



Linda Coan O'Kresik | BDN

Janet Mills calls Maine lawmakers back to vote on slimmed-down bond package

Gov. Janet Mills speaks at a Bangor event honoring Maine's bicentennial in July. On Monday, she called the Maine Legislature back in for votes on borrowing proposals.

By [Caitlin Andrews](#), BDN Staff • August 19, 2019 5:56 pm

Updated: August 19, 2019 7:22 pm

AUGUSTA, Maine — Republicans say they will support popular transportation borrowing when lawmakers head back to the State House next week for a special session, but the fate of three other bond items they successfully pushed to vote on separately is still undecided.

“Our position is that we will be supporting the transportation bond,” said John Bott, director of communications for House Republicans. “Any other bonds will be left up to individual legislators and what they feel they need to do in terms of their district.”

Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, released a proclamation Monday evening announcing a revised \$163 million bond package will be voted on by legislators when they return to Augusta next Monday for the first time since the regular 2019 legislative session ended in June.

The package includes \$105 million for Maine's roads, bridges, rail and air transportation system, a figure that has remained unchanged since Mills proposed [her \\$239 million initial bond package](#) in June. That money is critical for Maine's infrastructure system, as [the state relies on borrowing to fund its improvements](#). Department of Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said his department would be [in “a world of hurt”](#) last week if the bond wasn't approved.

Republicans [balked at Mills' proposed package in June](#) because it presented the transportation monies as a single package along with additional funds for conservation, broadband, economic development and other infrastructure, and they wanted to vote on them separately.

The governor ceded to that wish Monday, when she said the transportation bond proposal will be considered separately alongside three other slimmed-down items — \$23 million for infrastructure and economic development initiatives including high-speed internet; \$15 million for environmental protection and energy efficiency; and \$20 million for conservation.

“This revised proposal is a fair compromise that should garner bipartisan support in the Legislature,” Mills said in a news release. “I am asking lawmakers to take advantage of low interest rates, pass these critical bonds and send them to Maine voters for their consideration this November.”

Mills told [Maine Public](#) on Monday she was “convinced” there is support for “a variety of bonds” after talking to leadership on both sides. But Senate Minority Leader Dana Dow, R-Waldoboro, said there is still work to be done, and he plans to speak with Senate President Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, on Tuesday to discuss the bonds further.

“At this point I don’t have a prediction on what is going to happen when we get together next Monday,” he said.

Jackson spokeswoman Christine Kirby said Jackson is confident Democrats will back the measures. In a statement, Jackson said he will “proudly be voting to approve each of these bonds and I hope my colleagues in the Legislature will join me.”

Lawmakers will have to approve the items with two-thirds votes in each chamber to put them on the statewide ballot in November, where voters would see the proposals as four separate items. [Click here to view article online.](#)



The \$105 million transportation bond will be approved for November’s ballot—once again Mainer’s will blindly vote yes to said bonding thinking it is free money—once again the executive and legislative branches of our state have failed to act on the challenges of our infrastructure funding—and once again punted the issue to next year’s session where they will—once again—ignore the issue...