

November 29, 2019

## Fix existing roads first

Maine lacks the capital to maintain our infrastructure. Gov. Janet Mills tasked the blue-ribbon commission, [now deadlocked](#), to deliver a viable solution to fund infrastructure repairs without relying on annual bonding.

[Since March](#), rising construction costs have inflated the annual shortfall for road and bridge maintenance by 46 percent (\$73.1 million) to \$232 million. Eleven projects, representing 11.6 percent of the value of projects (\$45.5 million) planned to be bid this year, were [removed from the bidding schedule](#) by May. Deferred repairs result in significantly higher costs than regular, timely repairs.

At the same time that the shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually, the Department of Transportation is sitting on tens of millions of scarce transportation dollars for the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 Connector, a [controversial project](#) that [fails to satisfy](#) the DOT's original system linkage need mandate to provide a limited-access connection from I-395 to Route 9 east of Route 46.

Using the same 46 percent increase that bloated the shortfall, the connector's 2017 cost could swell from \$79.25 to \$115.71 million surpassing the benefit/cost decision point where cost outweighs benefits and thus the project's viability.

Repair work on existing roads and bridges generates [16 percent more jobs](#) than construction of new bridges and roads and that is where the priority must be. New projects should be suspended with the savings reallocated to fund Maine's unmet transportation needs. That's a viable solution that can start immediately. Anything short of that is disingenuous and fiscally irresponsible.

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