's \$29 million in interest charges over the ten year maturity of the bond. At some point we will have to bond just to pay the interest...

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.

[Click here to view inline video:](#)

"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.**

FROM WASHINGTON D.C.

Sen. Angus King cosponsors bill to repair 325 aging Maine bridges

Posted: Tuesday, June 4, 2019 - 4:45pm

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Angus King (I-Maine) cosponsored legislation that would begin to address the more than 47,000 structurally deficient bridges across the country, including 325 bridges in Maine. **This figure means 13.1% of Maine's bridges are classified as structurally deficient, which is [the six highest percentage in the nation.](#)**

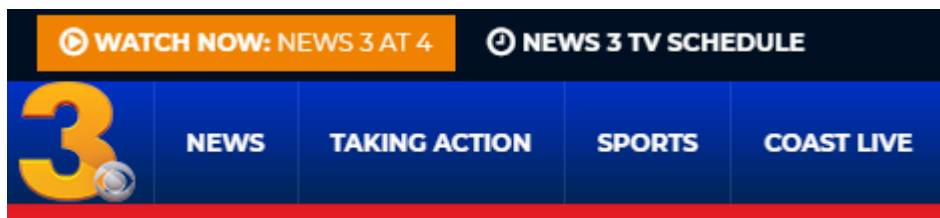
The Strengthen and Fortify Existing Bridges Act (SAFE Bridges) would establish a program to provide funding specifically dedicated to repairing and replacing bridges in poor condition.

“Right now, Maine ranks in the top 10 of a list that no state wants to be on: percentage of our bridges considered structurally deficient – a technical term for ‘less safe than we’d like,’” said Senator King. “Bridges are a vital part of our state’s infrastructure, but too many are currently behind on needed maintenance, updates, and reinforcements. By making bridge repair a priority, we can create jobs and ensure the safety of drivers for decades to come – a win-win.”

According to the 2019 Bridge Report, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) classifies **325 of Maine's bridges – or 13.1% of all bridges in the state – as structurally deficient.** The SAFE Bridges Act would authorize an additional \$2.75 billion annually through Fiscal Year 2025 to enable states to repair and replace bridges in poor condition, as well as maintain the surface coating and corrosion protection systems on eligible bridges. The bill uses a needs-based formula to provide states with funding levels according to their share of the nation’s deficient bridges.

In addition to Senator King, the legislation is supported by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and Bob Casey (D-Penn.). To read the [text of the bill, click here.](#)

[Click here to view on line document.](#)



At our current pace it'll take 80 years to repair all the structurally deficient bridges in the US, a report finds

POSTED 6:57 AM, APRIL 3, 2019, BY [CNN WIRE](#)

Officials have dubbed Monday's bridge collapse in Tennessee a freak accident, but that might be turning a blind eye to a larger issue.

Bridges across the United States are deteriorating, and a new report estimates it will take more than 80 years to fix all of them.

More than 47,000 bridges in the United States are in crucial need of repairs, says the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, or ARTBA. The group, which advocates for investment in transportation infrastructure, analyzes data from the Federal Highway Administration and releases an annual Deficient Bridge report.

This year's report, released Monday and based on 2018 data, found:

- There are 616,087 bridges in America
- Of those, 47,052 (nearly 8%) are "structurally deficient" and need urgent repairs
- 235,020 bridges (38%) need some sort of repair
- Americans cross structurally deficient bridges 178 million times a day, including such landmarks as the Brooklyn Bridge and the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge over the San Francisco Bay
- The average age of a structurally deficient bridge is 62 years

The states with the highest number of compromised bridges are:

- Iowa (4,675)
- Pennsylvania (3,770)
- Oklahoma (2,540)
- Illinois (2,273)
- Missouri (2,116)

The states with the most structurally deficient bridges, as a percent of their total number of bridges, are:

- Rhode Island (23%)
- West Virginia (19.8%)
- South Dakota (16.7%)
- Pennsylvania (16.5%)
- Maine (13.1%)

The definition of ‘structurally deficient’ has narrowed

“Structurally deficient” means the bridge needs repairs but is not unsafe for public travel.

The number of structurally deficient bridges is actually down about 7,000 from last year’s report — but it’s no cause for celebration. Not all the bridges were fixed.

Instead, the number likely dropped so much because the Federal Highway Administration, or FHWA, narrowed the definition of what it means for a bridge to be structurally deficient.

Bridges are regularly inspected for safety on a scale of 0 to 9. Structurally deficient means that one of four key elements of the bridge is rated a 4, which is poor, or below.

Before, bridges could also be classified as structurally deficient if their overall structural evaluation was rated 4 or lower, or if they had insufficient waterway openings.

“(The new definition) does make a difference,” ARTBA chief economist Alison Black said. “About 6,500 bridges that would’ve been structurally deficient are not under this (new) definition.”

Repairs are at their slowest in five years

The report’s projection for how long it will take to fix all the structurally deficient bridges has more than doubled since last year’s estimate of 37 years.

Because the current pace of repair work is at its slowest in five years, it will likely take more than 80 years to complete the repairs on the structures that need it, ARTBA said.

“We’ve seen bridge construction activity slow down the last few years after increasing significantly over the last 10 years,” Black said, adding that some states are focusing on improving pavement conditions instead of bridge repair.

But an FHWA spokeswoman painted a different picture. She said bridge conditions in the United States have steadily improved over the years due to ongoing bridge safety efforts led by FHWA and state departments of transportation. Since 2002, the number of bridges nationwide that are classified as poor has decreased from 11% to 8%, she said.

Bridge closures are likely to become more frequent

Although Black said bridge collapses are uncommon, bridge closures or weight limits may become more frequent to ensure motorists’ safety.

Black pointed to Mississippi, whose Department of Transportation said last week that 61 bridges need to be closed immediately because of unsafe conditions.

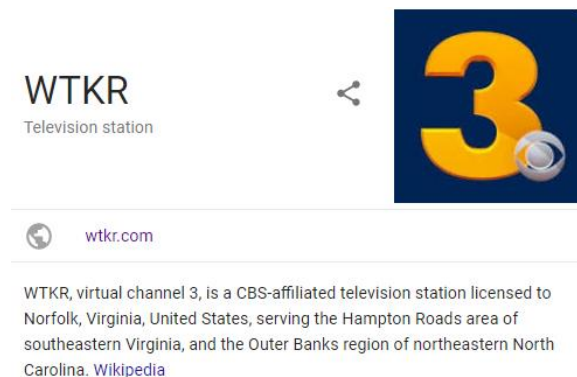
“We’ll continue to see more bridges close or posted for load as bridges deteriorate,” making it difficult for commuters to get around, Black said.

She said an increase in federal transportation funding would help alleviate the issue.

President Trump has said repeatedly that he wants to upgrade America’s crumbling infrastructure. Even though some Democratic leaders have expressed a willingness to work with him on a plan, little progress has been made on the issue.

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Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0016

Bruce A. Van Note
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony of
Bruce A. Van Note, Commissioner
Maine Department of Transportation**

In Support of LD 1002

“An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, Highway Fund and Other Funds, and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2021”

**to the
Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**

March 26, 2019

[The following excerpts were taken from Mr. Van Note's testimony that can be viewed here:](#)

Bonding. Although outside the traditional state budget process, bonding is a critical piece of MaineDOT funding. As can be seen in the Sources of Funds pie chart above, bonding represents fully 20% of MaineDOT funding, and is the linchpin of our capital program. Without it, dramatic cuts to MaineDOT programs would be necessary.

As one can see, General Obligation (G.O.) bonding serviced by the General Fund - shown as the yellow wedge above- is again assumed at \$100M per year, or \$200M for the biennium. Further, this budget authorizes a new \$75M GARVEE bond - shown as the orange wedge above. A GARVEE bond is a revenue bond repaid with future federal funds. As it is not a state debt, it does not require voter approval. The proposed GARVEE bond in this budget is \$25M higher than other recent biennial budgets (which authorized \$50M GARVEE bonds). This increased one-time level will be used to partially fund larger projects with a useful life of at least 15 years to free up state cash to provide the state match for a discretionary federal INFRA grant we were awarded for the I-395/Route 9 connector project.

This level of bonding has worked well for transportation in recent years as interest rates have remained low and other funding options have been elusive. However, if interest rates increase, or if policymakers see the need to invest in other capital areas, there is a substantial policy question regarding the sustainability of this bond funding component.



Maine's \$25 million matching funds, for the I-395/Route 9 Connector's INFRA grant, will come from a puffed-up GARVEE Bond that is paid for from FUTURE federal funds, which seems to be nothing more than a slight of hand; match the feds with federal funds which apparently do not exist today even though the INFRA grant does!? If moving non-existent money is really that easy, seems they could just as easy move those funds to other unmet transportation needs.

4. Unmet Capital Funding Needs

After prioritization, goal setting, and defining acceptable customer service and treatment levels, MaineDOT has a duty as the professional stewards of our transportation system to quantify and communicate the scope of our funding challenge. The following charts do so at a summary level.

Highway & Bridge Capital Needs vs Anticipated Funding (millions of \$)				
Work Group	Annual Basic Need	Anticipated Annual Funding *	Annual \$ Shortfall	% Shortfall
Bridge Projects	\$160	\$120	-\$40	-25%
Pavement Preservation	\$97	\$95	-\$2	-2%
Light Capital Paving	\$27	\$25	-\$2	-7%
Highway Safety Program	\$21	\$17	-\$4	-19%
Large Culverts (5'-10')	\$12	\$8	-\$4	-34%
Regional Spot Improvements (RAMP)	\$8	\$4	-\$4	-51%
Traffic/Mobility/Capacity/ITS Improvements	\$33	\$13	-\$20	-61%
Highway Reconstruction/Rehab	\$91	\$63	-\$28	-31%
Partnership Programs	\$10	\$6	-\$4	-41%
Totals	\$459	\$351	-\$108	-23%

* Note Anticipated Funding includes assumptions for Less Predictable Funding:

\$80M GF G.O. Bonding for Highways and Bridges
\$25M in Federal Discretionary Grants (TIGER, BUILD, INFRA)
\$10M in Federal August Redistribution
\$3M in Highway Fund Year-End Receipts

Maine's Roads and bridges statistics per May 2019 TRIP Report:

Maine's bridges: **14% Poor/Structurally Deficient**

55% Fair

31% good

Ranked #7 (worst) nationwide

\$40 million shortfall in budget per year in bridge program

Maine's roads: **22% Poor**

21% Mediocre

15% Fair

43% good

Ranked #9 (worst) nationwide

• **\$108 million shortfall per year in Highway and Bridge Program**

<p style="text-align: center;">Multimodal Capital Needs vs Anticipated Funding (millions of \$)</p>		
Multimodal	Annual Need	Comments
Transit Buses	\$6	Bus Replacement, Current Backlog - \$6M
Rail Lines - Bridges	\$19	Active State Owned Lines (10 Yr)
Rail Lines - Other	\$5	IRAP & Crossings Included
Ports & Harbors	\$7	Includes BIG & SHIP
Ferry Capital	\$7	Ferry Boat Replacement Plan (5-10 Yr)
Aviation	\$32	Aviation Program need analysis not available
Total Need	\$75	
Annual Multimodal Anticipated Funding	\$56	Includes FAA \$30M, GF G.O. Bond \$20M, Multimodal State Capital \$2.1, FTA \$3.6M, Ferry Boat Program \$0.5M
Annual Shortfall	-\$19	

As can be seen above, even after extensive prioritization, we have a substantial unmet capital funding need. Other legitimate policy goals - like reducing our reliance on bonding – would make the situation even more challenging.

Mr. Van Note avowed: “As can be seen above, even after extensive prioritization, we have a substantial unmet capital funding need.”

\$19 million shortfall/per year in Multimodal needs + \$108 million shortfall/per year in Highway and Bridge program = a shortfall/per year of \$127 million!!

Well, Mr. Van Note, if there is indeed such an unmet need in the state of Maine, why are you so determined on spending \$79.25 million of our state’s limited transportation funds on such a controversial project as the I-395/Route 9 connector, that many do not want and did not even satisfy the project’s purpose and needs a decade ago in April 2009? Every November, the DOT cries “the sky is falling” to get the electorate to approve another transportation bond; seems hard to cry that you have no money to fix our deficient roads and bridges when you are all too ready to build new ones. Not one dollar should be expended on any new project until our roads and bridges are brought up to an acceptable condition. We should not be proud, and in fact should be embarrassed by our #6 worst bridges and #9 worst roads nationwide standings; we’re better than that...



EDITORIALS

Our View: Recurring need to borrow shows trouble with Maine's roads and bridges

EDITORIALS

Posted 4:00 AM | 6.09.2019

Our View: Recurring need to borrow shows trouble with Maine's roads and bridges

Selling bonds to maintain a failing transportation system will not move our state in the right direction.

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Another state budget cycle, another [proposed \\$100 million transportation bond](#). And if this year is anything like previous ones, this bill will face little opposition, either from the Legislature or from the voters in November.

And why should this year be different? Our roads and bridges are in bad shape and the money we collect from their users through the gas tax doesn't come close to paying to keep them usable. The public hates potholes and detours, and politicians want to be on the side of prudent infrastructure investment that's going to pay off in the long run through economic development.

But the main reason this will sail through without any controversy is that we've become so used to pouring borrowed money into a system that doesn't work that it seems normal to us. But this is not normal.

This bond issue is necessary because the budget for maintaining our roads and bridges comes up short – not just once in a while and not by a little, but every year and by a lot. The first transportation bond issue of more than \$100 million

was approved in 2007, at the start of the Great Recession, and \$100 million bonds have since passed in 2013, 2016 and [2018](#). Before this run, the biggest transportation bond was \$63 million in 2003, and most were in the same range as the [\\$12 million](#) the state borrowed in 1968 (which would be \$37.9 million in today's dollars).

Some of these funds go to airports and rail infrastructure, but the bulk of the budget is spent on roads and bridges.

The rise in borrowing tracks with the inability of gas tax revenues to keep up with costs. Rates are frozen on both the state and federal levels at 30 cents per gallon and 18 cents respectively. As vehicle mileage improves and electric vehicles become more common, there is less gas sold per mile driven. Efforts to increase the gas tax and charge electric vehicles for their use of the roads were a political nonstarter in Augusta last session. Gas taxes are regressive, hitting the people who can least afford to pay the hardest, and penalizing electric cars would discourage their use when they are beneficial for other reasons. That left bonding as the best option for lawmakers.

It's easy to see how we wound up here, but it's harder to understand why everyone accepts it. Imagine if the voters were asked to approve borrowing to pay the salaries of teachers or game wardens – not once, after a catastrophic event, but every two years. We would all recognize that we were looking at a system in trouble.

In this case, we've got more roads than we can afford to maintain, but we have no choice because there are few alternative available for most people. So we keep borrowing, and what we spend on debt service is only part of the problem.

Transportation is the No. 1 cause of [greenhouse-gas emissions](#) in Maine, and the road system that we can't afford has driven a style of development that makes people more dependent on personal vehicles to get where they need to go. Pumping another \$100 million into the status quo means we continue to subsidize our contribution to global warming.

We will never meet the ambitious [climate goals set by Gov. Mills](#) if we don't start thinking differently about transportation. and that will take different thinking about more than just roads.

We need to rethink land-use planning, housing and make moving people from place to place without burning fossil fuels a priority in infrastructure investment.

This system that runs on gasoline and borrowed money is trying to tell us something. What once seemed like good ideas are no longer working.

Bridges & Structures

FHWA Data from 12.31.15 indicated 34.2% (831) of Maine's bridges were deficient, now the data, a mere two years later, indicates that 13.3% (326) of Maine's bridges are deficient?? How did the percentage of our deficient bridges seemingly decrease? FHWA discontinued F.O. tracking on 12.31.2015, delaying new performance measures reporting until October 2018...

Repost from March 2018: Anyone else notice the percentage of [Maine's deficient bridges](#) seems to have mysteriously gotten a whole lot better?

- **Structurally Deficient (SD):** This term was previously defined in <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bridge/065odsup.cfm> as having a condition rating of 4 or less for Item 58 (Deck), Item 59 (Superstructure), Item 60 (Substructure), or Item 62 (Culvert), OR having an appraisal rating of 2 or less for Item 67 (Structural Condition) or Item 71 (Waterway Adequacy) *Beginning with the 2018 data archive*, this term will be defined in accordance with the [Pavement and Bridge Condition Performance Measures final rule](#), published in January of 2017, as a classification given to a bridge which has any component [Item 58, 59, 60, or 62] in Poor or worse condition [code of 4 or less].
- **Functionally Obsolete (FO):** This term was previously defined in <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bridge/065odsup.cfm> as having an appraisal rating of 3 or less for Item 68 (Deck Geometry), Item 69 (Underclearances), or Item 72 (Approach Roadway Alignment), OR having an appraisal rating of 3 for Item 67 (Structural Condition) or Item 71 (Waterway Adequacy). Functionally obsolete is a legacy classification that was used to implement the Highway Bridge Program, which was discontinued with the enactment of MAP-21. As a result, fiscal year 2015 was the last year outstanding Highway Bridge Program funds could be obligated on eligible projects, including ones with bridges that were once classified as functionally obsolete. Therefore, FHWA is no longer tracking this measure, and *will not be publishing it on our website for the 2016 data forward*. Our focus has shifted to a performance-based program as established in MAP-21 and continued in the Fast Act. As such, we encourage the use of the Good-Fair-Poor bridge condition measures outlined in the [Pavement and Bridge Condition Performance Measures final rule](#), published in January of 2017.

FHWA Data as of this date:	# Bridges	# S.D.	% S.D.	# F.O.	% F.O.	Total # Deficient Bridges	Total % Deficient Bridges
12.31.2017	2458	326	13.3%	-	-	326	13.3%
12.31.2016	2450	352	14.4%	-	-	352	14.4%
12.31.2015	2431	361	14.8%	470	19.3%	831	34.2%

[Definitions of S.D. and F.O. and data used in above table from official FHWA website.](#)

“Functionally obsolete is a legacy classification... fiscal year 2015 was the last year outstanding Highway Bridge Program funds could be obligated on eligible projects, including ones with bridges that were once classified as functionally obsolete... FHWA is no longer tracking this measure, and will not be publishing it on our website for the 2016 data forward.”

Maine still has a third of the state's bridges that are sub-par; you can't just forget those 470 F.O. bridges that are conveniently not counted for now...

FHWA December [2018 Data](#):

Total bridges that the MaineDOT is responsible for: 2473

Bridges with a rating of good: 786 -or- 31.8% of total

Bridges with a rating of fair: 1362 -or- 55% of total

Bridges with a rating of poor: 325 -or- 13.1% of total

Whether we are #6 or #7 worst nationwide on bridges, or 14% or 13.1% poor or structurally deficient depends on the available data for the reports that I have referenced; these slight differences don't detract from the fact that our infrastructure is in sad shape and needs immediate attention.

In summary, we have gone from a total of 34.2% of Maine's bridges rated as deficient (structurally deficient + functionally obsolete) in 2015 to a total of 13.1% of Maine's bridges rated as poor in 2018 data. Does that make you feel better or should you hold your breath when you transit the bridges of Maine? And, what is the condition of those 522 bridges within the 21.1% no longer reported on?

Maine lawmakers adjourned on Thursday without approving a transportation bond in a departure from recent practice.

By [Michael Shepherd](#), BDN Staff | 6.20.2019 | [Complete article can be viewed here:](#)

The Maine Legislature pulled an all-nighter on Wednesday and adjourned for 2019 early Thursday while leaving major items unresolved, including a bond package floated by Gov. Janet Mills that Democrats and Republicans couldn't agree on.

Lawmakers could return for a special session to handle that and other unfinished business, but the impasse on a bond package creates major uncertainty for the Maine Department of Transportation, which could lose out on \$100 million in borrowing that it counts on for annual work plans for improving roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

Maine lawmakers may not approve any bonds for the 2019 ballot, which would be a stark break from past practice. Mills proposed [a four-part bond package](#) earlier this month worth \$239 million, centering it on transportation, conservation and economic and workforce development. Voters would have seen most of it in November. That last part — which earmarked \$30 million of \$50 million for broadband expansion — would have gone to the 2020 ballot.

It immediately ran into trouble. While the four items would have been voted on separately by Mainers, the Democratic governor packaged them together for an easier path to legislative approval and that rankled Republicans who wanted to vote on them separately.

All of that happened because the minority party can withhold the two-thirds votes in both chambers required to send bonds to the ballot. As the vote approached, Republicans signaled they wouldn't go along with the four-part package. Democrats refused to split it into parts.

They didn't resolve that by the time Mills' package went up for votes around 4:30 a.m. on Thursday. Republicans [withheld the necessary votes](#), then House Democrats [spiked a Republican amendment](#) that would have issued the transportation bond only.

On the House floor, Rep. Patrick Corey, R-Windham, a key backer of a \$30 million conservation bond that made it into Mills' package, urged members to vote against it, saying that "lumping it into a package that exceeds \$200 million" made it "unsupportable."

Maine has [borrowed for four straight years](#) to improve roads, bridges and other infrastructure and those measures are widely supported by politicians and voters. Legislative leaders could come back for a special session in 2019 to deal with bonds, but there is no plan to do so yet.

Legislature goes home after all-nighter, with some work left undone

Lawmakers passed a number of bills, but Democrats and Republicans could not agree on new bonds for transportation, broadband expansion and other needs.

Author: Don Carrigan | June 20, 2019

AUGUSTA, Maine — The Maine Legislature has wrapped up business for the year and gone home.

Lawmakers worked all Wednesday night and finally adjourned at 6:30 in the morning. But they may need to come back sometime this summer to finish one of their major tasks.

Lawmakers passed a number of bills, but **Democrats and Republicans could not agree on new bonds for transportation**, broadband expansion and other needs. Those items were **part of a \$239 million bond package** favored by Democrats. But House Republicans say they objected to voting on the total package. Instead, they favored voting on a stand-alone, \$105 million bond just for transportation.

Neither proposal found enough support, so no bonds were approved.

A transportation bond has become an annual need to pay for repairing roads and bridges. Several of the other issues are top priorities for the Governor. Mills told reporters Thursday they will look at options, including calling lawmakers back over the summer months.

"I think people need a rest from the session," said Gov. Mills. "It's been a long, very productive session, and in the coming weeks and months, we'll be talking about what we can do to get a bond package done. I think people just need a break."

The Governor can call lawmakers back for a special session if she wants, or House and Senate leaders can summon them.

Assistant Senate Democratic Leader Sen. Eloise Vitelli suggested that might be the answer to the bond problem.

"I agree with the Governor. It's a first step, and we will come back at it," said Vitelli.

Gov. Mills says she recently signed an order to sell bonds previously approved by voters, which she says will provide funding for the MDOT for current projects – meaning the lack of a new transportation bond would not cause any immediate problems.

Legislators, however, say they hope a bond can be approved and sent to voters in November to avoid any interruption to the DOT funding stream.