



Welcome to the 4th quarter of 2019 in the 19th year of the I-395/Route 9 Connector study/project – OR - how the MaineDOT plans to build a new road from a twice removed alternative that the MaineDOT acknowledged as potentially hazardous in 2003 for the new low price of only \$79,250,000.00!!

You should be outraged by these embarrassing facts:

- **58% of Maine's rural roads are in fair to poor condition.**
- **22% of Maine's rural roads are in poor condition.**
- **69% of Maine's bridges are rated fair to poor condition.**
- **14% of Maine's bridges are structurally deficient.**
- **Maine's infrastructure is ranked 4th worst in America.**
- **Maine's bridges are ranked 7th worst in America.**
- **Maine's roads are ranked 9th worst in America.**

YET, the MaineDOT squanders \$79.25 million of limited state and federal funds on one single project, the controversial I-395/Route 9 Connector that doesn't meet purpose and needs.

These 5 crumbling states have the worst infrastructure in America

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These 5 crumbling states have the worst infrastructure in America

4. Maine



Air traffic controllers work in the control tower at Portland International Jetport

Derek Davis | Portland Press Herald | Getty Images

What else would you suspect in the state that is said to have originated the phrase “You can’t get there from here”? Roads and bridges are in terrible shape. [Maine](#)’s busiest airport serves only about 20 destinations, none of them international. About 2 million passengers used Portland International Jetport last year. That is about 2% of the traffic at Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International.

2019 Infrastructure score: 125 out of 350 points (Top States grade: F)

US population within 500 miles: 49,364,126

Average commute to work: 23.8 minutes

Bridges in poor condition: 13.1%

Roads in unacceptable condition: 13%

20-year water-system needs: \$1.35 billion


[Excerpt of article – click here to view complete article online.](#)




**Blue Ribbon Commission to Study and
Recommend Funding Solutions for the
State's Transportation System**
[Resolve 2019, c.97](#)

[Click here to view official website online:](#)

Maine's Transportation Infrastructure



Joyce Taylor, P.E. - Chief Engineer
Andrew Bickmore, P.E. - Director, Results & Information Office

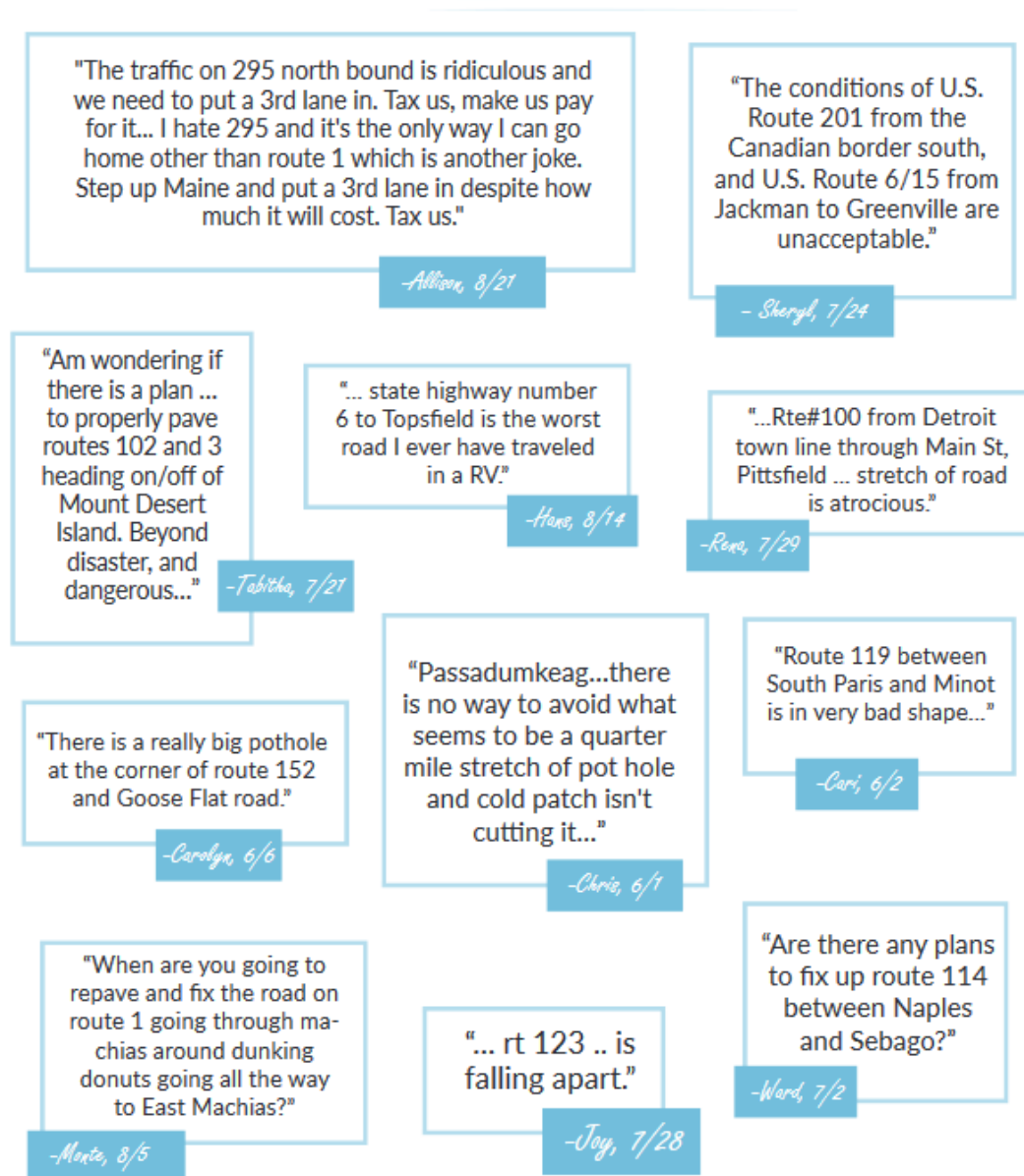


No mention in a 60 page briefing about the I-395/Route 9 Connector project, the \$25 million INFRA grant received for that project, the \$25 million state match to the INFRA grant for that project and the rest of the \$79.25 million needed to construct that controversial project.

[Click here for Infrastructure Overview Presentation from first meeting.](#)

This would be funny if it wasn't so sad. REALLY—all the emails and documents that I have sent since December of 2011 and this is the best you can do? How about, why are you spending \$79.25 million on a project that Brewer doesn't want and doesn't meet the original purpose and needs when you have such a backlog of existing unmet transportation needs?

Customer Feedback



[Click here to view Customer Feedback 2019 from first meeting.](#)

[Guess they didn't think my 2019 feedback was substantive...](#)

Unmet Need Work Plan 2019-2021

<i>Highway & Bridge</i>				
<i>Capital Needs vs Anticipated Funding</i>				
<i>(millions of \$)</i>				
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/TTS 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:

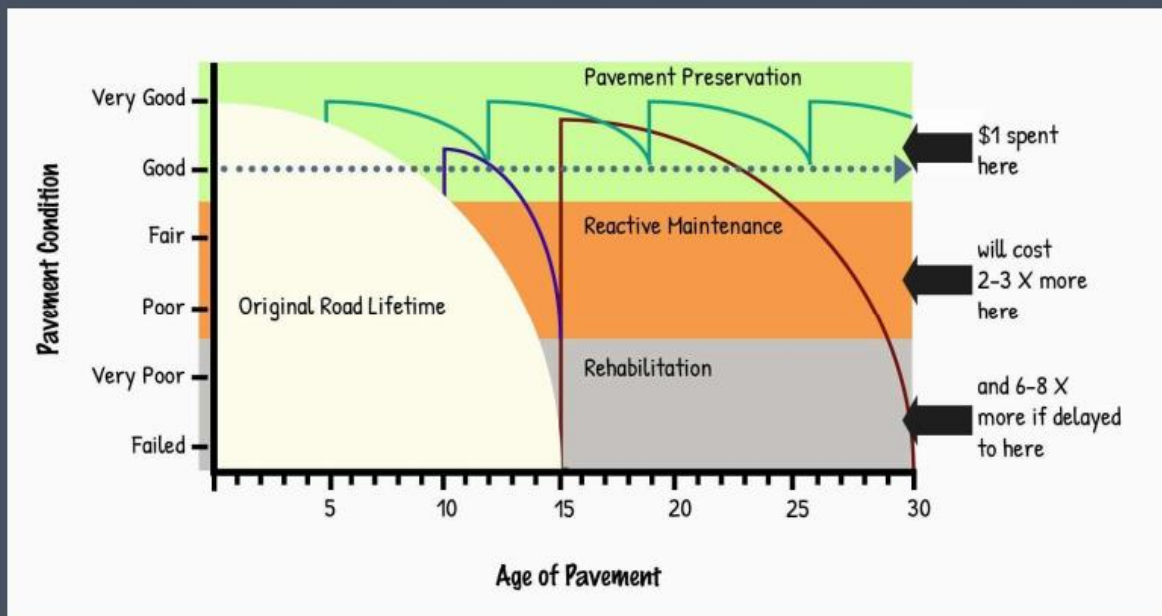
\$80M GF G.O. Bonding for Highways and Bridges
 \$25M in Federal Discretionary Grants (TIGER, BUILD, INFRA)
 \$10M in Federal August Redistribution
 \$3M in Highway Fund Year-End Receipts



[Click here for Infrastructure Overview Presentation from first meeting \(pg. 50\).](#)

Cost of Deferred Preservation

Preservation – Cost Effective Management of an Asset



[Click here for Infrastructure Overview Presentation from first meeting \(pg. 59\).](#)

October 6, 2019

[Click here to view online.](#)



LETTERS

Stops for Wiscasset traffic light may be longer than intended

Since the signal is located in the middle of a steep hill on Route 1, big rigs may have a hard time getting moving when the light changes.

We all respect the effort of the Maine Department of Transportation workers, who keep our roads clear and safe throughout the year. But there is another aspect of DOT that requires more oversight than it receives. The engineering department apparently believes that DOT stands for: Don't Overthink. We have all witnessed some of their bonehead designs and wondered who was responsible for that.

Well, that office has struck again. In the middle of the hill, the somewhat steep hill in Wiscasset, there now stands a traffic light. The semis that ply Route 1 will now need to stop for that red light in the middle of that steep hill – in the winter. Well, they may not get moving again. And, come summer, when the pavement heats and softens, those same semis will cause rolls in the pavement as they attempt to start moving after their stop.

The irony here is that all the work being done is designed to ease the flow of traffic, but stopping those big rigs on a hill? Sophist engineering.

Richard Foley

Gorham

Title 23: TRANSPORTATION

Part 1: STATE HIGHWAY LAW

Chapter 3: OFFICIALS AND THEIR DUTIES

Subchapter 1: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

[Click here to view this Maine State Statute online.](#)

§73. Transportation policy

1. Short title. This section may be known and cited as the "Sensible Transportation Policy Act."

2. Purposes and findings.

"The people further find that the decisions of state agencies regarding transportation needs and facilities are often made in isolation, without sufficient comprehensive planning and opportunity for meaningful public input and guidance."

Does anyone really think that's funny? Legislators actual felt it necessary to put that into a statute? Seems to line up with the above LTE...

A transportation advocacy group advises that we should cut federal funding, as states often spend those federal funds on new roads instead of fixing our crumbling infrastructure. Every year the DOT says we need to bond again because of all the roads and bridges in disrepair, yet the DOT continues to squirrel away \$79.25 million for the new I-395/Route 9 connector project instead of spending those limited funds on Maine's unmet transportation needs:



[OUR PRINCIPLES](#) ▾

[MAPS & TOOLS](#)

T4AMERICA BLOG

News, press releases and other updates

Why we are no longer advocating for Congress to increase transportation funding

3 Oct 2019 | Posted by [Beth Osborne](#) | [11 Comments](#) | [congress](#), [reauthorization](#), [transportation funding](#), [Transportation Policy](#), [transportation principles](#)

Since our inception in 2008, Transportation for America has always primarily advocated for reforming the federal transportation program. But raising the gas tax or otherwise raising new funding overall has also been a core plank of our platform since 2013. With the release of our brand new policy platform and principles coming this Monday, Transportation for America is no longer asking Congress to provide an increase in money for federal transportation program. Why?



For as long as I've been working in transportation and probably longer, the debate surrounding the federal transportation program has been a one-note affair: a never-ending fight over who gets money and how much money they get. Those who get money want more flexibility to spend it however they want. Those who get a little money want a bigger piece of the pie. And then both political parties come together in a "bipartisan" way to grow the pie and keep everyone happy.

This two-dimensional debate always leaves out an urgently needed conversation about the *purpose* of this federal transportation program. What are we doing? Why are we spending \$50 billion a year? What is it supposed to accomplish? Does anyone know anymore?

Nearly seven decades ago we set out with a clear purpose: connect our cities and rural areas and states with high-speed interstates and highways for cars and trucks and make travel all about *speed*. These brand new highways made things like cross-country and inter-state travel easier than we ever imagined possible. We connected places that weren't well-connected before and reaped the economic benefits (while also dividing and obliterating some communities along the way).

We've never really updated those broad goals from 1956 in a meaningful way. We've moved from the exponential returns of building brand new connections where they didn't exist to the diminishing, marginal returns of spending billions to add a new lane of road here and there, which promptly fills up with new traffic.

Why in the world would we just pour more money into a program that is "devoid of any broad, ambitious vision for the future, and [in which] more spending has only led to more roads, more traffic, more pollution, more inequality, and a lack of transportation options," [as I wrote](#) in the Washington Post during Infrastructure Week?

What the program *should* be about is accountability to the American taxpayer—making a few clear, concrete, measurable promises and then delivering on them. The program should focus on what we're getting for the funds we're spending—not simply whether or not money gets spent and how much there was.

Does anyone doubt Congress's ability to successfully spend money? We all have supreme confidence in their ability to spend hundreds of billions of dollars. Our question is whether that money can be spent in a way that accomplishes something tangible and measurable for the American people.

Taxpayers deserve to know what they're getting for their spending. Today, they don't, and nothing about the debate so far in 2019 with Congress has indicated that will change. So we've scrapped "provide real funding" from our core principles. T4America has concluded that more money devoted to this same flawed system will just do more damage.

Coming next week: our new principles

With the conversation about money put behind us, on Monday we're releasing three new principles for what we expect this upcoming surface transportation bill to accomplish. We believe that whether Congress decides to spend more money or less, these three things should be paramount.

Every time federal transportation reauthorization comes up, we hear endless cries about the poor state of our crumbling infrastructure. How many bridges are structurally deficient, how poor our roads are, the long backlogs of neglected maintenance, the (severely inflated) costs of congestion, perhaps even a few voices about the alarming increase in people struck and killed while walking...the list of woes goes on and on.

And then, predictably, states, interest groups, members of Congress and others call for more money for the federal transportation program as the only logical solution, with no clear promises made for how this money will solve any of the problems outlined above or precisely what will be better or different after five years of spending yet billions more.

So let's stop limping along and spending billions with an unclear purpose and marginal returns. We need a clear set of explicit goals for the federal program. We'll be back here on Monday as we unveil our principles.

POLICY PLATFORM

Principles for Infrastructure Investment

It's past time to elevate the national conversation about infrastructure beyond just the price tag

We spend nearly \$40 billion in federal tax dollars every year, which fails to bring us equivalent returns. The more we spend, the more that congestion, emissions, and pedestrian fatalities seem to rise.

We spend billions while failing to address our most basic need: **getting people where they need to go safely and efficiently**. More money alone will not suffice without accountability for measurable or tangible accomplishments.

We need a new plan beyond "spend more money." Whether a standalone infrastructure plan or a multi-year authorization, T4America has **three simple principles** for any comprehensive federal investment in transportation:

Click on any principle to go deeper on all three.

PRINCIPLE #1

Prioritize maintenance

Cut the road, bridge, and transit maintenance backlog in half by dedicating formula highway funds to maintenance.

Did you know: States are permitted to neglect their basic maintenance needs in order to expand their roadway systems—and then rewarded with more funding.



www.t4america.org/platform



PRINCIPLE #2

Design for safety over speed

A serious effort to reduce deaths on our roadways requires slower speeds on local and arterial roads. The federal program should require designs and approaches that put safety first.



 **Transportation**
for America

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PRINCIPLE #3

Connect people to jobs and services

Don't focus on speed. Instead, determine how well the transportation system connects people to jobs and services, and prioritize the projects that will improve those connections.

 **Transportation**
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These principles and expected outcomes will help us achieve measurable, tangible, concrete outcomes from the transportation program. We're used to not expecting measurable results from the dollars we spend. It's time to change that.

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

Guiding principles for transportation investment

It's past time to elevate the national conversation about infrastructure beyond just the price tag

We spend nearly \$40 billion in federal tax dollars every year, which fails to bring us equivalent returns. The more we spend, the more that congestion, emissions, and pedestrian fatalities seem to rise.

We spend billions while failing to address our most basic need: **getting people where they need to go safely and efficiently**. More money alone will not suffice without accountability for measurable or tangible accomplishments.

We need a new plan beyond "spend more money." Whether a standalone infrastructure plan or a multi-year authorization, T4America has **three simple principles** for any comprehensive federal investment in transportation:

(click the image at right or [here](#) to download a sharable PDF of these principles)



PRIORITIZE MAINTENANCE



If your house has a leaky roof, it's only prudent to fix the roof before building a new addition. Our transportation system is no different. In transit, formula funds are focused on maintenance, perhaps overly so. Roadway funds are not focused on maintenance, and **our roads are deteriorating, despite unprecedented high levels of funding**, including windfall funding from the 2009 Recovery Act. **States are allowed to spend more on expansion than repair**—which many states do—so merely adding new funding into these existing programs will not reduce our maintenance backlog.

🚧 Cut the road, bridge, and transit maintenance backlog in half

The next authorization should cut the maintenance backlog in half by dedicating formula highway funds to maintenance. In addition, when building new road capacity, agencies should be required to create a plan for maintaining both the new road and the rest of their system. This is common sense and is already required when building new transit projects. Roads should not be treated differently. On the highway side, it will be important to organize the program to better support repair. On the transit side, the program is organized well in terms of addressing maintenance needs but needs more resources.

With this approach, the federal government can halve the current backlog in six years under current funding levels. If funding is increased, they can do more.

DESIGN FOR SAFETY OVER SPEED

Access to safe, convenient transportation is a fundamental right. Today, most Americans are denied this right because their roads—not just highways—are designed to move vehicles at the highest speeds possible, and roads are not designed for people walking, biking, or taking transit as a priority.

High speeds make sense on interstates and other highways, but fatalities occur when we design all streets for high speeds rather than to connect people and create value. Local and arterial roads must be designed to put safety first.

🚩 Save lives with slower, safer road design

A serious effort to reduce deaths on our roadways requires slower speeds on local and arterial roads. The federal program should require designs and approaches that put safety first.

Roads surrounded by development should be designed to serve those areas with speeds of 35 mph or under, as speeds under 35 mph dramatically decrease the likelihood of fatalities in a crash. Roadways through developed areas have lots of points of conflict (driveways and intersections, not to mention bicyclists and pedestrians). Protecting the safety of all people who use the street must be a priority reflected in the decisions we make about how to fund, design, operate, maintain, and measure the success of our roads.



CONNECT PEOPLE TO JOBS AND SERVICES



The point of transportation is to get people where they need to go. Since the dawn of the modern highway era, we have used vehicle speed as a poor proxy for access to jobs and important services like healthcare, education, public services, and grocery stores. The way we build roads and design communities to achieve high vehicle speed often requires longer trips and makes shorter walking or bicycling trips unsafe, unpleasant, or impossible.

New technologies can now help us measure success by the primary thing that matters to real people: the ease of arriving at your destination. We can hold agencies accountable to deliver these connections.

🚩 Determine how well the transportation system connects people to jobs and services, and prioritize projects that will improve those connections.

Congress should require USDOT to collect the data necessary to develop a national assessment of access to jobs and services and set national goals for improvement.

With these data, state departments of transportation and planning organizations can ensure federal investments are effectively connecting people to economic opportunity. Funding should go to projects that will improve these connections, regardless of mode. State departments of transportation (DOTs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) should be held accountable by evaluating how well their investments help connect people to destinations.

These principles and expected outcomes will help us achieve measurable, tangible, concrete outcomes from the transportation program. We're used to not expecting measurable results from the dollars we spend. **It's time to change that.**

Bonds are not free; this 2020 bond will cost a whopping \$28,875,000.00 in interest + \$105,000,000.00 in principal for a total of \$133,875,000.00 over 10 years.

Style No. 1

**State of Maine Sample Ballot
Referendum Election, November 5, 2019**

<u>Instructions to Voters</u>	Question 1: Bond Issue	Question 2: Constitutional Amendment
<p>To vote for a question, fill in the oval to the right of the "Yes" or "No" choice, like this: ●</p> <p>To have your vote count, do not erase or cross out your choice.</p> <p>If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot.</p>	<p>Do you favor a \$105,000,000 bond issue to build or improve roads, bridges, railroads, airports, transit and ports and make other transportation investments, to be used to match an estimated \$137,000,000 in federal and other funds?</p> <p>Total estimated life time cost is \$133,875,000 representing \$105,000,000 in principal and \$28,875,000 in interest (assuming interest at 5.0% over 10 years).</p> <p>A "Yes" vote <u>approves</u> the issuance of up to one hundred and five million dollars (\$105,000,000) in general obligation bonds to finance transportation-related activities.</p> <p>A "No" vote <u>opposes</u> the bond issue in its entirety.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>Do you favor amending the Constitution of Maine to allow persons with disabilities to sign petitions in an alternative manner as authorized by the Legislature?</p> <p>A "Yes" vote <u>approves</u> adoption of the constitutional amendment.</p> <p>A "No" vote <u>opposes</u> adoption of the constitutional amendment.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/></p>

Bonding should not be used for maintenance repairs as the repair may not last for the complete 10 year bond life. How many times are you going to skim-coat the same exact sections of Routes 9/11/6/15 in central Maine over the next ten years?

"The Maine Department of Transportation has come to rely on about \$100 million in bonds each year to cover the cost of road and bridge maintenance and repairs. Although **borrowed money should generally not be used for repair projects that may not last as long as the interest payments, this remains a vital source of funding for MDOT." [Bangor Daily News Editorial 7.22.2019](#)**



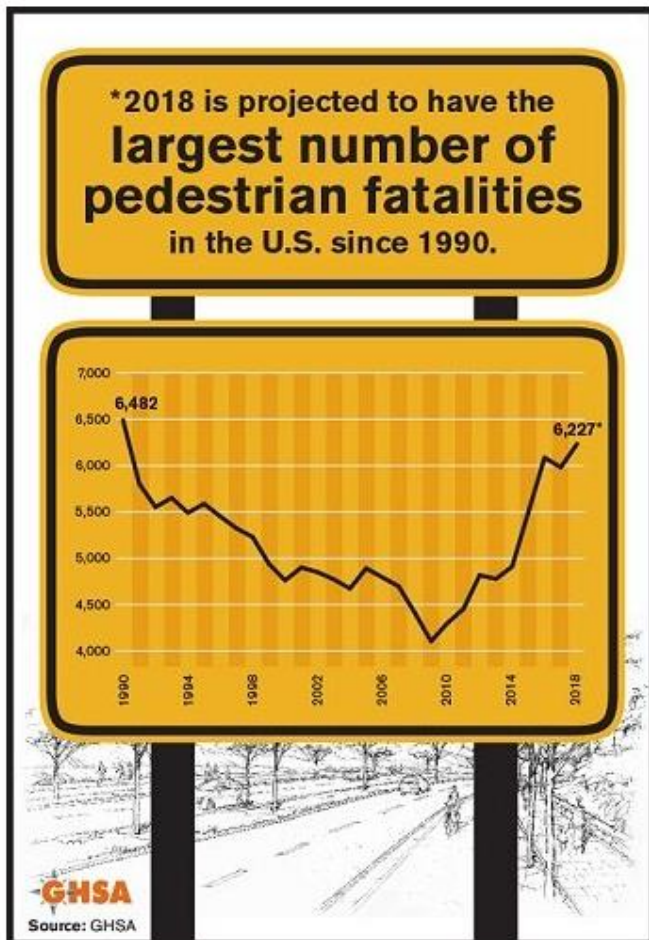
Joe Cortright is a Strong Towns member who runs the think tank and blog City Observatory. This piece is republished here with permission. For more on Transportation for America's bold policy shift, see [this post](#) from Strong Towns president Chuck Marohn.

[Click here to view online.](#)

There's been a kind of Kabuki theatre around federal transportation funding legislation over the past two decades. Advocates for transit, biking and walking form a loose coalition with the traditional highway interests to browbeat the Congress in to putting more money into transportation. Every few years, we get an omnibus piece of legislation with an inscrutable acronym ([SAFTEA-LU](#) and [MAP-21](#)), and a few more odd billion dollars. And for the past 25 years, all of the increased funding has been on the back of taxpayers, and it's been regarded as politically impossible to raise the so-called "user fees" — in the form of the federal gasoline tax. The result has been more than \$100 billion used to subsidize transportation, chiefly car transportation.



While they've been reliable allies to the highway lobby, progressive transportation forces have essentially gotten crumbs. In the face of growing evidence of climate change and a strong demand for urban living, all of the key indicators of transportation system performance are telling us the current approach is failing. [Vehicle miles traveled](#) and [carbon emissions are rising](#). More [pedestrians are being killed](#) in the US. [Transit ridership is falling](#).



Given our social and environmental challenges, and the great opportunity to meet an [unrequited demand](#) for car-free and car-lite urban living, we need a different approach to national transportation policy.

Finally, [Transportation for America](#) has said “Enough.” It has announced that it won’t support more federal funding for transportation until there’s been some fundamental reform of the policy that guides the use of these funds.

New principles for federal transportation policy

Transportation for American has laid out three key principles that they say should govern federal policy:

Fix it first. The case more transportation spending is always pitched as the need to patch potholes and repair bridges, but state highway departments routinely use added funding not to address these backlogs, but instead increase highway capacity. Advocates have seen this kind of bait and switch often enough to know that without requiring maintenance to be prioritized, additional money just means more lanes of traffic, and thanks to induced demand, even more congestion. (As I’ve pointed out at City Observatory, to many highway engineers, [induced demand is more of a feature than a bug](#) — it just continually generates a “need” for ever more road construction. Transportation for America wants a real priority for maintenance.

Safety before speed. Transportation for America highlights recent findings from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) confirming what we've long known: excessive speed is the principal cause of roadway crashes and fatalities. Despite the lip service many state's play to safety — routinely blaming vulnerable road users and trying to achieve safety largely with gimmicky ad-campaigns — the real priority of most transportation programs is “making cars go faster.” [Criteria](#) like level-of-service and the 85th percentile rule for setting speed limits are so deeply imbedded in the thought processes and design standards of the transportation system that it's impossible to challenge. Transportation for America is calling for putting a priority on projects that increase safety — which in many cases will mean reducing speeds.

Accessibility not mobility. As [David Levinson](#) and others have pointed out, transportation policy prioritizes “going faster” (mobility) over “getting somewhere” (accessibility). The unfortunate by-product of massive expansion of car infrastructure is sprawl: all of our common destinations are now more spread-out, forcing us to travel further, and making walking, cycling and transit, less efficient and more dangerous. A good transportation system is one where we don't have to travel so much, or travel so far to meet basic needs. And yet the metrics that are routinely used to measure transportation system performance invariably obsess about speed and ignore accessibility. Transportation for America is calling for this to be redressed.

A good start. Let's also get the prices right

We agree with all of these principles. If adopted, they'd definitely push federal transportation investments in a more socially and environmentally sensible direction. But I'd go even further.

At its root, [our transportation problems stem from the rampant mis-pricing of transportation](#), in particular our subsidies to car travel and car storage. Federal transportation policy should make “user pays” and “cost responsibility” key parts of its spending decisions. There’s no reason transportation should be subsidized from general funds; higher gasoline taxes, and widespread implementation of value pricing (to reflect back to users the high cost of providing peak our travel), would help promote more efficient use of the nation’s expensive investment in transportation, and meaningfully encourage transit, cycling and walking.

More money for a badly broken system will only lead to greater car dependence. It’s time for advocates of biking, walking and transit to insist on a new approach to federal transportation policy. Transportation for America has laid out a clear set of principles to guide that effort.

Cover photo via [Unsplash](#).

As presented by the MaineDOT to the Blue-ribbon Commission on 10.24.2019:

State Capital Transportation Funding Annual Shortfall

Annual Funding Assumptions

- No major changes to core state or federal budget allocations
- \$100 Million (M) in G.F. G.O. Bonding
- \$25 M in federal discretionary grant programs
- \$15 M in federal August redistribution
- \$3 M in state Highway Fund year-end balances

If these assumptions do not come to pass, the annual shortfall below would increase.

<i>Annual Shortfall</i> (millions of \$)				
Work Group	Adjusted to Current Pricing	Anticipated Annual Funding	\$ Shortfall	% Shortfall
Bridge Projects	\$188	\$120	-\$67	-56%
Paving Projects (including LCP)	\$141	\$120	-\$21	-17%
Safety and Spot Imp. (including Partnerships)	\$61	\$35	-\$26	-74%
Traffic/Mobility/Capacity/ITS Improvements	\$41	\$13	-\$28	-217%
Highway Reconstruction/Rehab	\$118	\$63	-\$55	-87%
Multimodal Improvements	\$91	\$56	-\$35	-63%
Totals	\$640	\$407	-\$232	-57%

[Click here to view online.](#)

An annual shortfall of **-\$232 million** or **-57%**, but
let's build a **\$79.25 million** connector anyway...

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

By The Editorial Board June 9, 2019

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.

Maine passes road and bridge borrowing for 5th straight year

By [Michael Shepherd](#), BDN Staff • November 5, 2019 9:07 pm

Updated: November 6, 2019 1:23 am

AUGUSTA, Maine — A \$105 million transportation **bond passed easily** in Maine's Tuesday election, marking the **fifth straight year** that road and bridge borrowing has passed as lawmakers consider overhauling the funding system.

Question 1 was sailing to passage, according to unofficial returns collected by the Bangor Daily News as of 9 p.m., when the yes side had 76.4 percent of votes to the no side's 23.6 percent with 31 percent of precincts reporting. It will be matched by \$137 million in federal funds.

Voters have never rejected this kind of borrowing package, which has been backed by lawmakers of both parties along with Democratic Gov. Janet Mills and Paul LePage, her Republican predecessor. The state [has counted on the annual funding for years](#).

On the state side, \$85 million will go to road and bridge construction and maintenance. The rest will go to other transportation modes, culverts and a renovation to a wharf and bulkhead at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland.

Maine has relied on borrowing as higher-efficiency vehicles make it harder to rely on the gas tax. The state's Highway Fund [had more money in 2006](#) than it did in 2017 as registration and other fees have accounted for a bigger share of the fund.

Even with the funding, the Maine Department of Transportation estimated it would face a \$140 million shortfall in road and bridge maintenance as [a state commission considers overhauling Maine's funding system](#) aiming to propose legislation by 2020.

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The Magazine of the Maine Better Transportation Association

MAINE TRAILS

**BLUE RIBBON
COMMISSION:
AUGUSTA,
WE HAVE
A PROBLEM**

**THE GO-TO GUY:
Remembering
John Dority**



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AUGUSTA, WE HAVE A PROBLEM

A blue ribbon commission meeting this fall promises to shine the spotlight on a growing problem in Maine's transportation funding

By Kathryn Buxton



DURING THE last regular session of the Maine Legislature, lawmakers passed L.D. 945: Resolve, To Establish the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study and Recommend Funding Solutions for the State's Transportation Systems. This fall, the commission has begun meeting with the goal of presenting a report on transportation funding options to the legislature in advance of the next session. Few transportation insiders believe that the commission will be able to establish a definitive and sustainable solution for the current annual funding shortfall, estimated at \$140 million by MaineDOT.

Still, there is a cautious sense of optimism that getting members of the legislature, the public and representatives from the transportation community to sit down together and talk is a first step on the road to a solution. "First thing is for there to be a recognition that we have a problem," said Representative Andrew McLean (D-Gorham), one of the commission's co-chairs and a co-chair of the Maine Legislature's Transportation Committee. That will be essential, he said, to setting the stage for any action on the issue during the 2020 legislative session.

REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING

Representative Thomas H. Martin (R-Greene) submitted the bill that called for creation of the commission, and he is quick to credit his fellow Transportation Committee members, especially Representative McLean, for their work during the past few sessions to keep the discussion of transportation funding open and proposing solutions. The intent of this bill, he said, was to create the opportunity to expand those discussions outside the Transportation Committee and try to reach bipartisan agreement on the scope of the problem and begin to take steps to address it.

Martin, a former MBTA president who has a background in public works and construction, says the success of the commission will be incumbent on "the willingness of the members of the commission to reach out to their communities and explain that the money they pay in taxes and fees is well spent and there is a need to do more."

HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

Blue Ribbon Commission Co-Chair Senator Bill Diamond (D-Cumberland) and co-chair of the Transportation Committee, takes

a more fundamental approach.

"Our first obligation is to see what the problem is and how serious it is," said Senator Diamond. He said agreeing on the facts is important because that will form the basis of everything else the commission does over the course of five to six meetings this fall. The seriousness of the problem, said Diamond, begins with that \$140 million gap that many believe is bigger.

MaineDOT does acknowledge the gap is bigger, if certain things are taken into account. "Add multimodal transportation, and we likely break the \$150 million threshold," said MaineDOT Public Information Officer Paul Merrill, adding "if the legislature hadn't approved the \$105 million bond [going to voters in November], that would have put our annual shortfall in excess of \$250 million."

SETTING THE STAGE

At the first meeting of the commission on September 17, much of the time was taken up by a presentation by MaineDOT Chief Engineer Joyce Taylor and MaineDOT Director of Results and Information Andrew Bickmore, who outlined the challenges the department faces, including a high number of annual bridge postings and closings, infrastructure stresses created by climate change, and pedestrian and driver safety issues related to aging or outdated infrastructure. The presentation also included an explanation of how delaying maintenance increases highway maintenance by as much to six to eight times the original cost. MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note, who is a member of the commission, and MaineDOT Finance Director Karen Doyle were also on hand to answer questions.

Former MBTA President Paul Koziell of CPM Constructors, Inc., is one of the 15 individuals appointed to the commission. He said the first meeting was a productive one. He said Taylor and Bickford "did an excellent job" explaining the present status of MaineDOT's budget constraints as well as the problem the agency faces in addressing maintenance and safety issues on a massive system that includes 8,812 miles of highway, 2,967 state-maintained bridges, three deep-water ports, 35 publicly owned airports, 337 miles of state-owned rail line, 22 public transit providers and 68 miles of ferry routes, among other assets. The commission also toured two job sites, one in Gardiner and one in Hallowell.

"It was a good introduction day," said Koziell. "Committee members asked thoughtful questions, and there seemed to be agreement that there

"Our first obligation is to see what the problem is and how serious it is."

Commission Co-Chair,
Senator Bill Diamond



"We don't drive on Democratic or Republican roads or bridges. We drive on Maine roads and bridges, and we need to find a solution that works for all Maine people."

Commission Co-Chair,
Representative Andrew
McLean



"Committee members asked thoughtful questions, and there seemed to be agreement that there is a funding problem."

Paul Koziell, President
CPM Constructors



Success will depend on "the willingness of the members to reach out to their communities and explain that the money they pay in taxes and fees is well spent and there is a need to do more."

Representative Thomas H.
Martin

is a funding problem."

Still, Koziell is eager to see what comes next. "I am looking forward to the commission beginning to focus on solving the transportation funding problem," said Koziell. "I've never sat on a commission like this before, but I am very optimistic."

THE PROBLEM WITH BONDS

Commission Co-Chair Diamond also mentioned bonding as a concern. While transportation bonds traditionally have enjoyed majority support in the legislature and among voters, Diamond and others wonder about the sustainability of bonds as a way to fill the consistent and growing gap in MaineDOT's budget. This November, Maine voters will weigh in on the fourth of four annual \$100 million transportation bonds in as many years. That stopgap measure has been critical as vehicle fuel efficiency has increased and gas tax revenues have not kept pace with wear and tear on Maine's roads.

Still, Diamond warns against continuing using bonds as a regular revenue source. "Relying on a \$100 million bond every year is not a

good idea," said Senator Diamond. "It's bad economics. It's not sound budgeting."

MBTA President Paul Bradbury said many interested parties like himself are hoping that the commission will recommend a sustainable alternative to bonds as a way to fill the gap. Bonds, he notes, come with risks, like this year when the legislature waited until August to pass a transportation bond.

"I hope the commission considers our current use of bonds," said Bradbury. "Bonding is one of our important funding tools since it allows for infrastructure with a long life cycle to be paid over time. Bonds should be reserved for those significant long lasting projects like bridges and road reconstruction." Bradbury added: "Unfortunately, we may have become too reliant on short-term bonds funding routine work, and we should be wary of the risks associated with that."

LOOKING AHEAD

What the commission will ultimately recommend will be shaped in future discussions, and several members have topics they would like to

"To me, what we should be talking about is . . . what is the immediate need and how are we going to take care of the infrastructure that we've got."

Senator Brad Farrin



"I hope the commission considers our current use of bonds. . . Unfortunately, we may have become too reliant on short-term bond funding for routine work."

Paul Bradbury, MBTA
President

What's on the table

At press time, it was unknown what solutions the commission will ultimately recommend, but most agree there are several funding concepts that are almost certain to be discussed.

They are:

F

FUEL TAXES

Maine currently levies a 30-cent per gallon tax on fuel sold in the state and a diesel fuel tax of 31.21-cents per gallon. The last time the fuel tax increased was in 2011. Maine's gas tax is ranked 24th out of the 50 states. At No. 1, Pennsylvania has the highest gas tax (58.70 cents / gallon) and Alaska is No. 50 (14.65 cents / gallon), according to the Tax Foundation. Drivers also pay 18.4 cents per gallon in federal fuel taxes, a rate that has not increased in more than 25 years.

Estimates are that Maine would generate \$7.5 million annually for every 1 cent increase in the state fuel tax. Many states have found this to be a viable option. Since 2013, 31 states have increased or adjusted taxes to raise transportation revenues, according to the Transportation Investment Advocacy Center, a project by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

T

TOLLING

Maine operates one toll highway, the Maine Turnpike. In 2018, the Maine Turnpike

Authority (MTA) raised \$138 million in toll revenue that was used to operate and maintain the 109-mile highway. Between 1982 and 2019, the MTA estimates it has contributed \$219 million to support Maine's transportation system, including debt service on MaineDOT-related transfers, interchange construction and other projects. Currently, the MTA is statutorily required to provide at least five percent of its net toll revenue to MaineDOT, which it does by providing maintenance for MaineDOT-owned highways and facilities and providing funding for various projects, including recent commitments to provide \$9.2 million toward the \$52.6 million cost to repair and rehabilitate the Piscataqua River Bridge and \$600,000 for MaineDOT's travel time sign project.

V

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

The commission is expected to explore the feasibility of a user-based fee based on the actual miles traveled. Several states are currently studying the feasibility of enacting such a fee. Maine currently is participating in one of those studies, the MBUF Pilot Program, a multi-state pilot by the I-95 Corridor Coalition.

A

ALTERNATIVE FUEL AND HYBRID VEHICLE FEES

As more Maine consumers and businesses turn to electric and hybrid vehicles, the impact on state fuel tax revenues promises to be significant. As of 2018, there were an estimated 19,000 hybrid vehicles and 410 electric vehicles registered in the state, and that number is

expected to increase as more Mainers look to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. Earlier this year, Governor Janet Mills announced \$5 million in funding for a rebate program to encourage more Mainers to purchase electric vehicles. While fuel efficiency is good, each new, fuel-efficient vehicle means the state receives fewer dollars to maintain its transportation network.

Currently, Maine does not charge a fee for hybrid or electric vehicles, but 28 other states already do, and that is helping them to replace declining fuel tax revenue. Those annual fees range from \$50 per vehicle in Hawaii and Colorado to a high of \$235 per vehicle in Michigan for electric vehicles. For hybrids, the lowest fees are \$10-\$20 in Utah, and the highest fee is \$500 for plug-in hybrids in Missouri.

S

SALES TAX AND REGISTRATION FEES

Maine has over the years toyed with allocating sales tax proceeds from the purchase of transportation-related goods and services to the highway fund. MBTA members successfully advocated for passage of L.D. 1790: An Act to Secure Maine's Transportation Future in 2007. That bill called for a modest increase in motor vehicle registration fees, as well as setting aside 20 percent of state sales tax revenues from transportation-related purchases for the Highway Fund. The commission is likely to renew discussion of this funding option.

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see addressed. Commission member Senator Brad Farrin (R-Somerset) wants to see the group more closely define the problem. Farrin works for MiltonCAT and is well aware of the issues MaineDOT faces. He also notes that he represents one of the poorest counties in Maine and is wary of any solution that would regressively affect his constituents. To that end, he said he also hopes the committee will be judicious in how it addresses the funding problem. Farrin said: "To me, what we should be talking about is repair and maintenance of our existing infrastructure – what is the immediate need and how are we going to take care of the infrastructure that we've got."

The key to the commission's success, Farrin said, would be keeping focus and keeping the message simple. "Don't make this more complicated than it needs to be. We're not trying to solve Maine's whole transportation system. We need to zero in on funding for the infrastructure we have."

Representative McLean is looking forward to the final report the commission plans to submit and is hopeful that it will spark meaningful discussions – and a move to find a solution among his fellow legislators on both sides of the aisle.

"We don't drive on Democratic or Republican roads or bridges. We drive on Maine roads and bridges, and we need to find a solution that works for all Maine people," said McLean. "We have smart, thoughtful people on the commission, and I am optimistic we will come to a bi-partisan agreement, but we'd better do it soon because the longer we delay, the more it is going to cost." ■

MBTA will be following the commission's progress. Look for updates on Facebook and in Maine Trails.

About the Blue Ribbon Commission

IN AUGUST, Governor Janet Mills' office released a list of 15 citizens who will be serving on the commission. Members come from both chambers of the legislature, MaineDOT, Maine Turnpike Authority and different constituencies throughout the state.

The commission plans to hold five meetings between September and December. The schedule calls for wrapping up its study and presenting a report before the next legislative session begins in January 2020.

GOVERNOR'S APPOINTEES & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- Paul Koziell, President, CPM Constructors, Inc.
- Jess Mauer, Executive Director, Maine Council on Aging
- Gary Picard, Town Manager, Town of Madawaska
- Barry Pottle, President and CEO, Pottle's Transportation LLC
- Ryan Ratledge, CEO, Central Maine and Quebec Railway
- Jim Tassé, Assistant Director, Bicycle Coalition of Maine

SENATE MEMBERS

- Senator Bill Diamond, Co-Chair (D-Cumberland County)
- Senator Bradlee Thomas Farrin (R-Somerset County)
- Senator Matthew G. Pouliot (R-Kennebec County)

HOUSE MEMBERS

- Rep. Kristen Cloutier (D-Lewiston)
- Rep. Andrew J. McLean, Co-Chair (D-Gorham)
- Rep. Thomas H. Martin (R-Greene)
- Rep. Nathan J. Wadsworth (R-Hiram)

AGENCY MEMBERS

- Maine Turnpike Authority Executive Director Peter Mills or the executive director's designee
- MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note or the commissioner's designee

Portland Press Herald

[Letter to the editor](#): Road, bridge fixes should become a Maine priority

Posted April 14, 2019

We can't keep borrowing money to fund maintenance – we need to raise the gas tax.

Maine's highways and bridges are a mess. It's so bad that Harpswell Neck Fire Department ambulance drivers detour off Route 123 to Mountain Road and continue on Route 24 to Brunswick medical facilities instead of taking a direct path on Route 123.

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-minus, according to [an American Society of Civil Engineers analysis in 2016](#), its latest report. The worse grade? D for roads. (Dams, wastewater and transportation all received D-plus grades. The highest grades? Drinking water and parks, which each got a C.)

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. 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 Conner | *Harpswell*



Funding Maine's old infrastructure

By Phil Hirschhorn | Posted: Wed 7:50 AM, Nov 13, 2019

PORTLAND, Maine (WMTW) - A "Blue Ribbon Commission" of government officials and industry experts is studying ways - beyond the gas tax and tolls - to raise revenue for road and bridge repairs.



Unveiling a new bridge or road in Maine is a rare event. The "Sarah Mildred Long Bridge," here in Kittery, is Maine's newest big bridge. It opened last year. But **more than half of Maine bridges are 50-years-old, and a-quarter are 80-years old.**

To finance and speed up projects, other states along the I-95 Corridor are relying more on public-private partnerships -- public assets designed, built, and maintained by private firms. That's how this tunnel in the Port of Miami got built...and this one, from Portsmouth to Norfolk, Virginia. Same approach for new bridges over the Ohio River, serving Kentucky and Indiana.

But Maine Transportation Commissioner, Bruce Van Note says those are all higher traffic areas, predicting solid profits for the private partners.

"There may be a couple places in Maine where that could make some sense, but not a lot, because you need a lot of traffic, and we're just so rural, with so many people driving on so many low volume roads, it's not going to have widespread application in Maine," said Van Note.

The only application of a public private partnership we could find in Maine was this roundabout on route 27 in Boothbay...making the road safer and easing traffic flow. It was a three-point-three-million dollar project split by the town, D-O-T, and a private businessman, who owns the country club nearby.

Stephen Sawyer is a Senior Vice President of "Sebago Technics," an engineering and design firm helping to build the expanded Turnpike Toll Plaza under construction in York. He's also a board member and past president of the "Maine Better Transportation Association."

He says one new way to get revenue, tested in other states- is a "vehicle mileage tax." It's tabulated by a device installed on your dashboard. Your tax is based on how many miles you drive.

"With smartphones that we all have, we're being tracked anyway. The answer is not going to be one thing. That's the problem. The problem is too big. You're going to have to have a menu of things that sort of chip away at this problem. So, there's no silver bullet," said Sawyer.

Drivers' license and car registration fees could be raised, too. The "Blue Ribbon" Commission is expected to make its first recommendations next month.

[Click here to view this article and video online.](#)

We have no money, yet another home is destroyed to make room for a road than many do not want nor see the need for:





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We have no money, yet another home is destroyed to make room for a road than many do not want nor see the need for:





State Capital Transportation Funding Annual Shortfall

Annual Funding Assumptions

- No major changes to core state or federal budget allocations
- \$100 Million (M) in G.F. G.O. Bonding
- \$25 M in federal discretionary grant programs
- \$15 M in federal August redistribution
- \$3 M in state Highway Fund year-end balances

If these assumptions do not come to pass, the annual shortfall below would increase.

<i>Annual Shortfall</i> <i>(millions of \$)</i>				
Work Group	Adjusted to Current Pricing	Anticipated Annual Funding	\$ Shortfall	% Shortfall
Bridge Projects	\$188	\$120	-\$67	-56%
Paving Projects (including LCP)	\$141	\$120	-\$21	-17%
Safety and Spot Imp. (including Partnerships)	\$61	\$35	-\$26	-74%
Traffic/Mobility/Capacity/ITS Improvements	\$41	\$13	-\$28	-217%
Highway Reconstruction/Rehab	\$118	\$63	-\$55	-87%
Multimodal Improvements	\$91	\$56	-\$35	-63%
Totals	\$640	\$407	-\$232	-57%



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Totals	\$640	\$407	-\$232	-57%

- This document was presented to the “blue-ribbon” commission on October 24th of this year. The **-\$232 million (-57%) shortfall** includes recent bonding and several other assumptions.
- **A -\$232 million shortfall as they (the DOT) continue to squirrel away \$79.25 million for a highly controversial connector that many do not support, instead of funding the existing unmet transportation needs of the state.**



Money to rebuild Maine roads and bridges



Money to rebuild Maine roads and bridges.

Published: 5:43 PM EST November 25, 2019

Updated: 5:42 PM EST November 25, 2019

[Click here to view video.](#)

In summary, an **annual -\$232 million shortfall (-57%)** was reported to the blue-ribbon committee in October—yet the DOT currently sits on tens of millions of limited state and federal transportation dollars to support the controversial \$79.25 million I-395/Rte. 9 Connector, a project that many do not want or support. Seems fiscally irresponsible to fund a new project when the state has existing unmet needs and no money!!

Maine transportation funding panel deadlocks on gas tax as it nears December deadline

By [Caitlin Andrews](#), BDN Staff • November 25, 2019 6:00 pm

AUGUSTA, Maine — A commission charged by Gov. Janet Mills and lawmakers with fixing Maine's transportation funding gap bogged down on Monday, deadlocking on the thorny issue of raising the tax that makes up the lion's share of the state highway budget.

A blue-ribbon commission has one more meeting scheduled before the Legislature reconvenes to propose solutions to bridge a shortfall for road and bridge maintenance that Department of Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said now sits at \$232 million, a 46 percent increase from a March estimate mostly attributed to rising construction costs.

The commission cited increasing the gas tax and reallocating resources as possible ways to raise additional funds during a Monday meeting. But Republican members of the committee made it clear that raising the gas tax isn't on the table for them as the panel closes in on a December deadline to make recommendations to the Legislature.

Sen. Matthew Pouliot, R-Augusta, said members of his party "are interested in finding a solution," but he said a tax increase "is not "something we will get support for" in the election year of 2020 and that an increase in more fuel-efficient vehicles could impact its effectiveness.

Bridging the shortfall without raising the gas tax is likely to be difficult. Though the rise of more fuel-efficient vehicles has made it a less reliable revenue source, it made up 69 percent of the highway budget in 2017 while vehicle registrations and other fees made up most of the rest.

The fund had more money in it in 2006 than it did two years ago. The gas tax hasn't been raised in Maine since 2011 and not since 1993 on the federal level.

Barry Pottle, the CEO of Hermon-based Pottle's Transportation and a representative of trucking interests on the commission, said boosting the tax would be the easiest way to increase revenue and could be carried by his industry. He suggested an increase of 15 to 20 cents.

That would generate between \$112 million and \$150 million, given a department estimate that a 1-cent increase in the tax would generate \$7.5 million. But previous efforts to raise the gas tax and other fees have proven unsuccessful, and a large increase could be politically unpopular.

Instead, Pouliot and other Republicans on the commission suggested moving money from the state's General Fund to the highway budget or using some of a nearly \$30 million budget surplus to pay for projects. Other members of the commission suggested diverting some of the sales tax revenue raised through vehicle related purchase as a way to help fix the shortfall.

But Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, who co-chairs the commission, said the shortfall is "too substantial" to pursue just one solution and the group would need to compromise to adequately fix the problem. The commission agreed to form a subcommittee that will meet during the next few weeks to see if other solutions may be possible.

If not, the commission risks adjourning "without any sort of success," he said.

Van Note said the possibility of not having a solution by year's end and continuing the status quo was "unsettling" but would be "nothing new" to his department. He said reallocating revenues and raising new ones have worked in other states facing similar funding issues, and have worked — if both parties are willing to work together.

"By the end of today, we can't say they were ready to make that grand bargain," Van Note said.

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

Maine needs \$200 million more to rebuild roads

There is general agreement that borrowing \$100 million each year is not good policy, and that is one more factor driving the search for alternative financing.

Author: Don Carrigan

Published: 6:37 PM EST November 25, 2019

Updated: 6:37 PM EST November 25, 2019

AUGUSTA, Maine — Maine never has enough money to fix the roads, and the needs keep growing.

The Maine DOT says starting last year, construction costs have gone up 20 to 30 percent, making it even harder to keep up with repairs. The DOT says to meet all of next year's needs for road and bridge repairs would cost \$232 million more than the state currently raises for the purpose.

"There's a lot of construction projects we have to be funding and doing," says Sen. Bill Diamond, co-chair of the Legislature's Transportation Committee, "And if we don't, they will get worse. "

Diamond also is co-chair of a special committee of lawmakers, state officials and business leaders that's been studying the highway funding problem for the past few months. At a meeting Monday, the members tried to focus on specific ideas for other ways to raise the needed money each year.

The state currently pays for roads through the fuel tax, annual borrowing with bonds and federal dollars. There appears to be general agreement that borrowing \$100 million each year is not good policy, and that is one more factor driving the search for alternative financing.

The two ideas currently generating the most discussion are increasing the fuel tax and taking money from the state's General Fund provided by the sales tax on sales of cars, trucks and auto parts. Lawmakers say they have been told those taxes currently generate roughly \$160 million per year.

There appeared to be lots of agreement on taking some money from the General Fund, because the vehicles use the roads.

“If we’re generating the income from vehicles using those roads and bridges it would seem those dollars could be used to pay for that infrastructure,” said Sen. Matt Pouliot (R-Augusta).

But there is disagreement over raising the gas tax.

Pouliot and one other Republican argued that with the state having budget surpluses, it’s not the time to increase any taxes.

Diamond says a one-cent increase in the gas tax would only raise about \$7.5 million per year, so it cannot fill the funding gap by itself.

“In order to meet 100 million, for example, you have to raise it an awful lot and that’s beyond reality I think,” Diamond says.

However, Rep. Andrew MacLean (D-Gorham), the other co-chair of the committee, says they will need to rely on multiple funding sources to meet the needs, and that will take compromise.

“I think we are open to different ideas,” says MacLean, “And its not going to be possible to do 12 to 25 cents fuel tax increase and its also not going to be possible to solve this with general fund money.”

The general fund, including tax revenue from car and truck sales, is already used for other parts of the state budget, meaning reallocating some to highways would be controversial in the Legislature.

Maine DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note told the committee he hopes they can find some answers, but also warned there will need to be a bi-partisan compromise to get a plan through the Legislature and the Governor.

“The purpose has to be bi-partisan or non- partisan solutions,” Van Note says. “Because there are no Democratic roads or Republican bridges. It’s a common problem that needs common sense solutions.”

The committee is hoping to agree on a plan before the end of December.

[Click here to view online.](#)

A viable solution to Maine's lack of transportation capital:

No one can look at the condition of these bridges, as briefed by the [MaineDOT](#) to the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study and Recommend Funding Solutions for the State's Transportation Systems, without expressing profound concern.

Bridge Conditions — Yarmouth HCP 1



MaineDOT

Bridge Conditions — Wilton HCP 6



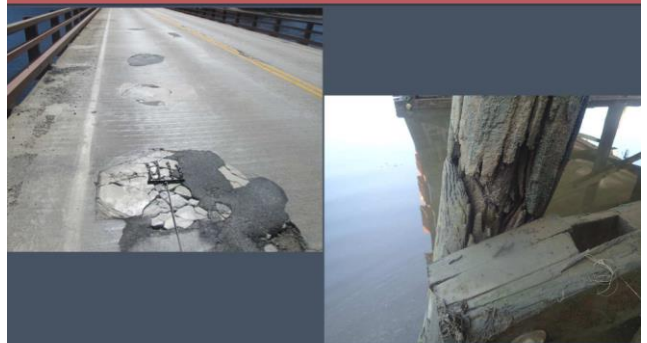
MaineDOT

Bridge Conditions — Peru HCP 2



MaineDOT

Bridge Conditions — South Berwick HCP 4



MaineDOT

Bridge Conditions — Millinocket HCP 4



MaineDOT

Bridge Conditions — Wilton HCP 6



MaineDOT

It is also highly disconcerting that—at the same time—a Brewer HCP 1 bridge, in [good/good/satisfactory condition](#), will be replaced at a cost of \$11.9 million merely to facilitate a project that the Brewer City Council does not support.

The \$11.9M replacement of the Wilson Street/I-395 Bridge (#1564)—the first phase of the \$79.25M I-395/Route 9 connector project—is necessitated by the dubious selection of 2B-2 as the preferred alternative; [set to advertise late 2019](#), the project was removed from the Construction Advertising Schedule in “...efforts to reconcile surging construction costs with available funding...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.” ([DOT Press Release 5.09.19](#)) Since 2B-2 is a new alignment—the connector project should be suspended...

It is fiscally irresponsible to spend \$11.9M of limited state and federal transportation dollars to deliberately demolish a bridge with a [good/good/satisfactory](#) rating when the State Capitol Transportation Funding [Work Group for Bridge Projects contains an annual -\\$67 million \(-56%\) shortfall](#).



45 of the 79 (57%) studied routes—NOT 2B-2—met the original system linkage need that mandated a [Route 9 EAST of Route 46](#) connection. 2B-2 connects to Route 9 [4.2 miles WEST](#) of that specific system linkage need connection point requiring the \$11.9M replacement of bridge #1564. 45 other routes did not!!

- [Bridge #1564 was built in 1984](#) and is a relatively new bridge at 35 when compared to the average age of Maine's bridges at 52+ years old.
- Maine's overall infrastructure—[4th worst in the nation](#) (CNBC).
- 14% of our bridges are rated structurally deficient—[7th worst in the nation](#).
- 43% of our roads are in poor to mediocre condition—[9th worst in the nation](#).
- Driving on roads in need of repair [costs every Maine motorist \\$529 a year](#).

In February 2019, an annual shortfall in excess of 125 million:



Work Plan

Calendar Years 2019-2020-2021

February 2019

“Transportation Needs and Goals MaineDOT works hard to achieve the best system results it can with the funding provided. Through the use of asset management principles, this Work Plan, like prior recent plans, seeks to maintain the current system of assets first, while acknowledging that we are losing ground to the capital goals established in 23 MRSA §73(7)...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.” [**2019-2021 Work Plan**](#) Pg. xi.

By November 2019, an annual shortfall of \$232 million:

At the same time that the shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually, the DOT 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.

Dear Senator Diamond and Representative McClean – I am writing to you today to express my appreciation in your continued work as the chairs of the JSC on Transportation and members of the blue ribbon commission.

I've been following the activities of the blue ribbon commission; I'm not surprised there is a deadlock as this has been a subject that many just want to ignore. I think in the end the solution will have to be a little bit of everything mentioned and just saying NO will no longer work.

Now that construction costs have ballooned, evidenced by the recently reported annual \$232 million shortfall, it is my suggestion that the DOT, and the JSC on Transportation as checks and balances on the DOT, take the drastic move of calling for an immediate stand-down of DOT operations, much like a stand-down in the military, to include the audit and validation all new projects (not existing road and bridge repairs that are long overdue) to verify that said new projects still fit the parameters of cost and benefits today as they did when they were first studied. Projects that are no longer viable, due to increased construction costs, should be immediately culled out of the process. DOT priorities must be reset to focus on the current unmet transportation needs of the state and not new infrastructure.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out my displeasure with the DOT painting such a bleak picture when they have tens of millions set aside (at least \$25 million of required state matching funds for the \$25 million INFRA grant) for the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 connector that the City of Brewer and its citizens do not support.

The connector's cost estimate of \$79.25 million is in 2017 dollars. The I-395/Route 9 connector project had a Benefit/Cost ratio of 1.1 in August 2012 – that B/C ratio had magically increased to 1.3 in the October 2017 INFRA Grant application.

There is every reason to believe that the newly experienced rise in construction costs will also affect the cost of the connector in a similar fashion and the connector's B/C ratio is probably already less than 1.0 which would make the project no longer viable. Mathematically, an increase in the cost above \$23.775 million should drop the B/C ratio below the acceptable ratio of 1.0 and if you use the 46% increase that bloated the

shortfall – that increase is \$115.705 million or an increase of \$36.455 million which would drastically drop the B/C ratio to 0.89. Will the DOT continue to hang on to a project that is no longer monetarily viable? And–how would we know? When will the DOT tell us the real cost, in 2019 dollars, of the I-395/Route 9 connector? And if they continue to pursue the connector, how are they going to for pay it?

The connector project is still in the preliminary engineering status, or at least that's all we know since the DOT has not updated their project website since February. The project to replace bridge#1564 (Wilson Street/I-395) in Brewer was one of 11 projects suspended last May for rising construction costs–that bridge replacement is the first phase of the connector project and is only being replaced because of the connector at a time when 14% of our bridges are structurally deficient. We do know that two more homes have been demolished over the past few weeks at the same time that the DOT is arguing they have no money...

I have been very vocal in my non-support since 2012. The 2B-2 alternative selection (the second preferred alternative of the project) IMO was illegitimate from the start as the DOT changed the original purpose and needs of the study at the last moment without going back and taking another look at all the other 79 studied alternatives. There was never a time when we felt the DOT was actually working to select the best solution for our communities and even our PAC members felt early on that the selection was pre-determined and all else was for show. For a history of the last 8 years as seen from a private citizen, please view: <https://i395rt9hardlook.com/>

I get it–they have that \$25 million INFRA grant for the connector, but the required state matching funds and the extra funds to make up the \$14.6 million shortfall in the grant (application was for \$39.625 million) are real monies that could be used for other projects. And, where will the DOT find the extra money for any extra construction costs that may now be applicable to the connector? Giving up the INFRA grant would put an immediate \$25 million or more of our state's money against the shortfall.

It is time to do something drastic; things are not going to get any better, they will just continue to get worse every year and as the Portland Herald just pointed out this morning: the \$150 million Gorham connector, passing the legislature in 2017, could cost 60% more than expected. Respectfully, Larry Adams | Brewer resident

Maine transportation funding panel deadlocks on gas tax as it nears December deadline

By [Caitlin Andrews](#), BDN Staff - November 25, 2019 6:00 pm (excerpt)

AUGUSTA, Maine — A commission charged by Gov. Janet Mills and lawmakers with fixing Maine's transportation funding gap bogged down on Monday, deadlocking on the thorny issue of raising the tax that makes up the lion's share of the state highway budget.

A blue-ribbon commission has one more meeting scheduled before the Legislature reconvenes to propose solutions to bridge a shortfall for road and bridge maintenance that Department of Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said now sits at \$232 million, a 46 percent increase from a March estimate mostly attributed to rising construction costs. [BDN 11.25.2019](#)

<i>Annual Shortfall</i> (millions of \$)				
Work Group	Adjusted to Current Pricing	Anticipated Annual Funding	\$ Shortfall	% Shortfall
Bridge Projects	\$188	\$120	-\$67	-56%
Paving Projects (including LCP)	\$141	\$120	-\$21	-17%
Safety and Spot Imp. (including Partnerships)	\$61	\$35	-\$26	-74%
Traffic Mobility/Capacity/ITS Improvements	\$41	\$13	-\$28	-217%
Highway Reconstruction/Rehab	\$118	\$63	-\$55	-87%
Multimodal Improvements	\$91	\$56	-\$35	-63%
Totals	\$640	\$407	-\$232	-57%

A project so troublesome that:



CITY OF BREWER
CITY COUNCIL
Office Of The Mayor

August 26, 2015

Mr. Ben Condon
Bureau of Transportation Systems Planning
Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0016

Dear Mr. Condon:

Pursuant to the Notice of Availability for Public Comment regarding the Brewer/Eddington I-395 Rt. 9 Connector and the plan by MDOT to proceed with Preliminary Engineering and Right of Way, the Brewer City Council wishes to reiterate its opposition to the project as proposed. The Brewer City Council has long advocated improvements to East-West transportation connections in Maine, but firmly believes the route(s) chosen by the MDOT have negative consequences to many property owners as well as the environment.

The Brewer City Council has formally gone on record supporting the "no build" option, in March 2012 as well as January 2015, and maintains that position.

As primary stakeholders in this proposed project, we must continue to go on record in strong opposition.

Sincerely,

Matthew Vachon
Mayor, City of Brewer

Cc: Brewer City Council
Larry Adams
File

 COPY

Tel: (207) 989-7050

80 North Main Street, Brewer, Maine 04412-2039

Fax: (207) 989-5262

- FHWA (MH) told DOT (JL) in Dec. 2011 the "Preferred Alternative [2B-2] does not satisfy the Purpose and Need" because newly downgraded criteria was applied only to 2B-2 and not the rest of the studied routes—further comparison to other alternatives was "an apples to oranges comparison". FHWA (MH) concerns were overruled.
- The project fails to meet the original system linkage need: "must provide a limited-access connection between I-395 and Route 9 east of Route 46." 2B-2 met only one of the five purpose and needs in April 2009, and project benefits are uncertain at best: "However, future development along Route 9 in the study area can impact...overall benefits of the project." (DEIS pg.S-19)

The backstory to the \$25,000 INFRA Grant:



Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

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

David Bernhardt
COMMISSIONER

October 23, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Assurance of Matching Funds

Dear Secretary Chao:

This letter serves as evidence of assurance by the State of Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) that matching funds for the INFRA application "I-395/Route 9 Connector Project" submitted by MaineDOT are committed and will be provided.

MaineDOT's matching share of the INFRA request is \$39,625,000 and we are committed to providing these matching funds to the Federal funds requested.

Sincerely,

David Bernhardt, P.E.
Commissioner

The DOT is very protective of their \$25 million INFRA grant and I believe will do anything to keep it—even go to construction with a B/C ratio < 1.0 as construction costs significantly increase. This project was originally supposed to be an 80%F/20%S funded, yet the DOT opted for the INFRA grant and IMO because there was no real support at the federal level for this project.

Originally a 50%/50% funding split—see that the commissioner committed matching funds of \$39.625 million—yet the INFRA grant received in 2018 was for only \$25 million. (The project estimate was \$79.25 million in October 2017.) One expects the rest of the money will come from STIP funds which will take scarce monies away from other projects at the same time that the budget shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually.

Using the same 46 percent construction cost increases the DOT experienced since March, the connector's 2017 cost swells from \$79.25 to \$115.7 million surpassing the benefit/cost decision point where cost outweighs benefits and thus the project's viability. The B/C was 1.3 in October 2017 INFRA grant application, yet only 1.1 in August 2012.

The approved \$105,000,000 bond will cost Mainer's \$28,875,000 in interest—a total of \$133,875,000 over a ten year period.

Question 1: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$105,000,000 bond issue to build or improve roads, bridges, railroads, airports, transit and ports and make other transportation investments, to be used to match an estimated \$137,000,000 in federal and other funds?

Total estimated life time cost is \$133,875,000 representing \$105,000,000 in principal and \$28,875,000 in interest (assuming interest at 5.0% over 10 years).

A "Yes" vote approves the issuance of up to one hundred and five million dollars (\$105,000,000) in general obligation bonds to finance transportation-related activities.

A "No" vote opposes the bond issue in its entirety.

Yes ☐

No ☐

- [BDN Editorial Board](#) opined: "...borrowed money should not be used for repair projects that may not last as long as the interest payments."
 - [MaineDOT Commissioner VanNote](#) asked: "Is this really the best way to fund transportation projects?" Van Note said. "I get why people say 'why are we bonding all the time' – right now we appear to be overly reliant on it."
 - "Relying on a \$100 million bond every year is not a good idea," said [Senator Diamond](#). "It's bad economics. It's not sound budgeting."
- [Senator Diamond](#) stated: "We have to be honest with ourselves and the public; this is not a good way to go; this is not a balanced procedure; it's not good economy to borrow 100 million dollars every year."
 - "I hope the commission considers our current use of bonds," said Bradbury. "Bonding is one of our important funding tools since it allows for infrastructure with a long life cycle to be paid over time. Bonds should be reserved for those significant long lasting projects like bridges and road reconstruction." [\[MBTA President\] Bradbury](#) added: "Unfortunately, we may have become too reliant on short-term bonds funding routine work, and we should be wary of the risks associated with that."

Questionable priorities...

Detailed in my [LD47](#) and [LD 783](#) written testimony are questionable priorities, nonexistent checks and balances, debatable accountability, dubious decisions, inadequate outreach, lack of transparency, misrepresentation of facts, and failure to involve municipal leaders in decision-making processes.

As evidence of questionable priorities and dubious decisions: the DOT brought back to life an alternative [removed from consideration](#) in Jan. 2003 because: “This alternative[2B]...would fail to adequately address the traffic congestion needs...conflicting vehicle movements on this section of Route 9 would substantially increase the potential for new safety concerns and hazards...the lack of existing access controls and the inability to effectively manage access along this section of Route 9, and the number of left turns, contribute to the poor LOS and safety concerns...would not be practicable...would negatively affect people...would severely impact local communities...[and] would not provide a substantial improvement in regional mobility and connectivity...”

What did the Army Corp think?

Even the ACOE, the connector’s principal permitting agency, was concerned with funding such a high dollar project that many did not support: “How do MaineDOT and FHWA intend to address the argument that the no-build alternative might save state and federal transportation funding that might be better served on other unmet needs in the state? How does Maine DOT intend to address the apparent multi-community support for the no-build alternative as evidenced in testimony at the public hearing?” ACOE’s observations were considered “not substantive for comment” by the DOT and thus both statements went unanswered. ([Substantive Comments on the DEIS pg.59](#))

What did Legislators think?

The following entry exists in [Maine State statute §73 Transportation Policy](#): “The people further find that the decisions of state agencies regarding transportation needs and facilities are often made in isolation, without sufficient comprehensive planning and opportunity for meaningful public input and guidance.” An anti-endorsement of our transportation agencies—the fact that state legislators recognized that problems existed and then took the time to intentionally input this statement into Maine statute some 28 years ago, and that it remains in said statute, should warn us all that funding is indeed not the foremost problem within our state transportation agencies—comprehensive planning and the lack of real public involvement are real.

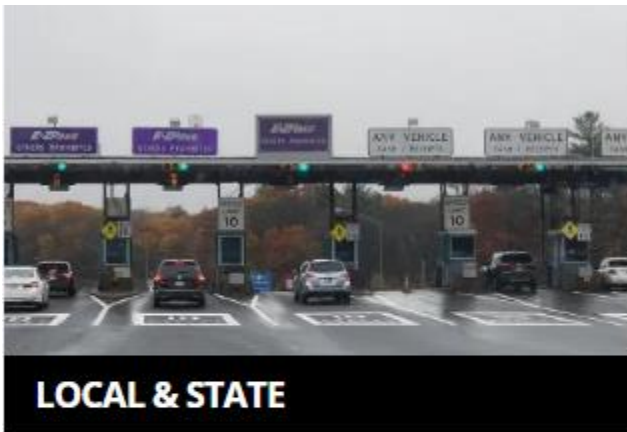
In conclusion:

Almost two decades from the start of a study to remove now-non-existent logging trucks transiting Route 46 to a [now-non-existent mill](#), an alternative removed from consideration in 2003 because of “the potential for new safety concerns and hazards”, that only satisfied 20% of purpose and needs in April 2009, that the FHWA project manager believed no longer met the purpose and needs within 90 days of the March 2012 DEIS is the preferred alternative for the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 Connector project—a shocking transformation—full stop. I contend that high construction costs will be the death knell of this project as high costs outweigh the benefits and viability.

New projects must take a back seat to existing infrastructure until our bridges and roads are brought back up to an acceptable level as established in [2011 legislation](#) and not one cent should be spent on any new pavement until that condition is achieved.

Repair work on 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 immediately suspended with the savings reallocated to fund Maine’s current unmet transportation needs—that’s a viable solution that can start immediately and anything short of that is disingenuous and fiscally irresponsible.

Portland Press Herald



Estimated cost for Gorham connector: 60% more than expected

But Maine Turnpike officials believe the toll highway, projected to open in 2026, would still pay for itself. [Click here to view article online.](#)

BY [PETER MCGUIRE](#) STAFF WRITER | 11.29.2019

Building a 5-mile toll highway linking the Maine Turnpike to the suburbs west of Portland could cost almost 60 percent more than expected but will still generate enough revenue to pay for itself, a turnpike official says.

The Maine Turnpike Authority board of directors last week authorized staff to negotiate land purchases for the Gorham Connector, a limited-access highway designed to alleviate commuter traffic on local roads.

The proposed road would connect the turnpike exit near the Maine Mall in South Portland to Route 114, south of Gorham.

By its projected opening in 2026, the four-lane highway will cost at least \$191 million and as much as \$237 million, according to a report this month from HNTB, an infrastructure design firm. That exceeds the \$150 million that the Legislature approved two years ago for construction borrowing for the project.

Despite higher prices than projected, a new \$1.50 toll route would pay for itself and bring tens of thousands of vehicles off surface roads and onto the state's main highway, said Peter Mills, executive director of the turnpike authority.

"Even at a higher construction cost, it still works," he said. "Why? The traffic is crazy out there."

The only reason it works with this project is that it will be a toll road. I added this article just to show the increase in construction costs over just 2 years from when this project was approved – an increase of \$41 million (+27%) to \$87 million (+58%) since 2017.

The I-395/Route 9 connector was estimated to cost \$79.25 million in 2017 which raises the questions: what's the cost now and how will the DOT pay for it? What does the increase in cost do to the benefit/cost ratio that "proved" the viability of the project?

A similar increase in construction costs will bring the \$79.25 million cost of the I-395/Route 9 connector over the \$100 million threshold, from \$100.648 to \$125.215 million. What does that do to the original Benefit/Cost ratio of 1.3? I contend that any increase over \$ 103.025 million will bring the B/C ratio below 1.0 and prove the project as no longer viable.

We may already be close to that or even blown right through it at this time.

Can the DOT be trusted to advise us when that happens? Really??

LTE provided to the Bangor Daily 11.29.2019:

A viable solution:

Maine lacks the capital to maintain our infrastructure.

Governor 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% 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 DOT 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 swells 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.

Larry Adams

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.

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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.

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Larry Adams

Brewer

[Click here to view online.](#)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1950s weren't so great

V. Paul Reynold's Nov. 24 column on the joy of the 1950s is typical of what can happen to someone who doesn't appreciate they are probably alive today because of so many good things we take for granted today but didn't even imagine in the '50s.

I urge my fellow aging Americans to throw away rose-colored rear view mirrors like Reynolds uses. Life is too good to be living in the past! Be thankful America is a better place today, even if we do seem to be receding because some voters wanted to return to the '50s.

Here are some things I remember from the '50s that Reynolds forgot: polio, iron lungs, metal dashboards, windshields that broke when heads hit them because there were no seatbelts. Also, Sen. Joe McCarthy and Roy Cohn (praise Margaret Chase Smith, one of the truly good things about the '50s in America, a very brave U.S. senator whose Declaration of Conscience should be read to the U.S. Senate today). There was discrimination based on race, gender, social status, competent abortions for rich women and awful substitutes for poor ones, women encouraged to stay in bad marriages, holiday travel "news" that several hundred would die on the highways, long distance telephone calls that cost so much the person receiving one assumed it was bad news, dirty rivers, cigarette smoke in every building.

Reynolds would remember we had a single, horrible enemy then called Communism, that wanted to destroy us. I spent four years in the military doing my small part to protect America from the USSR. The Republican Party is on Russia's side today!

Robert Winship Johnston
Gouldsboro

Fix existing roads first

Maine lacks the capital to maintain our infrastructure.

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 200 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 650 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published,

submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

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.

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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.

Larry Adams
Brewer

Sue oil companies?

In November, at an international symposium held in Portland, I listened to scientists "dive in" to the challenges facing the Gulf of Maine, one of the fastest warming bodies of water in all the world's oceans. The week-long symposium focused on sea level rise, ocean acidification and warming ocean temperatures, involved stakeholders dependent on working waterfronts and our fisheries, and began an incredibly important conversation about what the Gulf of Maine will look like in 2050 in a warmer world. We learned that there is published science tracing fossil fuel companies' contributions to the warming ocean and to sea level rise. In fact, the emissions between 1880 and 2010 from 90 companies are responsible for as much as one-third of global sea level rise.

If taxpayers are paying for coastal damages, and fishermen are forced to adapt to changing fisheries, shouldn't fossil fuel companies pay their fair share of the costs? Especially given that for almost half a century these companies have known about the harm from greenhouse gas emissions (yet continued to keep the information from the public). Rhode Island and Massachusetts are already suing oil companies for climate damages. Will Maine join them?

Marina Cucuzza
Bangor

Raising gas tax must be part of solution to closing road funding budget gap



Pat Wellenbach | AP | Vehicles pass a construction sign warning of delays on a road under construction in Brunswick, Maine, on Wednesday, May 12, 2010.

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. • November 29, 2019 3:54 pm

If there were a politically easy solution to Maine's transportation funding woes, it would have emerged by now.

After years of shortfalls to fund road and bridge maintenance, and repeated asks for voters to approve \$100 million [transportation bonds](#), Maine has settled into an irresponsible pattern for providing this fundamental government service. With the creation and ongoing work of a [transportation funding commission](#) this year, there's

been reason to hope that lawmakers of both parties and the Mills administration may be willing to make some politically tough but necessary decisions.

So it's discouraging that Republicans on the commission **signaled** that raising Maine's gas tax is off the table for them moving into an election year. At the very least, a modest increase to the gas tax, the primary funding source for Maine's highway fund, must be part of a multifaceted shift in how the state funds transportation maintenance.

Maine transportation funding comes from a mix of sources: the state's highway fund, the federal government and bonding. The highway fund will support 39 percent of the projects in the Maine Department of Transportation's two-year work plan. The gas tax accounts for 69 percent of that fund, and vehicle registrations and fees provide most of the remaining funding.

Maine's gas tax is currently 30 cents per gallon, putting the state in the middle of the road **compared with other states**. The federal gas tax of 18.4 center per gallon has not been increased since 1993, and Maine's gas tax has remained unchanged since 2011 when it was **unwisely de-indexed**. Those factors have undermined the effectiveness of this long-standing means to fund transportation infrastructure, both here in Maine and around the country. But that's not the only force at work.

The gas tax's efficiency and impact has also dropped as more and more people turn to more energy-efficient vehicles, including hybrid and electric vehicles — an otherwise encouraging trend. As a result, increasing the gas tax isn't going to solve our transportation woes on its own. There also should be steps taken to make sure energy-efficient vehicles are equally contributing to the infrastructure funding.

Legislators, however, cannot completely abandon an increase to the gas tax, which remains a sensible source of revenue aiming to ensure the people using roads are also the ones paying to maintain them.

Suggestions from Republican members of the commission and others to move money from the general fund to the highway fund, use budget surplus funds or divert some vehicle purchase sales tax revenue specifically to the transportation shortfall should be part of the debate. But those potential measures should come in addition to a conversation about raising the gas tax, not in place of it.

The Maine Department of Transportation says the shortfall is now up to \$232 million, with a steep 46 percent increase since a March estimate due in large part to increased construction costs. As correctly pointed out by Transportation Committee co-chair

Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, this shortfall is “too substantial” to address without a broad compromise that employs several different approaches. He as [submitted](#) multiple bills in recent years with this [balanced approach](#).

According to a Department of Transportation spokesperson, a one cent increase to the gas tax would generate [\\$7.5 million in revenue](#). This cannot be the only approach, but it’s a straightforward place to start.

The trucking industry and other business groups support some level of a gas tax increase. Republicans officials must be too, just as Democrats must be willing to consider fees on electric vehicles and ways to shift general funds to road and bridge maintenance.

We do not have all the answers, but we know that repeatedly turning to bond packages while still staring down shortfalls is unsustainable — and we know that a gas tax increase has to remain an option. The road to more responsible transportation funding is going to take politically unpopular concessions from both sides of the aisle in Augusta.

[Click here to view the editorial online.](#)



[Dustin Moore](#)
[CITIES](#)

Why we need to fix our crumbling roads, not build new ones

By [Liz Core](#) on Feb 11, 2015

[Click here to view online.](#)

The United States road system is knit together like a Forever 21 cardigan: marginally functional, mass-produced, and likely to fall apart shortly after first usage. These days, our roads are wearing out—probably because, much like the pieces of [trash fashion](#) rapidly deteriorating at the back of your closet, they've been [built to break](#).

Past transportation spending has mostly been directed to construction rather than repairs. But this ends up doing more harm than good because, as we've reported before, [more roads equal more traffic jams](#). Economists call the concept "[induced demand](#)," or, when supply of something (i.e. roads, cars, tribal-print jumpsuits) is increased, people will buy it—and then want more.

Vox senior editor Brad Plumer [wrote](#) an excellent explanation on why the U.S. needs to redirect transportation dollars to fixing what's old rather than building something new—which is where, as he reports, more than half of state road funds go. This is because misdirected dollars end up causing "excessive sprawl," says Plumer, which does "little to alleviate traffic congestion or deterioration." We couldn't agree more!

Here's more from Vox:

If all these new roads were beneficial, [building new ones] might make sense. But, as [[Streetsblog's Angie Schmitt](#)] points out, that's not always the case. One [study](#) by the Center for American Progress found that 50 percent of U.S. roads don't even generate enough traffic to pay for themselves in gas taxes. With [driving on the decline](#) and the National Highway System reaching the end of its natural lifespan, there's a good argument for devoting more scarce resources to repairing the expensive and dilapidated system we already have.

There's a dollars-and-cents case for allocating more money to repairs, too: Taking care of a damaged road early on is much cheaper than trying to deal with it when it's near-destroyed. However, an even more economical—and green—solution *in the long term* could be [building improved public transit networks](#).

We're living in a nation that's trying to [reduce carbon emissions](#) by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 — but that's going to mean changing our long-held habits, like a transportation system that's built around personal cars. The fact is, we need more new roads like we need that [adorable cat sweater](#). Really, *put the sweater down*, and walk away.



Washington State DOT / Flickr

America's Infrastructure Crisis Is Really a Maintenance Crisis

ERIC JAFFE | FEBRUARY 12, 2015

[THIS IS AN EXCERPT OF THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE, CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE.](#)

It's long been time to focus more on maintaining America's existing roads and less on building new ones. The National Highway System already connects virtually all of the areas worth connecting. Driving peaked circa 2004—and even earlier in some states. Traffic remains bad in many metros, but by itself expanding road networks can only temporarily alleviate the problem, and over time might even increase it.

And yet we build. We build without seeming to appreciate that every mile of fresh new road will one day become a mile of crumbling old road that needs additional attention. We build even though our pot of road funding requires increasingly creative (and arguably illegal) solutions to stay anything other than empty.

The numbers tell the story best. From 2004 to 2008, states dedicated just 43 percent of their road budgets to maintain existing roads despite the fact that they made up nearly 99 percent of the road system. The other 1 percent—new construction—got more than half the money. From 2009 to 2011 states did only marginally better, spending 55 percent of their road money (\$20.4 billion) on expansion and just 45 percent on maintenance (\$16.5 billion):

In other words, we need to use all the available road money each year to fix our roads, and then some, to prevent them from falling into a state of disrepair that endangers public safety. And the more roads we build, the more we need to one day fix.

Tyranny of the Ribbon

The hard political work begins with the tyranny of the ribbon. Of the many reasons infrastructure repairs get snubbed for construction, big public ribbon-cutting ceremonies that come with fresh projects—but not with stale maintenance—is near the top of the list. By the nature of their limited tenure and uncertain futures, politicians care more about attaching their name to a new project than extending the life of someone else's old one.

Smart Growth America suggests we "raise the profile of repair and preservation projects." That's easier said than done, and when done wrong the results can be disastrous. Take that time, in 2005, when then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger tried to call public attention to road maintenance—by having a crew dig a pothole only to fill it:

In general, public ceremonies for maintenance just end up drawing little attention. During my recent conversation with MARTA chief Keith Parker, he said the Atlanta transit system had a tunnel ventilation project underway that may cost upwards of \$200 million, and a radio system upgrade that will cost up to \$50 million, and of course regular track enhancements and repairs—investments that, while necessary, will prevent the agency from doing what Parker called "sexier" expansion projects.

"When we tell people, 'hey, come out because we're going to have a celebration for the Clayton County expansion,' we expect a long line of people," he said. "When we say, 'hey look, we want to celebrate the tunnel ventilation project,' I don't think we'll get so many."

The media isn't blameless here. Just as politicians are loath to cut ribbons for infrastructure repairs, news organizations and bloggers prefer to hype new and shinier projects in the pipeline—or to wait until deferred maintenance causes a high-profile tragedy. There's no single or simple way to reverse America's growing infrastructure crisis, but reframing it as a maintenance crisis is a good place to start.



"One Angry man
with a laptop"

Welcome to the 1st quarter of 2020 in the 20th year of the I-395/Route 9 project—estimated in 2017 to cost \$79.25 million—at the same time that the shortfall in the road and bridge maintenance budget increased by 46% in just the period between March and October 2019 to an annual \$232 million. DOT reports this was due mainly to higher construction costs, but one has to wonder if the real reason is that the DOT intentionally “lowballs” estimates to get project passage—hoping they would later be able to pass on budget overages covertly...



“Repair work on 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 immediately suspended with the savings reallocated to fund Maine’s current unmet transportation needs—that’s a viable solution that can start immediately and anything short of that is disingenuous and fiscally irresponsible. Ask these people!!

250 word LTE sent to the PPH on 12.01.19:

Maine lacks the capital to maintain our infrastructure. Governor Mills tasked the blue-ribbon commission, now deadlocked, to deliver a viable solution to fund infrastructure repairs without relying on annual bonding.

Eleven projects, 11.6% of the value of projects (\$45.5 million) planned to be bid in 2019, were removed from the bidding schedule in May. Deferred repair costs are significantly higher than regular, timely repair costs.

The annual shortfall for road and bridge maintenance “now sits at \$232 million, a 46 percent increase from a March estimate.”

The Gorham Connector will cost as much as \$237 million, almost 60 percent more than expected, exceeding the \$150 million approved by the Legislature just two years ago.

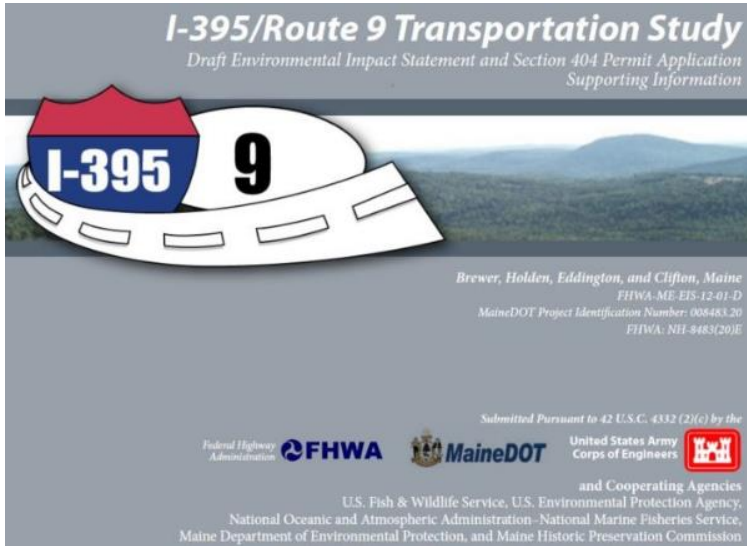
In like fashion, the I-395/Route 9 Connector, a controversial project that fails to meet original purpose and needs and unanimously rejected by Brewer’s City Council, may surpass the benefit/cost decision point where cost outweighs benefits and thus project viability upon updating the \$79.25 million 2017 cost estimate.

Unlike the Gorham connector’s solution of raising tolls to pay for the increased construction cost, “Tolling would not be used to supplement the funding for construction of one of the build alternatives [I-395/Route 9 Connector] due to the low traffic volumes (HNTB, 2010).”

As the shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually, new infrastructure, priced out of viability by increased construction costs with no chance of the project paying for it, should be suspended and funds reallocated to meet Maine’s current unmet transportation needs.

Larry Adams

Can tolling be the answer to rising construction costs as with the ability to raise the Gorham Connector's tolls to offset rising costs?



Not per the [DEIS](#). Chapter 2 page 56

- “The MaineDOT and the FHWA preliminarily considered tolling as one method of partially financing the operation and maintenance costs of a build alternative.”
- “Due to estimated cost of construction, the MaineDOT and the FHWA are not considering tolling as a method of partially financing the operation and maintenance costs of a build alternative, if one is selected and advanced to construction.”
- “Tolling would not be used to supplement the funding for construction of one of the build alternatives due to the low traffic volumes (HNTB, 2010).”



LOCAL & STATE

Maine to stop using road sealant suspected of making travel lanes slick

The Maine Department of Transportation has decided to halt the use of fog sealant on roadways after finding its application is imprecise and involves too much "eyeballing."

BY MEG ROBBINS MORNING SENTINEL | DECEMBER 2, 2019

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

The Maine Department of Transportation has decided to stop using a type of road sealant on the travel lanes of state roads following an investigation of a near-deadly crash in Rome in which the slick surface was found to be a factor.

In October, the state agency temporarily halted the use of the product, called surface fog sealant, [after a story in the Morning Sentinel](#) spotlighted dangers associated with its use.

Fog sealant is a diluted asphalt that is sprayed onto roads to cost-effectively repair cracks and extend the life of pavement, according to the Maine DOT.

Paul Merrill, spokesman for the transportation department, likened the use of fog sealant to "putting icing on a moldy cake."

"There are enough questions about its effectiveness and safety on travel lanes that we see no point in restarting the fog seal program," Merrill said. The material will continue to be used on shoulders, according to Merrill.

"People don't drive on the shoulders," he said. "The way that we treat a travel lane that sees potentially thousands of vehicles a day is different."

A lot of roads, especially in rural parts of the state, need more treatment," Merrill said. "The bottom line is we just can't afford to do that."

A full rebuild of 1 mile of road can cost millions, and repaving could cost about \$50,000, Merrill said, so applying sealant is a lower-cost way to shore up crumbling roads.

While investigating the issue in Rome, engineers from the Maine DOT found the process of applying fog sealant is “not as precise as we want it to be,” and that “a lot of the specifics of the application are left up to the discretion of the workers doing the fog sealing,” Merrill said.

“A lot of it is the manual change of a nozzle to increase the flow or decrease the flow,” he said. “There’s a lot of eyeballing to see if it’s being applied the right way.”



Tom Streznewski of Belgrade stands Oct. 2 near the section of Route 225 in Rome where his truck slid off the road in September and was destroyed.

In the Kennebec County town of Rome, Tom Streznewski’s truck lost traction in September on an area of Route 225 that had been treated recently with too much fog seal, creating a glassy surface. The truck rolled over and a tree punctured the back window, nearly killing the 58-year-old Belgrade resident.

Merrill confirmed that after the fog sealant was applied to that road in June, there had been four crashes in the area.

“One driver fell asleep, but the others were in the rain,” when the surface was especially slick, Merrill said.

In 2018, at least two [crashes on Route 3](#) in Bar Harbor were [attributed, in part, to the same sealant material](#), the Mount Desert Islander reported.

The state DOT has contracted out seven fog sealant projects across the state over the past five years, according to Merrill.

“Five of those projects involved older pavement,” Merrill said, “so the fog sealant did what it was supposed to do. The old pavement absorbed the sealant enough that it was effective.”

In Rome, as well as in Bar Harbor in 2018, the material was flagged as being “an issue.”

“We suspect overapplication,” Merrill said, “but it could have been any number of factors.”



Tom Streznewski of Belgrade walks Oct. 2 on Route 225 in Rome, where the pavement was ground to remove a sealant that he believes created a slick surface that caused his truck to slide off the road. Streznewski's vehicle crashed Sept. 14 into the ditch at right and was destroyed.

The excessive sealant on the surfaces of Route 225 in Rome and Route 3 in Bar Harbor has since been removed.

“In Bar Harbor, there were a couple other things at play,” Merrill said. “There were cooler temperatures when we applied that, the grade of the road was different and there were questions about over-application like there was in the Rome issue.

“It's not exactly apples to apples, but we questioned the overapplication even though there were some other factors involved. Certainly with that incident and the one in Rome, there's not a compelling reason to start up the fog seal program for travel lanes again.”



Going forward, Merrill said, there are several other sealants the state can use to treat cracked pavement.

“Some roads may get shimmed, which means we fill in ruts or potholes,” Merrill said. “Some roads may get light surface treatments. It depends on the specifics of each given situation. As our funding issues persist, we aim to stretch every dollar we have as far as it will go to maintain safety and mobility.”

LeighH 2 hours ago

I think the issue is that some roads have structural issues and need to be torn up and rebuilt, but because that's expensive (this article says 'millions' for the cost), you get quick, cheap band-aids. But since you're not fixing the root problem, only paving on top of it, the cheap fix quickly deteriorates. Re-paving roads isn't rocket science, so it's not as if the contractors screwed up the job. The issue is that the root cause isn't getting fixed.

Respect  Reply 

Share  Report 

MY TWO CENTS: This sounds much like a driveway sealer, also generically known as jennite, which I cannot use because it is so slippery in the winter and in fact that is why they also offer a product with sand imbedded in the solution.

I applaud the DOT stopping the use of this product, however the bigger problem here is that the DOT is unable to maintain the roads we already have and yet they want to build more of them that they will not be able to maintain.

You cannot skim coat roads every few years instead of proper maintenance. And—you cannot keep promoting questionable new projects at the same time.

“A lot of roads, especially in rural parts of the state, need more treatment,” Merrill said. **“The bottom line is we just can’t afford to do that.”**

“A full rebuild of 1 mile of road can cost millions, and repaving could cost about \$50,000, Merrill said, **so applying sealant is a lower-cost way to shore up crumbling roads.”**

“Some roads may get shimmed, which means we fill in ruts or potholes,” Merrill said. **“Some roads may get light surface treatments. It depends on the specifics of each given situation. As our funding issues persist, we aim to stretch every dollar we have as far as it will go to maintain safety and mobility.”** How about cancelling the I-395/Route 9 Connector—there’s a lot of dollars that are stretchable in that \$79.25 million project...



By Robbie Feinberg, Maine Public • December 3, 2019 4:55 pm

The Maine Department of Transportation said it will no longer use a certain type of road sealant on travel lanes of state roads after investigating an accident earlier this year.

Department spokesperson Paul Merrill said the agency began to investigate “fog sealant” after [a Morning Sentinel report](#) of an accident raised questions about the use of the substance, which seals up imperfections on pavement. While Merrill said the department found no direct connection between the sealant and accidents, it decided to end its use due to concerns about how precisely it’s applied.

“They’re essentially controlling a nozzle by hand to determine the amount that goes on the road. It’s not a precise process,” he said. “That’s the main reason that we think it’s probably the best decision to stop using it.”

Merrill says the department will continue to use fog sealant on the shoulders of roads. But he says for travel lanes, the DOT will look at other methods instead, including lightly paving or filling in potholes. He also said that with a significant transportation funding gap, the department will look to other shorter-term fixes instead, including light paving and filling in potholes.

“We would love to be able to give more thorough treatments to a lot of the infrastructure in the state. We think that’s the best way to move forward,” he said. “But until we find a sustainable funding source that can pass up in the state house with bipartisan support, we’re trying to make do with what we have.”

This article appears through a media partnership with [Maine Public](#).

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

Portland Press Herald

LETTERS

PUBLISHED
DECEMBER 4, 2019



Letter to the editor: Gorham connector plan doesn't jibe with governor's climate plan

A toll highway linking the Maine Turnpike to the western suburbs will only enlarge our state's carbon footprint.

A toll highway linking the Maine Turnpike to the western suburbs will only enlarge our state's carbon footprint.

Our governor, admirably concerned with our environment, needs to have a long, hard talk with Peter Mills, Maine Turnpike Authority executive director, regarding his proposed Gorham connector highway ("Estimated cost for Gorham connector 60% more than expected," [Nov. 29](#)).

His stressing that the tolls will result in the project's paying for itself is a short-term solution with a long-term expansion of Maine's carbon footprint.

The Gorham town manager is correct with his concerns that the connector will only encourage more traffic. As the article's author, Staff Writer Peter McGuire, notes, **"Academic research has shown new road construction creates more traffic because it encourages more people to drive."**

Traffic has grown almost 30 percent, writes McGuire, with an additional 10,000 vehicles using those several westerly routes in and out of Portland since 1990. How many of the 35,000 toll-paying vehicles projected to be funneled from the connector to the Maine Turnpike will continue into downtown Portland, and where will we put them? To say nothing of the

additional 20 percent currently predicted by 2040, and at what cost, and paid by whom?

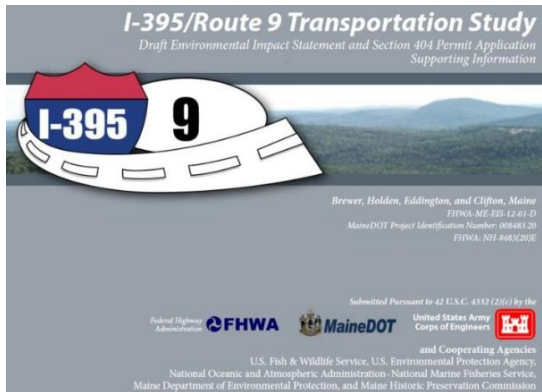
True leadership requires long-term thinking for long-term benefit. “North of \$200 million,” perhaps in the range of \$237 million, the projected cost today of the connector, would make a substantial down payment toward a long-term solution to that traffic congestion – light rail into downtown Portland – and the reduced carbon footprint would make a substantial contribution to Gov. Mills’ environmental legacy.

R. John Wuesthoff

Portland

[Click here to view online.](#)

How does one reconcile that the **traffic volume is too low for tolling**, yet apparently the traffic volume is sufficient to spend \$79.25 million in 2017 dollars on this boondoggle??



“Tolling would not be used to supplement the funding for construction of one of the build alternatives due to the low traffic volumes (HNTB, 2010).” [DEIS Chapter 2 Page 55](#)



Due to the small amount of revenue generated from a toll facility in comparison to the estimated cost of construction [of said toll facility], the MaineDOT and the FHWA are **not considering tolling as a method of partially financing the operation and maintenance costs** of a build alternative, if one is selected and advanced to construction. [DEIS Chapter 2 Page 55](#)



“Tolling would not be used to supplement the funding for construction of one of the build alternatives [and not] a method of partially financing the operation and maintenance costs of a build alternative...due to the low traffic volumes.”

Was this an accurate estimate from the DOT Chief Engineer (KS) or a just a guesstimate to make the Benefit/Cost ratio fit the project?

MUST READ - FOAA document #000364/000365

13 January 2012 email from the MaineDOT Chief Engineer (KS) to the MaineDOT project manager (RC). "Fill in the range of costs alternatives....Low should be no greater than \$65 M ..you decide High." Engineering guidance or just a guesstimate?? Seems like they decided on a price that would make the project doable and nothing more. It should be noted that this alternative has only gone through preliminary engineering to date and there is really no way to accurately estimate the cost of this project until final engineering reveals the real geology of the area. It is well known to many in the area that the 6.1 mile length of 2B-2 will face boggy areas, areas with a lot of ledge and even areas around the I-395 interchange that had compacting issues when I-395 was initially constructed. Don't forget that this connector will go some 40 feet under Eastern Ave. and Mann Hill Road - not an easy feat with the geology of this area.

One of my earliest posts when the cost was \$61 million with updated comments on following page. Also to review how we got here-view Gretchen's 2013 FOAA briefing.

From: Sweeney, Ken

Sent: Friday, January 13, 2012 1:07 PM

To: Charette, Russ

Subject: RE: I-395/Route 9 Study

000364

Yes...as follows:

Does the purpose statement need to reference AASHTO POLICY? If it must then it should say GUIDE not policy.

Add a sentence or two about Freight connectivity and the recent Congressional action to allow 100k trucks on the interstate system and the critical need to provide a safe connection to the interstate system for those trucks on route 9 from Canada and regionally from Washington County and EastPort Port needing to travel to points south and west.

Fill in the range of cost alternatives....Low should be no greater than \$65 M ..you decide High

000365

Anticipated Construction could begin in 2014-2015

We also discussed wording and had a meeting with the biologists that led to a comment that we should only commit to the 1.2 bankful on the structures that make environmental sense and not a blanket 1.2 statement. We should also avoid the "will be considered in final design" when it involves environmental commitment because the regulators interpret the language consider the same as require.

That's all I recall

Thanks

ken

[Click here to view briefing by Gretchen Heldman of March 2013 FOAA release.](#)

What is a Benefit-to-Cost Ratio and how does it relate to projects?

The following is a simplified example showing how Benefit/Cost analysis is applied to your everyday life; you do it all the time without even thinking.

The Benefit/Cost Ratio (BCR) is based on a simple mathematical equation: Benefit divided by Cost; or B/C. A viable project must offer more benefit than the cost to construct said project.

1.0 is the baseline or threshold to the Benefit/Cost ratio analysis where:

BCR equal to or greater than (\geq to/or $>$) 1.0 is considered a good expenditure or a viable project.

BCR greater than 1.0 have greater benefits than costs; hence they have positive net benefits.

BCR less than ($<$) 1.0 when cost exceeds benefits is not a good expenditure and a project less than 1.0 is not viable.

Say you buy a bag of chips with a suggested retail price @\$2.99 at your favorite store:

- Benefit \$2.99 bag of chips/\$2.99 Cost = BCR = 1.0 (acceptable expenditure)

Say you go to another store that has that same bag of chips, but on sale for \$2.00:

- Benefit \$2.99 bag of chips/\$2.00 Cost = BCR=1.495 (a more positive expenditure)

Say you now go to the movies and the same bag of chips is marked-up to \$3.50:

- Benefit \$2.99 bag of chips/\$3.50 Cost = BCR = 0.854 (not a good expenditure)



Commissioner Bernhardt and BCR of cancelled project in Wiscasset:

“Our responsibility going forward is to manage our existing obligations within our existing budget, and to limit adding new infrastructure to that which is shown to provide overwhelming benefits. We know federal transportation funding will continue to decrease, and the era of special earmarks for transportation projects is over.”

[August 2011 MaineDOT Press Release](#)

Benefit-to-Cost Ratio of the Wiscasset Bypass Study cancelled in August 2011:

September 2009 Wiscasset Bypass Phase II Report page 27: (no longer available online)

4.4. Summary Comparison of Alternatives – Part 3 (Transportation and Cost Considerations)

Criteria	No Build	N8c	N2f	N2a
Traffic Safety & Mobility				
Change in Annual Crashes, 2030	0	-9	-15	-8
Change in VMT, 2030	0	9,700,000	8,500,000	9,300,000
Change in VHT, 2030	0	-1,130,000	-1,090,000	-1,030,000
Estimated Capital Cost, \$M (2006) ⁸	\$1.1	\$82.25	\$78.95	\$81.75 ⁸
Life Cycle Cost, \$M (100 Years)	N.A.	\$136.01	\$123.88	\$122.02
Benefit-to-Cost Ratio (Life Cycle)	N.A.	2.46	2.43	2.27
Mitigation Costs (Included in Estimated Capital Cost, Life Cycle Cost & Benefit-to-Cost Above)				
Wetland, \$M	N.A.	\$1.35	\$1.45	\$2.05
Wildlife, \$M	N.A.	\$1.40	\$1.80	\$1.70
Historic, \$M	\$0.02	\$0.10	\$0.23	\$0.06
Constructability				
Cofferdam Pier Construct Time (Weeks)	N.A.	32	20-30	6
Earthwork (Cubic Yards)				
Cut (Cubic Yards)	0	920,000	1,150,000	965,000
Fill (Cubic Yards)	0	275,000	420,000	400,000
Excess Earthwork (Cubic yards)	0	645,000	730,000	565,000
Operations	Mobility Decline	Improved Mobility	Improved Mobility	Improved Mobility

⁸ Costs updated from DEIS to include new Clark's Point right-of-way and historic preservation costs.

27

- Commissioner Bernhardt cancelled a Study in August 2011 with BCR's equal to 2.27, 2.43 and 2.46—BUT—moved forward to complete the I-395/Route 9 Connector Study promoting a preferred alternative (2B-2) with a BCR of only 1.1? (The B/C ratio in October 2017 INFRA Grant application became 1.3.)
- Many wonder why the DOT continues to spend one more cent on a project that teeters around not even being viable. Is underwhelming a word?

Now in December Of 2019:

There is every reason to believe that the newly experienced 46% to 60% rise in construction costs as reported in recent PPH and BDN articles will also affect the cost of the connector in a similar fashion and the connector's B/C ratio is probably already less than 1.0 which would make the project no longer viable. Mathematically, an increase in the cost above \$23.775 million should drop the B/C ratio below the acceptable ratio of 1.0 and if you use the 46% increase that bloated the shortfall – that increase is \$115.705 million or an increase of \$36.455 million which would drastically drop the B/C ratio to 0.89.

BCR analysis: cost and BCR as of Oct 2017 is \$79.25 million and 1.3.

Benefits as of October 2017 = Benefit/\$79.25 million = 1.3

Solving for Benefits, Benefit = \$79.25 million (X) 1.3 = \$103.025M

Benefits as of October 2017 = \$103.025 million

Question: When does the project become unviable?

Answer: When cost exceeds established benefit of \$103.025 million.

Question: How much can the cost increase before that happens?

Answer: \$23.775001 Or an increase of 30%

46% increase in cost = \$115.705 million decreases B/C ratio to .89

60% increase in cost = \$126.8 million decreases B/C ratio to .82

If the costs go up by the same 46% increase as bloated the shortfall since March estimates—OR—increases by 60% as with the cost of the Gorham Connector since 2017 estimates, the I-395/Route 9 Connector is no longer viable—that's simple mathematics.

Are construction costs intentionally “low-balled”, falsified or manipulated to get projects through the process to final acceptance?

We always felt that there was a magic cost number that the DOT was trying to stay under when they priced the connector beneath the \$65 million number that the Chief Engineer gave to the Project Manager in 1.13.2012, FOAA #000364. It needs to be noted that it would become clear through other FOAA documents that the \$61 million cost was necessary to keep the Benefit/Cost ratio above the 1.0 project viability value—simple put—the DOT manipulated and falsified the B/C ratio:

- (12.06.2011) FOAA #000392 defined the cost of 2B-2 @ \$93.24 million using design criteria for freeways.
- (1.30.2012) DOT Chief Engineer (KS) decided to go to cheaper rolling rural criteria that will decrease costs by 1/3 in FOAA #000431.
- (8.01.2012) FOAA #187 defined benefits @ \$61,424,195.00 and 1.1 B/C.
- However 1/3 of the cost was actually \$62.16 million when reduced by 1/3 of \$93.24 million—exceeding the \$61,424,195.00 benefits—\$62.16 million cost would have dropped the B/C ratio below the 1.0 value and the project would not be viable—so—it should be obvious that the DOT falsified the cost from \$62.16 million to \$61 million to make the project viable—and raises the question if the DOT has also falsified the 2017 cost @ \$79.25 million and what is the actual cost now at the end of 2019 when it appears that costs have risen by 46% since March estimates. Is there any wonder why we mistrust DOT?
- I contend that the manipulation of the B/C ratio was intentional (possible even criminal) to make 2B-2 appear affordable...what's next?? And, why should we believe it? 2B-2 may already have decreased the B/C ratio below viability with updated 2019 costs.

I constantly check this website for updates—this is the current page and url:

Latest Updates

[Project Updates](#) [News Releases](#)

Project Updates

Select an update below to view details.

- + [Route 9/I-395 Connector Updates: 02/22/19](#)
- + [Route 9/I-395 Connector Updates: 06/22/18](#)

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/l395rt9connector/updates/>

However—if you go to the home page of the same site—here's what you get:

Latest News

11/15/19: The bridge on the Route 9 Connector project has been delayed due to budgetary challenges.

The bridge is now scheduled to advertise in the spring of 2020 with construction beginning that summer. There will be a public meeting regarding the remainder of the connector in the spring of 2020. After that meeting, the final design and right of way process begins.

2/22/2019: [Route 9/I-395 Connector Updates: 02/22/19](#)

Work has continued on developing the design for the connector. Geotech crews have been out gathering information along the alignment. ... [read more](#)

6/22/2018: [Route 9/I-395 Connector Updates: 06/22/18](#)

A preliminary public meeting with project updates will be held at 6 PM June 27, 2018 at the Eddington Elementary School (440 Main Road). ... [read more](#)

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/l395rt9connector/>

Comparison of two projects that received INFRA Grants; which project is more important? The higher the Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR), the more benefits the project offers. A 4.1 BCR offers overwhelming benefits; a 1.3 BCR, although viable, could easily be considered as “underwhelming” in comparison. Very similar costs, yet one has a much larger BCR by 320 percent. Which project is more important?

2017-2018 INFRA Grants: The I-395/Route 9 Connector received \$25 million.



**I-395/Rt. 9 Connector
Project**

- Estimated cost of \$79.25 million in October 2017 INFRA Grant application.
- DOT Commissioner signed an assurance of matching funds letter for \$39.625 million in the grant application.
- The BCR of the I-395/Route 9 Connector is 1.3

2019 INFRA Grants: The Madawaska Bridge Replacement received \$36 million.



- Estimated cost of \$74.0 million in March 2019 INFRA Grant application.
- DOT Commissioner and NBDTI Minister signed assurance of matching letters for \$35.5 million in the grant application.
- The BCR of the Madawaska Bridge replacement is 4.1

Portland Press Herald

LETTERS

PUBLISHED
DECEMBER 9, 2019



Letter to the editor: Pump the brakes on new highway projects

Funds for new infrastructure should be reallocated to cover Maine's current unmet transportation needs.



John Patriquin/Staff Photographer

Maine is not keeping up with maintenance on existing roads, so it should not commit to new projects, a reader says.

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

Eleven projects, 11.6 percent of the value of projects (\$45.5 million) planned to be bid in 2019, were removed from the bidding schedule in May. Deferred repair costs are significantly higher than regular, timely repair costs.

The annual shortfall for road and bridge maintenance “now sits at \$232 million, a 46 percent increase from a March estimate,” the Bangor Daily News [has reported](#).

Now the Press Herald [reports that](#) the Gorham Connector will cost as much as \$237 million, almost 60 percent more than expected, exceeding the \$150 million approved by the Legislature just two years ago.

In like fashion, the I-395/Route 9 Connector, a controversial project that fails to meet original purpose and needs and unanimously rejected by Brewer's City Council, may surpass the benefit/cost decision point where cost outweighs benefits and thus project viability upon updating the \$79.25 million 2017 cost estimate.

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As the shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually, new infrastructure, priced out of viability by increased construction costs with no chance of the project paying for it, should be suspended and funds reallocated to meet Maine's current unmet transportation needs.

Larry Adams

Brewer

[Click here to view Portland Press Herald LTE](#)

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The annual shortfall for road and bridge maintenance "now sits at \$232 million, a 46 percent increase from a March estimate," the Bangor Daily News has reported.

Now the Press Herald reports that the Gorham Connector will cost as much as \$237 million, almost 60 percent more than expected, exceeding the \$150 million approved by the Legislature just two years ago.

In like fashion, the I-395/Route 9 Connector, a controversial project that fails to meet original purpose and needs and unanimously rejected by Brewer's City Council, may surpass the benefit/cost decision point where cost outweighs benefits and thus project viability upon updating the \$79.25 million 2017 cost estimate.

Unlike the Gorham Connector's solution of raising tolls to pay for the increased construction cost, "Tolling would not be used to supplement the funding for construction of one of the build alternatives [I-395/Route 9 Connector] due to the low traffic volumes (HNTB, 2010)."

As the shortfall balloons to nearly a quarter of a billion dollars annually, new infrastructure, priced out of viability by increased construction costs with no chance of the project paying for it, should be suspended and funds reallocated to meet Maine's current unmet transportation needs.

Larry Adams
Brewer

Portland Press Herald

Lisa DeSisto
Publisher

Cliff Schechtman
Executive Editor

Steve Greenlee
Managing Editor

Greg Kesich
Editorial Page Editor

OPINION

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Pump the brakes on new highways



John Patriquin/Staff Photographer

Maine is not keeping up with maintenance on existing roads, so it should not commit to new projects, a reader says.



[Click here to view online.](#)

JACKMAN, Maine —

One of Maine's most popular scenic byways has been named the worst road in the state, according to the Maine Better Transportation Association.

The MBTA said a 14.3-mile stretch of Route 201 from Moose River to the border of Maine and Quebec is the winner of the 2019 Worst Road in Maine contest.

William Jarvis, of Jackman, submitted the stretch of road and won the \$529 grand prize.

Jarvis, a forester and chief of the Jackman Fire and Rescue Department, said he travels the road frequently. He said its deteriorating condition is a deterrent to tourists.

The MBTA also awarded three runner-up prizes. Those roads were Route 202 west of Sanford, Presque Isle Street/Route 1A in Fort Fairfield and Route 1 in Washington County from Chase Mills Road near Gardner Lake.

According to the most recent Maine Infrastructure Report Card issued by the Maine Section, approximately 18 percent of Maine highways, or 1,530 out of 8,645 miles of state highway, are rated poor or worse, the MBTA said.

The MBTA said it is estimated Maine needs an additional \$198 million in funding to fix the state's roads and bridges.

STRATEGY E

provide supporting infrastructure

To attract talent to move into the state — and to retain the talent we have — Maine needs a supporting infrastructure that ensures a quality of life. Broadband and schools, mentioned earlier, are pieces of the puzzle. Childcare, housing and transportation are also part of the picture. Because these functions are largely independent of the economic development system, other entities must be responsible for achieving goals in these areas, and those entities are identified on the following pages.

ACTION E2:

Establish an adequate and sustainable funding system for public transportation.

Maine spends 86 cents per person annually for public transportation. That is 37th among all states, and is below every other state in New England. Part of the problem is that Maine's overall transportation funding system is broken, and does not bring in adequate revenues to fund highway improvements or any other major function of the Maine Department of Transportation.

The Legislature has established a *Blue Ribbon Commission to Study and Recommend Funding Solutions for the State's Transportation Systems*. Increasing public transportation funding to a sustainable level should be part of its recommendations.

The blue-ribbon commission is deadlocked, the annual shortfall is \$232 million and the ten-year plan admits that the “funding system is broken, and does not bring in adequate funding to fund highway improvements or any other major function of the Maine DOT.” YET—the DOT has decided to keep going ahead with the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 Connector!!

“Part of the problem is that Maine's overall transportation funding system is broken, and does not bring in adequate revenues to fund highway improvements or any other major function of the Maine Department of Transportation.”

For example, a commission that aimed to find more money for the state's embattled transportation system has [deadlocked so far on raising the gas tax](#). Solving that problem—given an estimated \$232 million shortfall for road and bridge maintenance—is also identified as a goal in Mills' economic plan.

[BDN 12.11.2019](#)

Scenic highway in Jackman 'worst road' in Maine

A section of the highway connecting Maine to Quebec has won this year's 'worst road' contest, which highlights poor conditions on many state roads.



BY [PETER MCGUIRE](#) | STAFF WRITER | DECEMBER 10 | [CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE.](#)

A 14-mile stretch of scenic byway from Jackman to the Quebec border has earned the dubious distinction of being declared Maine's worst road.

William Jarvis, from Jackman, nominated that section of Route 201 in the "worst road in Maine" contest, sponsored by the Maine Better Transportation Association.

"That road is just so full of cracks, potholes and bad stuff," Jarvis said in an interview. "It needed to be fixed years ago and just keeps getting put off because of lack of funding."

Jarvis, a forester and chief of the Jackman Fire and Rescue Department, won the contest's grand prize – **\$529, the average amount Maine drivers pay a year in extra maintenance and repairs from road damage.**

Sections of Route 202 heading west from Sanford to Lebanon; Route 1 around Fort Fairfield in Northern Maine; and Route 1 in East Machias were runners-up in this year's contest. The association sponsors the contest to highlight the poor condition of many Maine roads. This is the fourth worst-road contest the association has held.

Conditions along Route 201 north of Jackman are bad enough to damage personal vehicles, commercial tractor-trailers and state and local plow trucks, Jarvis said. Riding in the back of one of his department's ambulances can be bruising because of jolts and bumps.

It also provides a rude welcome for Canadian tourists traveling into the state, Jarvis added. This summer, visitors told hospitality businesses in Jackman they intended to seek another way to Maine on their next trip. “It is a major road and a major entry into the state and there are a lot of Canadian tourists coming through here,” Jarvis said. “Once you come up here and experience it, you’ll never want to be back.”

Route 201 is part of the national highway system, part of the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway, the national freight network and a Priority 2 roadway, the second-most important grade in the state.

The Maine Department of Transportation is aware of the problem. In a letter to Jarvis this spring, Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note said it was “in poor condition by any measure” but was scheduled for a \$7 million treatment in 2020.

“While this section of US 201 is a significant and important piece of our system, a general shortfall of funding does not allow us to get to every deficient section we would like,” but there is funding for improvements in the corridor, including in Moscow and Caratunk, Van Note said in his letter.

Maine has an annual highway funding shortfall of \$232 million, according to Maine DOT spokesman Paul Merrill. In recent years, state voters have authorized [annual \\$100 million bonds](#) to help cover the gap, and a legislative [Blue Ribbon Commission](#) is scheduled to propose new funding options by early next year.

Almost a quarter of Maine’s 22,860 miles of public roads are rated in poor condition, according to the [American Society of Civil Engineers](#).

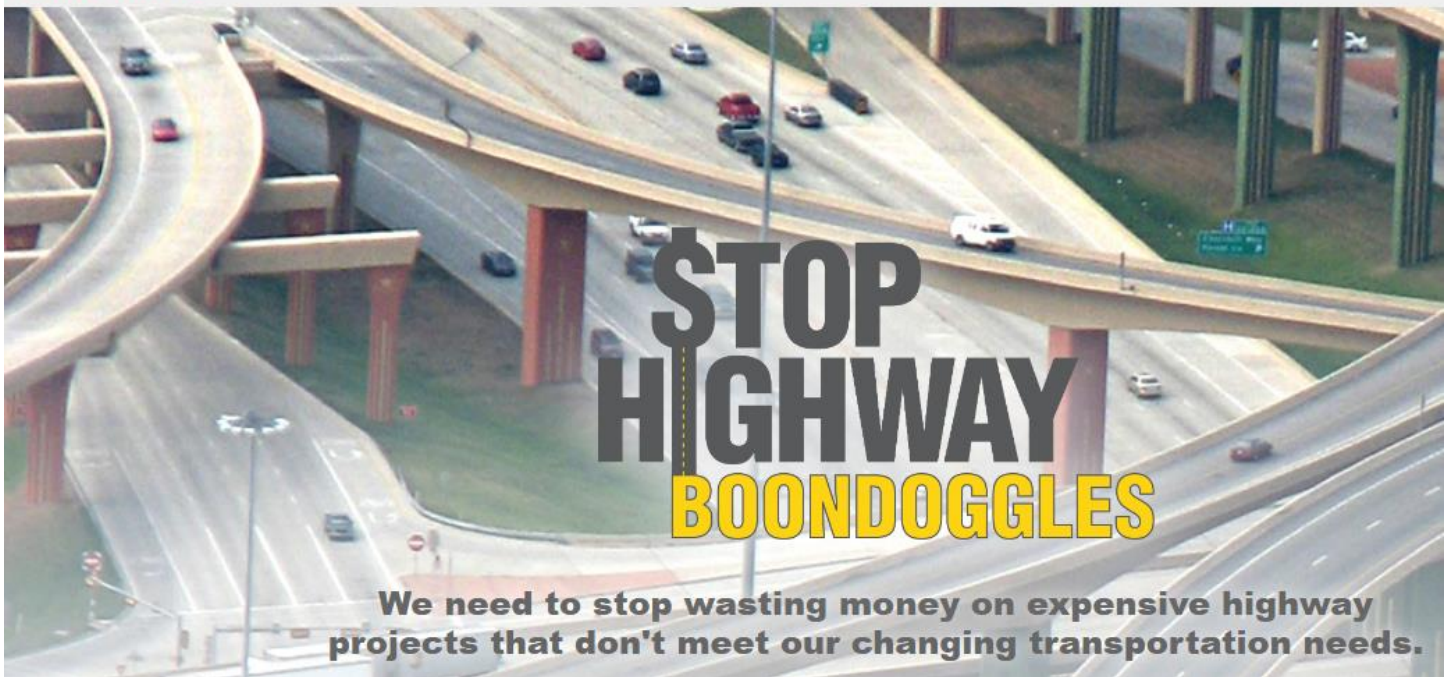
More than 100 entries were submitted for this year’s worst road contest. Runners-up were Craig Bartlett, of Sanford, for his nomination of Route 202 west of Sanford; Matt Bell of Limestone for nominating Route 1A in Fort Fairfield; and Caitlyn Roy of East Machias for a stretch of Route 1 in Washington County. The runners-up each won a \$176 prize – one-third of the \$529 grand prize.

“We had some incredible entries this year, and when it came down to it we decided we need to recognize all four of these people and their stories of how bad roads affect their lives,” said association President Paul Bradbury in a news release.

“Part of the problem is that Maine’s overall transportation funding system is broken, and does not bring in adequate revenues to fund highway improvements or any other major function of the Maine Department of Transportation.” Governor Mills’ [Ten year economic plan](#) 12.11.2019

Does “any other major function” include funding the \$79.25 million I-395/Route 9 connector project unanimously rejected by the City of Brewer at the same time the annual roads and bridge maintenance fund swells to a shortfall of \$232 million?

The DOT must refocus on Maine’s current unmet transportation needs.



Demand for public transportation, safe biking and walking routes, and modern ride-share options are all on the rise. At the same time, way too many of our roads, bridges and transit systems are falling into disrepair. Yet, policy makers consistently prioritize spending on new highway projects, often justifying their spending by utilizing outmoded transportation projections and models designed to meet the needs of a different century.

In 2012, federal, state and local governments spent \$27.2 billion expanding the highway system — including new roads, new bridges and widenings of existing highways. Those expansion projects absorbed more than one out of every four dollars spent on highways in 2012. All while we are facing a roughly half a trillion dollar backlog in needed road and bridge repair, and a \$90 billion repair backlog in transit repair needs.

Every year, we highlight the most egregious of these new construction and expansion projects in our Highway Boondoggles report. That report finds that these projects aren't just expensive, they are a total waste of precious transportation dollars. They do not solve the problems they are meant to solve, namely, they do not relieve congestion. But they do take money away from other more pressing needs that would do a better job addressing modern transportation needs, like repairs and maintenance, expansion of public transportation, and local street improvements.

Fix It First

We need to stop wasting money trying to solve transportation problems of the past. Instead we should fix the roads and bridges we already have and make investments that will help us meet the transportation needs of the future.

In 2015, 21 percent of the nation's highways had poor pavement condition. 1 in 9 of the nation's bridges is rated as "structurally deficient," and the average age of our bridges is 42 years. This is a result of deferred maintenance and misguided investment in new construction. To catch up, we're going to have to spend at least \$170 billion a year on road maintenance and another \$20.5 billion a year on bridge maintenance. We currently spend about half that. This is going to take a major shift in the way our policymakers think about and plan transportation projects.

Now is the time to make these changes. We can't let our roads and bridges crumble into further disrepair. The further behind we fall, the harder it will be to fix. Poor road and bridge conditions are costing drivers money, increasing congestion, and creating safety hazards. And we need to be planning for the future now. The transportation dollars we spend today to will determine the way we get around tomorrow.

IOWA PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
2643 Beaver Ave #120
Des Moines, IA 50310
Phone: 515-236-3257


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

"We need to stop wasting money trying to solve transportation problems of the past. Instead we should fix the roads and bridges we already have...We can't let our roads and bridges crumble into further disrepair. The further behind we fall, the harder it will be to fix. Poor road and bridge conditions are costing drivers money, increasing congestion, and creating safety hazards." Iowa gets it, why doesn't Maine?

[Home](#) > [Consumer Resources](#) > **U.S. Road Conditions**

2019 U.S. Road Conditions by State

Some roads are less traveled for a reason

 Last Updated 11/20/2019

Worst road conditions ranked by state

Below, we ranked all 50 states in order from most terrible to most excellent based on data from ConsumerAffairs' email survey, Tax Policy Center's Data Query System (DQS), the U.S. Department of Transportation, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Federal Highway Administration's "Highway Statistics: Highway Infrastructure, Public Road Mileage by Functional System."

Worst state roads	Spent per mile	"Poor" roads	"Good" roads
12. ME	\$45k	22%	41%

[View this information here.](#)

Maine's roads are ranked 12th worst in the nation; 22% of Maine's roads are considered in poor condition.

BUSINESS

Reducing emissions from transportation is a long, difficult road for Maine

A preference for pickups, paltry spending on public transit options and slow adoption of electric vehicles create significant obstacles for the state's ambitious goals.

BY [PETER MCGUIRE](#) | STAFF WRITER | 12.15.2019



A Tesla car charging station near Hannaford in Portland stands at the ready. There are about 556 electric and 22,300 hybrid vehicles registered in the state, accounting for about 2 percent of Maine's 1.3 registered vehicles. A preference for pickups and SUVs, and slow adoption of electric vehicles, creates significant obstacles for Maine's ambitious carbon reduction goals. *Derek Davis/Staff Photographer* [Buy this Photo](#)

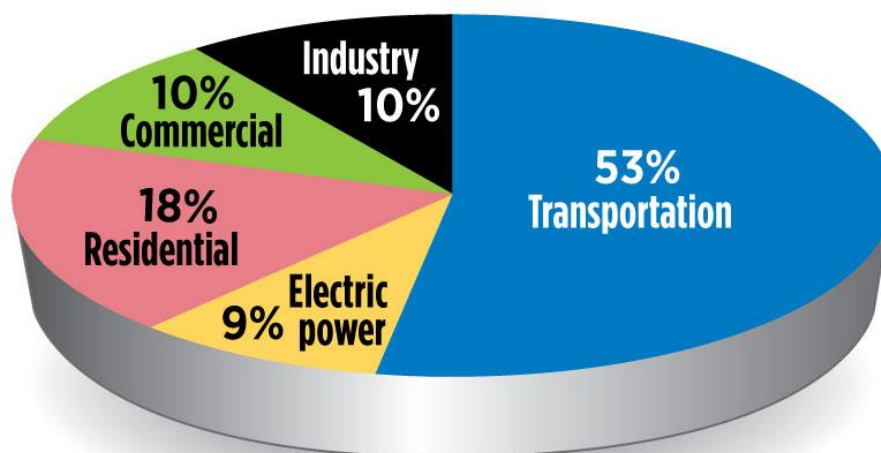
The most daunting obstacle in Maine's struggle to cut greenhouse gases in the next two decades is also the most ubiquitous – pollution from the tailpipes of more than a million personal automobiles on state roads.

Denting vehicle emissions will require dramatic shifts – widespread adoption of electric vehicles, public transit expansion, denser and more efficient towns and cities, and overcoming Mainers' reliance on single-occupancy vehicles to travel everywhere.

But reaching those solutions will be an uphill battle. State public transit spending is just 17 percent of the national median, less than 1 percent of registered vehicles are all-electric, Mainers live in dispersed, rural communities and many do not want or cannot afford new, fuel-efficient vehicles. Many of the policies that could make substantial change will come from the federal government.

Maine CO₂ emissions by sector

Maine's transportation sector is the single largest source of greenhouse gas pollution in the state, accounting for more than half its total emissions. Nationally, transportation accounts for about 29 percent of the total.



SOURCE: Maine Department of Environmental Protection

STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

“I think sometimes it is such an overwhelming, depressing topic that people kind of shut down,” said Joyce Taylor, co-chairwoman of the transportation working group for the Maine Climate Council and the state’s chief highway engineer.

In [September](#), Democratic Gov. Janet Mills established the council and tasked it with reducing Maine’s greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent in 10 years and 80 percent by 2050.

The transportation sector is the single largest source of Maine’s greenhouse gas pollution, accounting for more than half its total emissions, one of the highest proportions of any U.S. state. Nationally, transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas, about 29 percent of the total.

At its second meeting last month, 30 members of the working group from industry, government and civil society grappled with the scope of the problem and the clearest solution – how to get vehicles to pollute less and people to drive less.

“It’s challenging, but we can’t let the challenge overwhelm us,” Taylor said.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Overall, Maine’s greenhouse gas emissions have declined since a peak in the early 2000s. In 2017, the state produced 15 million metric tons of CO₂, almost 19 percent less than in 1990.

But as emissions from the state’s residential, commercial energy and industrial sectors have fallen, transportation pollution remains stubbornly high, about 8 million tons of CO₂ a year, according to the [U.S. Energy Information Administration](#). Those emissions mostly come from tailpipes of personal vehicles, not air, rail, shipping or marine traffic.

Policies to change that dynamic are challenging because it means managing at least three parties with divergent aims – vehicle consumers, auto companies and fuel suppliers, said Jonathan Rubin, an economist at the University of Maine and chairman of the environment and energy section of the U.S. Transportation Research Board for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

“You have three different significant players all trying to make themselves happy through enjoyment of the vehicle or by making money. You have to coordinate three sectors,” Rubin said.

Federal auto fuel-efficiency standards are the most effective way to curb emissions, but the Trump administration appears opposed to stricter fuel economy. Last year it rolled back an [Obama-era policy](#) that automakers had to reach an average 51 miles per gallon for new vehicles by 2026, and in September [revoked](#) California’s ability to set its own fuel standards. Maine has joined other states [challenging](#) those policies in court.

Absent federal rules, Maine can pursue its own solutions, with less impact.

MAINERS KEEP ON TRUCKIN’

Replacing fossil-fuel engines with all-electric versions tops the list of policy options. Three-quarters of Maine’s electricity comes from renewable sources, so all-electric vehicles have greater emissions impact here than states reliant on dirtier power.

But convincing consumers to switch from roomy trucks and SUVs to smaller, efficient cars or all-electric vehicles is a tough ask. A U.S. Department of Energy analysis of 2017 data showed that ownership of plug-in electric vehicles nationally averaged 2.21 per 1,000 residents. In Maine, it was 1.31 per 1,000 residents.

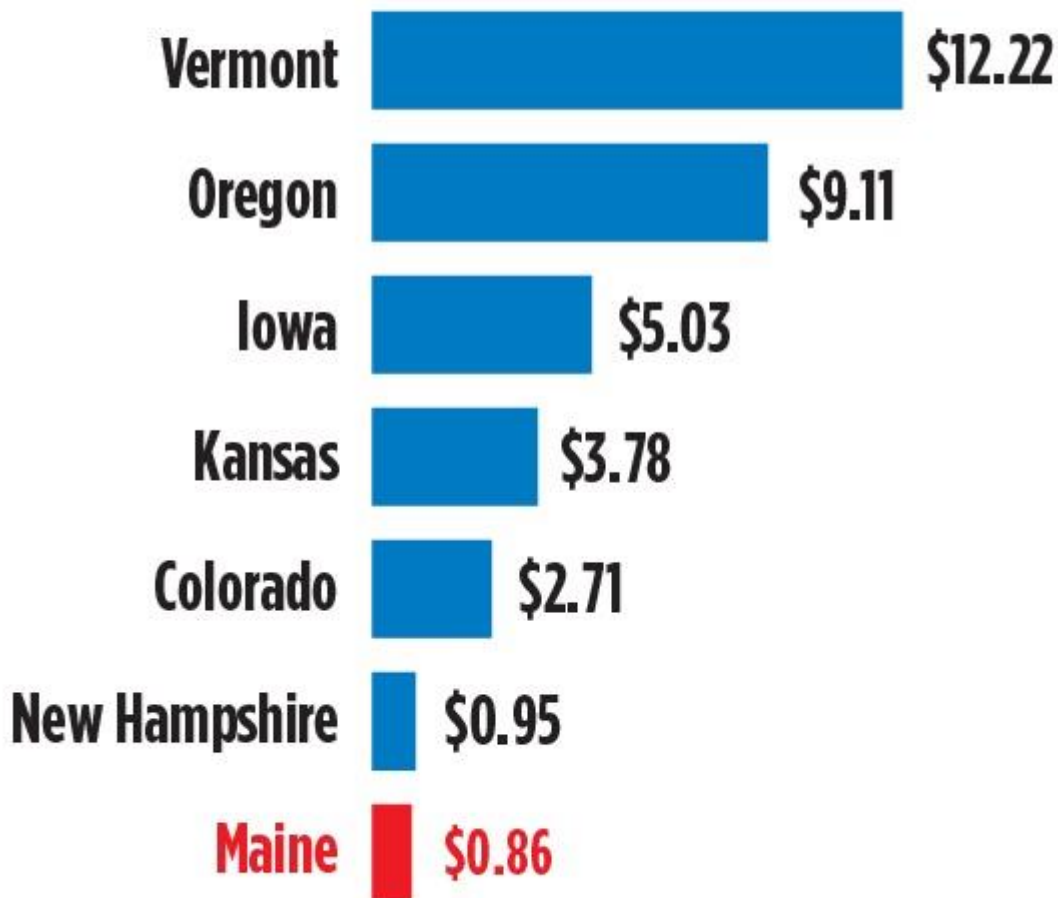
“It is a huge challenge. I think it is cultural,” Rubin said. “A discussion about values and people and communities and having people understand that their choices really matter.”

In 2015, the most popular new vehicle in Maine wasn’t an electric or hybrid vehicle, or even a fuel-efficient sedan – it was a [pickup truck](#).

Persistently low pump prices mean Americans have selected big cars and trucks over smaller vehicles. Small and large SUVs accounted for 43 percent of the U.S. market in 2017, the biggest share of any vehicle class, according to the most recent Environmental Protection Agency automotive trends [report](#).

Public transit spending

Maine ranks 38th in the nation for per-capita spending on public transportation such as bus and rail lines. The national average is \$5 per capita, while Maine spends 86 cents per capita per year.



SOURCE: Maine Department of Transportation

STAFF GRAPHIC | MICHAEL FISHER

Trucks and big SUVs get better gas mileage and emit less CO₂ than 20 years ago, but not as much as smaller vehicles. Last year, the average pickup truck got 19.3 mpg and a large SUV got 23 mpg. Sedans and wagons, on the other hand, got almost 31 mpg on average.

Just 556 electric vehicles are registered in Maine, less than one-tenth of a percent of the 1.3 million total registrations. There are just under 22,600 hybrid-electric vehicles, roughly 2 percent of the total.

To boost electric vehicle sales, the state offers [rebates](#) up to \$2,000 for qualifying vehicles and added public [charging stations](#) across the state. The program has issued 145 rebates since it started this summer, according to Efficiency Maine Trust, the quasi-governmental agency that operates it.

SLOW ADOPTION

The rate at which electric vehicles are being purchased is now too slow to make any real impact, said Adam Lee, president of Lee Auto Malls, one of the state's biggest car dealers. His dealerships sell about 30 Nissan Leafs, a common all-electric model, a year, less than half a percent of annual vehicle sales. Those low sales are after the company makes every effort to market electric vehicles, Lee added.

"It may be the solution, but at this rate we are not selling enough to make it the solution," he said. Without federal rebates and tax incentives, state-level incentives can do only so much to stimulate more sales, Lee added. He doesn't believe a federal program is realistic under the Trump presidency.

Electric vehicles get cheaper every year and manufacturers plan to release mass-market electric trucks, sports cars and SUVs in the future. But now most options are still more expensive than a fossil-fuel counterpart and may not be perceived to have the same performance or reliability. Many people regard electric cars as a luxury product, said Barry Woods, who promotes electric vehicles for solar panel installer ReVision Energy. Advertising that promotes profitable, but inefficient, trucks and SUVs also doesn't help, Woods said.

"There is a perception issue, which is too bad, and I think it is why we need more consumer education in the space so people can see what choice they have," he said.

Even if everyone went out and bought an electric vehicle tomorrow, they'd contend with an insufficient public charging infrastructure. There are just 187 public charging stations across Maine and only 24 are fast-charging, Woods said. If Maine had 30,000 electric vehicles on the road – a benchmark to reach a zero-emissions vehicle mandate

set by California law – it would need almost 800 public charging stations and the same number at places of work.

“If we are going to do this, we have a ways to go,” Woods said.

LOW PRIORITY, LITTLE COORDINATION

Realistically, rapid adoption of electric vehicles doesn’t appear on Maine’s horizon. That leaves a narrower set of policy prescriptions to cut back transportation emissions.

“Some of the transportation options other states will rely on don’t work as well in Maine,” said Hannah Pingree, head of the state’s Office of Policy Innovations and the Future. “Transportation emissions are among the most important areas of focus in our climate work,” which “has a lot of challenges in a state like Maine.”

Expanding and improving the state’s sparse public transit network is likely a top priority in a way it has not been for decades.

The Maine Department of Transportation’s spending on public transit is among the lowest in the country – just \$1.2 million a year, or about 86 cents per person. The national transit spending average is about \$5 per person, and Vermont, another rural New England state, spends \$12 per person. The bulk of Maine DOT funds are spent to [shore up](#) the state’s sprawling network of roads and bridges.

“It’s anemic,” said Greg Jordan, general manager of Greater Portland Metro, the biggest public transit system in the state. “The funding from local jurisdictions is fair, but not enough to support a really robust transportation system.”

Portland Metro has steadily increased ridership in the past five years, reaching [almost 2 million](#) boardings in 2018. Booming housing and business development, population growth and increasing congestion makes southern Maine an obvious place where boosting transit ridership could help curb emissions. Emissions in the Portland region have increased 40 percent since 1990, according to a New York Times analysis.

But the region’s fractured transit system, shared between six agencies with no shared schedules, ticketing or management, creates inefficiencies and discourages riders. “It seems to us that our No. 1 goal is to make this system easy for the customer,” Jordan

said. “If they are disconnected brands all over the place, people who have a choice are just not going to do it.”

THE IMPACT OF SPRAWL

Reducing commuter pollution may also require a reconsideration of where people live and work. Over the long term, some planners want communities designed around dense urban cores where people do not need an automobile for every trip to the office, store or school.

“Transit is only going to work to the extent land use supports it,” Jordan said.

Transportation is one of the biggest contributors to household carbon footprint, but is disproportionately higher in suburban communities, according to data from [Cool Climate Network](#) at the University of California, Berkeley. In Maine, the carbon emissions from bedroom towns such as Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Pownal, Gorham, Hollis and Buxton are about twice those on the Portland peninsula.

Those figures aren’t a surprise considering decades of land-use policy that encouraged sprawl and emphasized large home lots, dispersed business and shopping districts and lots and lots of free parking, said Kristina Egan, director of the Greater Portland Council of Governments, a regional planning group.

State incentives could help towns and cities come up with new zoning and housing policies that encourage downtown cores with services and amenities accessible by foot, bicycle and public transit. Changing our built environment is the overall long-term fix to emissions and an affordable housing crisis, Egan said.

“It is both a climate strategy and a workforce strategy; municipalities can take action about this immediately,” Egan said. “There is a demand for housing, and we don’t have the zoning rules that allow for it in places where people are living and working.”

PAYING THE PRICE

As the state develops a long-term plan to reduce emissions, it is also pursuing short-term fixes. The Maine Department of Transportation intends to use less-polluting biodiesel in some of its heavy trucks in southern Maine and government agencies are switching to electric vehicles. Mills has [directed state agencies](#) to develop plans to

meet the state's carbon reduction goals and said the Department of Administrative and Financial Services would purchase five electric vehicles for office use as an example.

Maine may make headway against its overall emissions reduction goals by improving [building efficiency](#), producing more electricity from [renewable sources](#), installing cleaner [home heating](#), and storing more carbon in the state's expansive [forestland](#).

Eventually, Mainers are going to have to confront the impact their everyday vehicle use is having on the environment, said Dylan Voorhees, energy director at the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

A multistate alliance called the [Transportation Carbon Initiative](#) could provide future relief. The initiative, a collection of 12 Northeast and mid-Atlantic states and Washington, D.C., intends to put a limit on the amount of carbon produced by vehicles and put a price on that pollution. It is modeled on a similar program that reduced greenhouse gases from power plants in New England starting in 2007.

"I'm a fairly big believer in markets to get the right outcome – people understand the economic implications of their actions," Voorhees said.

"We need to account for the fact that our cars and trucks are polluting our atmosphere, are changing our oceans, are changing our forests, are making us sick; that is the cost of our polluting out of our tailpipes for free," he added. "We are not really paying the full cost of driving any of our cars, much less our trucks."

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

Portland Press Herald

EDITORIALS

Our View. Transportation in Maine should be about more than cars and trucks
To lower carbon emissions, our state has to change the ways it builds communities.

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD | 12.18.2019

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE](#)

In the Dec. 15 Maine Sunday Telegram, Staff Writer Peter McGuire [laid out the dilemma well](#): If Maine is going to meet its goal of drastically reducing carbon emissions, it's going to have to address personal vehicle use, the state's single largest producer of greenhouse gases.

And if Maine is going to cut back on emissions from cars and trucks, it's going to have to change in some pretty fundamental ways.

"It's challenging, but we can't let the challenge overwhelm us," Joyce Taylor, the state's chief highway engineer and a member of Gov. Mills' Climate Council, told McGuire.

The council is working on ways for the state to reduce emissions by 45 percent in 10 years and 80 percent by 2050.

The transportation sector makes up more than half of Maine's emissions, and personal vehicles are by far the largest portion of the sector. Thus, electric cars are part of the answer to reduce emissions but are not being adopted fast enough to make a real difference – pickups remain the most popular new vehicle in Maine.

The other avenue for reducing emissions is to cut down on vehicle traffic. To do that, Maine is going to have to rethink its transportation policy, which is focused [almost solely on cars and trucks](#).

As McGuire reports, the Maine Department of Transportation spends about \$1.2 million a year on public transit. That's 86 cents per person, when the national average is about \$5 per person – Vermont, rural like Maine, spends about \$12 per person.

Traditional public transit is a good fit for the Portland region, where emissions are up 40 percent since 1990. Rail could be a part of the long-term solution, but bus service in the region could be expanded [at relatively low cost](#).

Public transit should be expanded [in rural areas of the state, too](#), using buses as well as vans and ride-sharing programs.

In both cases, service has to be reliable and frequent, and that is going to take investment.

Maine also has to change how it builds communities, because cutting emissions is a housing problem as well as a transportation one.

For decades, land-use policy has favored large home lots segregated from office and retail areas, encouraging sprawl.

What's more, the lack of affordable housing in the state's largest city is forcing workers to [live farther away from their jobs](#), making them put more miles on the road just to earn a paycheck.

Maine needs denser housing built alongside services, amenities and offices – and along public transportation corridors. The state needs to encourage the development of downtown areas and neighborhoods where cars are not a necessity, at least not for every errand, and pedestrians and bicyclists are [safe and welcome](#).

When it comes to transportation in Maine, cars and trucks get all the attention. If the state is going to reduce emissions and do its part to slow the climate crisis, that's going to have to change.

What happened to Maine's 470 functionally obsolete bridges?

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.

“What is a “functionally obsolete” bridge? A functionally obsolete bridge is one that was built to standards that are not used today. These bridges are not automatically rated as structurally deficient, nor are they inherently unsafe. Functionally obsolete bridges are those that do not have adequate lane widths, shoulder widths, or vertical clearances to serve current traffic demand, or those that may be occasionally flooded. A functionally obsolete bridge is similar to an older house. A house built in 1950 might be perfectly acceptable to live in, but it does not meet all of today's building codes. Yet, when it comes time to consider upgrading that house or making improvements, the owner must look at ways to bring the structure up to current standards.” [Click here to view VDOT definition.](#)

“Changes to FUNCTIONALLY OBSOLETE (FO): Effective with the 2016 archived data, FHWA is no longer tracking this measure, and will no longer be publishing it on our 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... [Click here to view this FHWA statement.](#)

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.](#)

Maine may still have a third of the state's total number of bridges that are sub-par; you can't just forget those 470 F.O. bridges that are conveniently no longer counted...

Portland Press Herald

Panel considers gas tax, state money to boost Maine's highway funding

A commission scheduled to finish work at the end of 2019 will ask for more time to draft a long-term solution to Maine's road funding shortfall.

BY [PETER MCGUIRE](#) STAFF WRITER | DECEMBER 18, 2019 | [CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE](#)



Workers rig straps from a large crane to the first of the new bridge supports put into place over Cobbossee Stream in downtown Gardiner in October. A commission formed to recommend new funding options for transportation projects will ask for more time to draft a long-term solution. *Joe Phelan/Kennebec Journal* [Buy this Photo](#)

Members of a bipartisan panel appear to agree in principle on a long-term proposal to narrow the state's annual highway funding gap by using more state revenue, adding taxes and fees and lowering annual bonding for transportation.

Wednesday's meeting of the [Blue Ribbon Commission](#) to Study and Recommend Funding Solutions for the State's Transportation System was one of the most productive since the group first assembled four months ago.



A Chevrolet Volt gets a “fill-up” at a charging station in Portland. Among proposals to boost transportation funding is to enact an annual fee for hybrid and electric cars. *Yoon S. Byun/Staff Photographer, File*

It also was supposed to be its last – commissioners were expected to write a report that includes recommendations to the Legislature by the end of the year. Instead, it will ask for more time to hammer out a compromise proposal.

“I hope we will be able to come up with something, the key to that is time to do it so we don't have an artificial deadline,” said commission co-chair Sen. Bill Diamond, D-Windham. “If we do that, we will come out with the beginnings of the approach and a strategy that really meets the goals of our commission.”

Maine's \$675 million annual highway budget is roughly \$232 million lower than it should be to meet the backlog of maintenance, repair and replacement projects, according to the Maine Department of Transportation. That shortfall has persisted over time, despite a recent practice of offsetting it with a yearly [\\$100 million bond](#) package.

Among the proposals considered by commissioners are:

- Allocating a portion of the state's \$240 million vehicle and automobile-related sales tax for highway funding.
- Increasing the 30-cent-per-gallon gas tax.
- Enacting an annual fee for hybrid and electric cars.
- Increasing registration and inspection fees.

A gas tax increase is the most direct way to raise more revenue, but commission Republicans are against any increase unless the state eliminates or seriously lowers borrowing for regular road maintenance.

“The only way I would ever support the gas tax (increase) is a constitutional assurance that we would reduce bonding,” said Sen. Matt Pouliot, R-Augusta. He and others noted that while Maine politicians have resisted using money from the general fund to prop up transportation spending, it is being used to repay bond debt and interest.

Road and bridge maintenance is paid for through the state’s highway fund, which relies on gas tax revenue.

“Right now we are using the general fund for transportation, but we are using it to repay investors on Wall Street who have put money into our projects,” Pouliot said.

Trying to reduce the state’s reliance on annual bonding to fix roads is a good goal, but it would be a step too far to eliminate it entirely, said Transportation Commissioner Bruce Van Note.

Interest rates that are lower than construction cost inflation mean borrowing is fiscally prudent right now, and bonding for durable projects such as bridges makes sense, he said. He also cautioned commissioners that shifting money from the general fund to the highway budget has been unsuccessful historically.

But continuing Maine’s recent practice of bonding every year to fix roads creates volatility in planning and budgeting, Van Note said, adding that another bond package is being prepared for 2020.

“It is not philosophy, it is pragmatism that says, ‘Reduce, don’t eliminate,’ ” he said. “I would love to build work plans on revenue instead of bonding.”

If some members of the commission want the state to stop borrowing, others just want the roads fixed and as quickly as possible.

“The longer we wait to do something, the more it is going to cost us,” said Barry Pottle, president and CEO of Pottle Transportation, a trucking company based in Bangor.

The commission needs to come up with a plan that ensures money will be coming in for years to come, Pottle added. That likely means increasing the gas tax.

“When we talk about a 7 cent to 9 cent tax on gas, I can tell you the state of Maine will welcome it if we can fix our roads and bridges,” Pottle said.

The commission intends to request approval to be reappointed and meet again until mid-February at least.

Commission Co-Chair Rep. Andrew McLean, D-Gorham, said he’s encouraged that the commissioners are making progress and willing to continue meeting.

“In the end, a solution we come up with is not going to be rocket science; it is going to be new revenue, involve some sort of general fund transfer and some sort of increase in the fuel tax,” he said.

The conversation is difficult for a lot of people and a likely compromise will not please everyone, but he and others on the commission are committed to delivering a bipartisan proposal that would receive support from both parties in the Legislature and the Governor’s Office.

“It is not a partisan issue and I am not trying to make it one, and I don’t think anyone around the table is trying to make it one,” he said. **“We are doing this because we have a major issue in front of us, and that is our crumbling infrastructure.”** [Rep. Andrew McLean]

Not a word about reigning in the DOT’s pet project...

Brewer legislator Arthur Verow dies at 77



Gabor Degre | BDN

Maine state Rep. Arthur Verow participates in a ceremony naming the rest area in Hampden on the northbound side of Interstate 95 the Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain Rest Area in this May 2, 2016, file photo.

By [Eesha Pendharkar](#), BDN Staff • December 19, 2019

Arthur “Archie” Verow, who represented most of Brewer in the Maine House, died unexpectedly Thursday morning of a heart attack, according to his daughter, Suzette Furrow.

Verow, a Democrat, was first elected to the Maine House in 2012 and was serving his third term when he died. He won re-election in 2014 before losing his seat in 2016. He [reclaimed it in last year’s election](#).

Before serving in the State House, Verow, 77, also had a long history of serving at the municipal level in Brewer. He served two terms as the city’s mayor. He also served on

the City Council, and he worked at Brewer City Hall as city clerk for 40 years before he retired in 2007.

Verow leaves behind his wife of 55 years, Fran, as well as a son, daughter and three granddaughters, Furrow said. He also had a daughter who predeceased him.

Furrow called her father a kind, compassionate, well loved man who “never said a bad word about anyone.”

Verow had a number of slogans he often used that applied to various circumstances in life, Furrow said. One was, “Life, be in it.” Another was, “Anything that’s easy isn’t worth it.”

“He was always involved in the community. You’d see him everywhere,” his daughter said. “If people described him as kind, that would make him happy.”

On Wednesday, Verow attended a breakfast hosted by the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce where Gov. Janet Mills spoke. In her remarks, Mills even mentioned Verow by name while answering a question about the upcoming legislative session.

“I’ve got 39 bills that I held over on my desk that we’re working on,” Mills said. “Representative Verow? Archie Verow? There he is. I’m working on that, too,” she said, without specifying what they had been discussing.

Mills offered her condolences in a statement about Verow on Thursday that noted that he “was eager to discuss the upcoming legislative session” at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

She praised the legislator for “his commitment to community and his tireless defense of Maine seniors.”

Former Gov. John Baldacci was serving on the Bangor City Council when he met Verow, who was then serving as the Brewer city clerk.

“He was very humble,” Baldacci said. “He wasn’t one to take credit. He wanted to help the council and help get things done.”

He also praised Verow’s work as a state representative, saying that he was more interested in problem-solving than in partisan politics.

“There’s glue that holds communities together,” he said. “We lost a little bit of that today with Archie’s passing.”

Gideon said Verow had “dedicated his professional life to public service.

“His roots in Brewer go back four generations and his passing is a tremendous loss to the city of Brewer, the state of Maine, and all of us who knew and loved Archie,” she said in a statement.

Verow served on the Legislature’s State and Local Government Committee.

One initiative he spearheaded in his time in the Legislature was a bill [to rename a rest area on Interstate 95 North](#) in Hampden for Joshua Chamberlain, the Brewer native and Civil War hero. The renaming happened in 2016.

Another was a successful bill he sponsored to provide state income tax credits to offset the cost of modifying homes — such as by installing ramps or widening doorways — to make them more accessible to people with disabilities and so seniors could continue living at home. The bill passed in 2016, and Verow was recognized for it the next year in Washington, D.C., at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s public policy conference.

BDN writer Charles Eichacker contributed to this report.

[Click here to view online.](#)



Former Brewer mayor, city clerk passes away

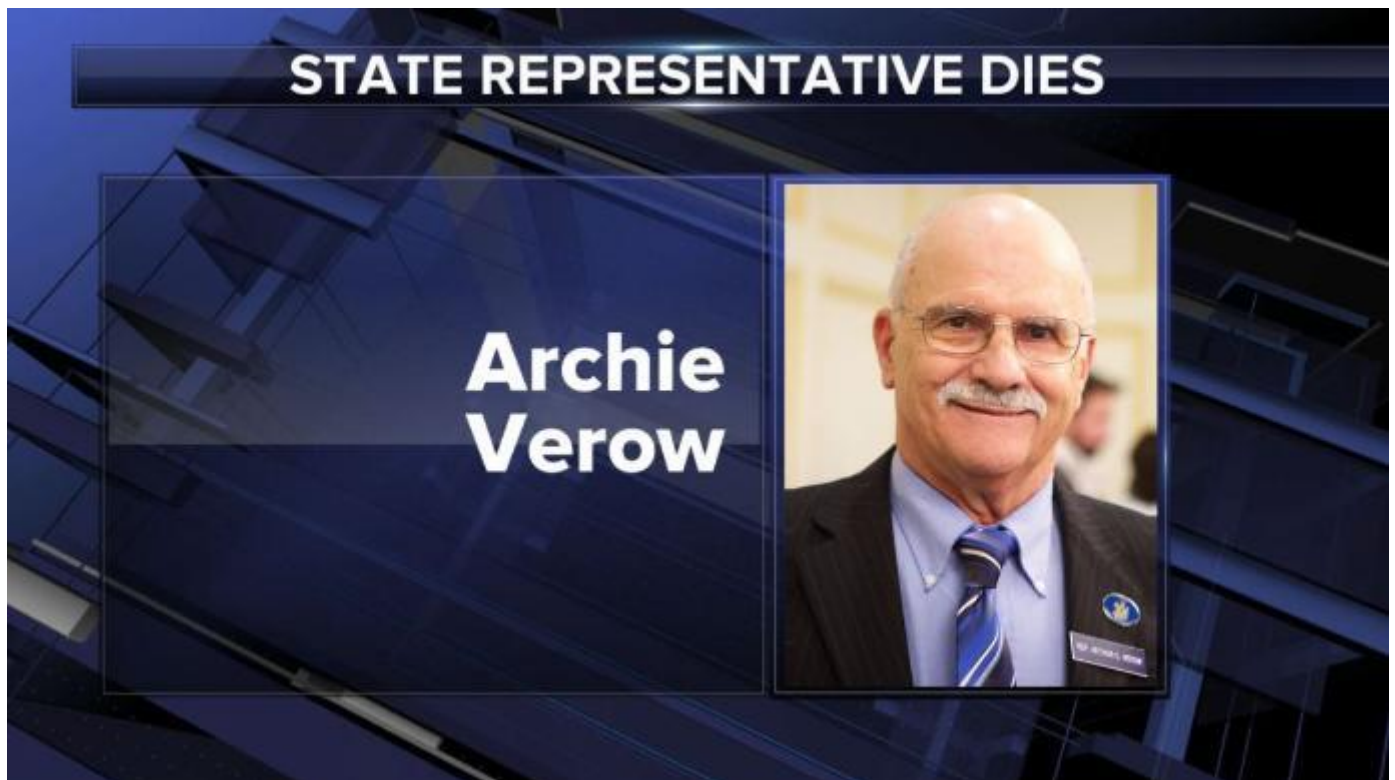
Volume 90%

By News Desk |

Posted: Thu 11:36 AM, Dec 19, 2019 |

Updated: Thu 3:07 PM, Dec 19, 2019

BREWER, Maine (WABI) One of Brewer's former mayors, who was serving as member of the State House of Representatives has died.



[Click here to view this report online and to access video.](#)

Arthur "Archie" Verow was serving his third term in the Maine House of Representatives.

In addition to his work in state government, Verow retired in 2007 after serving as Brewer's city clerk for 40 years.

Archie Verow was 77.

Below are some statements sent from government officials:

House leadership statement on the passing of the Honorable Arthur Verow:
"Following the announcement of the passing of the Honorable Arthur Verow, House Majority Leader Matt Moonen, D-Portland, and Assistant House Majority Leader Ryan Fecteau, D-Biddeford, released the following statement:

"It is a difficult day for us in the Legislature as we grieve the loss of our friend, Archie Verow. Rep. Verow was the kind of public servant who embedded himself in every aspect of his community and gave back in every way he could. He served as Brewer's city clerk, on the city council, as mayor, in the Legislature, as president of the Kiwanis Club and on the boards of St. Xavier's Home and Brewer Historical Society. In the Legislature, Rep. Verow fought for better protection of our aging Mainers and for better support of municipalities. He was a calming presence who treated everyone with respect. We all knew Rep. Verow as a loving husband to his wife, Fran, and a committed father and grandfather. Our hearts are heavy, and with Rep. Verow's family."

Governor Janet Mills released the following statement grieving the passing of Maine State Representative Archie Verow (D-Brewer):

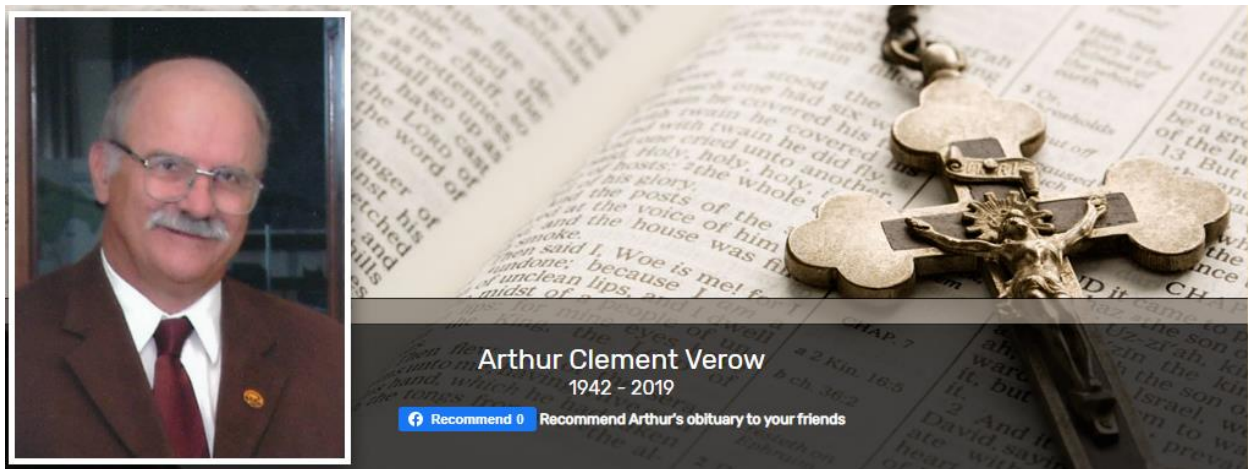
"It is with great sadness and gratitude for his lifelong contributions to our state that we grieve the passing of Representative "Archie" Verow. Archie was a passionate public servant who dedicated much of his life to the people of Brewer and the State of Maine, serving on Brewer's City Council, as Mayor, and in the State Legislature. His commitment to community and his tireless defense of Maine seniors will be sorely missed. Just yesterday, I enjoyed his company at the Bangor Chamber of Commerce breakfast, and he was eager to discuss the upcoming legislative session. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, his colleagues in the Legislature and with the people of Brewer during this difficult time."

Senate President Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, released the following statement regarding the sudden passing of Rep. Archie Verow, D-Brewer:

“On behalf of the Maine Senate, I want to offer my deepest condolences to the family of Rep. Archie Verow and the people of Brewer. Rep. Verow was a dedicated public servant, who cared deeply about the people in his community. In the Legislature, it was his kindness that made him stand out. He never had a bad word to say about anyone; it made him someone you just wanted to be around.”

“We will remember Rep. Verow for his commitment to his community, his quality character, and his friendship. He was the real deal and his presence at the State House will certainly be missed.”

Rep. Archie Verow represented the people of Brewer in the Maine House and served on the Legislature’s State and Local Government Committee. He devoted his professional life to public service, serving the City of Brewer for over 30 years as the City Clerk, as well as two terms as Mayor and as a City Councilor. He later served in the House from 2012 to 2016 and again from 2018 until his passing.



Arthur C. “Archie” Verow, 77, loving husband of Frances (Doane) Verow, died unexpectedly December 19, 2019 from a heart attack at Eastern Maine Medical Center surrounded by his family. He was born March 14, 1942 in Old Town, the son of Clement A. Verow and Erma (Smith) Verow Landry.

He graduated from John Bapst in 1960 and earned a B.S. degree from Husson College. Archie worked at Eastern Fine Paper and was the City Clerk of Brewer for 40 years. He served on the Brewer City Council and was mayor of Brewer for two terms. He was awarded Brewer Citizen of the Year. Archie was in his third term in the current Maine House of Representatives. He served as president of the Maine Town and City Clerks Association, State's Animal Advisory Committee and the Maine Municipal Association's Legislative Policy Committee. He was a member and past president of the Bangor Breakfast Kiwanis Club and advisor to the John Bapst Key Club.

Archie was a life-long resident of South Brewer and communicant of St. Paul the Apostle Parish. Archie loved to spend his summers on Parks Pond in Clifton where he built his family camp. He spent many summers hiking, swimming and boating with his wife and children and many relatives. He especially enjoyed attending activities his children and grandchildren participated in. He was a prolific writer who always had a pen and paper in his pocket to jot down story ideas, more recently these were replaced with an iphone. Some of his stories were published in local publications, and many were distributed to friends and family for their enjoyment. He was a member of various writing groups in the area. He was a frequent swimmer in “the cold pool” at the Bangor YMCA. He enjoyed biking, boating, reading, music, sports,

camping and dancing. He and Fran were members of the Saturday Nighters dancing club. He was a proud member of the Brewer community and loved being with family and friends. Archie was an advocate for the unborn, disabled and the elderly. He was a gentleman with a great sense of humor who was good to people.

Surviving in addition to his devoted wife of 54 years are two beloved children, Todd Verow and his partner James Kleinmann of New York City and Suzette Furrow and her husband Michael of Bangor, a son-in-law, Timothy O'Connor of Virginia Beach; three precious granddaughters, Trudy and Lilly Furrow of Bangor and Abby O'Connor of Virginia Beach; four sisters, Denise Wright of Citrus Heights, CA, Carol Verow of Long Beach, CA, Katherine Dowling of Brewer, and Cynthia Moran and husband George of Winterport; in-laws, John Doane (Lynn), Cindy Perrone (Ken), Gerald Doane and Richard Doane, many special nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. He was predeceased by his parents and his cherished daughter, Julie M. Verow O'Connor.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 AM Monday, Dec. 30, 2019 at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, St. John's Catholic Church, 217 York St., Bangor where a reception will be held immediately afterward at the parish center. Burial at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Bangor will be private. For those who wish, memorial contributions may be made to National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Greater New England, 101A First Ave., Waltham, MA 02451 or at nationalmssociety.org, or the Children's Dyslexia Center, 294 Union St., Suite 3, Bangor, ME 04401. Arrangement trusted to Kiley & Foley Funeral Service, 69 State St., Brewer. Messages and memories of Archie may be shared at kileyandfoley.com.

[Click here to view online.](#)



An earlier time:

Special Thanks to Representative Verow:



Arthur C. Verow

**District #128
Brewer (part)**

Archie is not our neighborhood's Representative anymore, we were redrawn into the "part of Brewer" reassigned to District #129. Archie is a man of his word and I thank him for his efforts to get our voices heard. Archie's bill to remove 2B-2 from further consideration was denied a hearing in the second 126th session, yet his determination brought LD 47 to a hearing at the JSC on Transportation of the 127th on February 3rd of 2015. Gretchen and I are no longer squelched under the filter of not substantive for comments. If you see Archie, please give him your thanks or drop him a quick note. We feel like the red-headed stepchild since redistricting and miss his representation.

Archie.Verow@legislature.maine.gov

February 2015 Supplemental Edition | Larry Adams | Page 10

Maine is working to increase road funding and reduce emissions. Politics are keeping them separate.



Gabor Degre | BDN

Construction crews work in Bangor in this 2018 file photo. Maine's is pursuing parallel efforts to increase transportation funding and reduce carbon emissions, but they encompass a number of tricky political questions.

By [Caitlin Andrews](#), BDN Staff • December 24, 2019 6:00 am

AUGUSTA, Maine — How Maine weighs in on a regional effort to curb transportation emissions could have consequences for parallel efforts to increase funding for roads and bridges and reduce carbon emissions generally, according to elected officials.

That makes the conversation around the [Transportation Climate Initiative](#) — a regional cap-and-trade plan from Northeast states that aims to drive down emissions — delicate in Maine, a rural state where [roughly half of carbon emissions](#) come from vehicles and public transit is less developed than the rest of the region.

The administration of Democratic Gov. Janet Mills is participating in that effort, but it hasn't committed to supporting it as a state commission considers ways to fill an [annual shortfall for road and bridge maintenance that the Maine Department of Transportation has estimated at \\$232 million.](#)

Both are politically complicated, but a gas tax is sensitive. It hasn't increased since 2011, and Republicans won't go for a gas tax unless it's tied to a constitutional amendment to eliminate bonding except for emergencies, said Sen. Matthew Pouliot, R-Augusta, who sits on the blue-ribbon transportation commission.

Sen. Bill Diamond, D-Windham, who also sits on the commission, said any perception that the commission's work and the initiative are tied together would be a “death knell” for any proposal the commission recommends and saying the conversations should remain separate.

“It would be a nonstarter and kill any discussion along those lines,” he said.

Diamond said the conversation around climate change and transportation funding should remain separate. He said the commission has just barely been able to discuss the idea of a single-digit gas tax increase. (A month ago, Pouliot said Republicans [simply wouldn't support a gas tax increase.](#))

Diamond added that the gas tax increase required by the initiative could be much higher, saying they could be between 20 to 30 cents. [According to Maine Public](#), drivers could see a 5 to 17-cents per gallon increase in the initiative's first year, depending on emission targets.

"It would be politically naive to think this could go forward at the same time," Diamond said, referring to the initiative, noting the Transportation Climate Initiative looks at reducing fossil fuels from a climate change perspective.

The governor has tasked a new Maine Climate Council with [making the state carbon-neutral by 2045](#) and that effort includes a subgroup on transportation. However, it hasn't discussed the transportation initiative in depth yet, said state Rep. Bettyann Sheats, D-Auburn, instead focusing on the bigger picture of how people travel themselves around the state and how to create the "biggest impact" with the least amount of controversy and cost.

That has meant looking at barriers to more efficient vehicles — like the cost of electric vehicle charging ports and fears of electric vehicles running out of power mid-commute — and public transportation, Sheats said. Cost is part of the conversation, but how anything gets funded is the purview of the commission, she said.

"At this point we're trying to figure out what's the best bang for our buck," she said of the climate council's group.

The Transportation Climate Initiative would reduce the amount of carbon emissions allowed from transportation fuels — which make up 50 percent of the state's emissions — by limiting how much emissions can come from transportation and require dealers to bid for allowances to sell fuel within that cap and send the proceeds to participating states.

A [memorandum of understanding](#) between the partnering states was released last week, but Mills, a Democrat, hasn't said yet whether she will sign on. Mills spokesperson Lindsay Crete said the state will be "appropriately cautious" when considering how the state's rural nature and transportation needs intersect with climate change.

Pouliot said it would be a "huge win" for the state if they could eliminate bonding for transportation, but he said there needs to be more communication from the state on where they are with the Transportation Climate Initiative, saying there is "a lot of concern" about what would happen to the gas tax if it was approved and the Legislature increased the gas tax.

If a hike occurred, he said it should only increase over time and fluctuate depending on the state's needs. But Pouliot noted any solution is going to face political barriers, noting rearranging general fund money would come with its own obstacles.

"How do you fill the gap without generating the revenue?" he asked. "You don't."

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

Two gas tax increases, new toll booths across Maine could drive up costs for drivers in 2020

by Maine Examiner 12/2/2019 | 5:05 | Posted in Blaine House, Maine News, State House

[Click here to view online.](#)



Senator Bill Diamond (D-Cumberland) poses for a picture with Governor Janet Mills.

AUGUSTA – Efforts to purportedly boost funding for Maine’s roads after Gov. Janet Mills canceled road projects last year and then avoided any new road funding in the state budget may leave Maine drivers footing a higher bill for driving in the coming year. The news comes as a Blue Ribbon Commission on Maine’s transportation funding tries to negotiate an agreement on a long-term plan for funding Maine’s roads.

On two fronts, Maine drivers face increases in the gas tax. One of those, Gov. Janet Mills’ participation in the multi-state (TCI) Transportation and Climate Initiative, would not direct money to road repair and construction. Instead the TCI would distribute those funds to states to spend on more “green” initiatives, such as mass transit and electric vehicles.

While potentially beneficial to a segment of the population in Maine’s more densely populated southern Maine cities, Mainers who live in rural areas and northern Maine are not likely to see much benefit. **That puts rural and northern Mainers in the position of paying higher gas prices to essentially fund projects for urban Mainers to their south.**

On the second gas tax front, a Blue Ribbon Transportation Commission assembled to study funding sources for Maine's roads after the last legislative session has so far been divided on a solution. Democrats continue to advocate for a higher tax on gasoline, while Republicans push to allocate existing resources and make Maine's roads a higher priority in the state budget.

If Governor Mills pushes forward with the TCI agreement, which some say would raise the gas tax by 13 to 20 cents per gallon, and an increase to the state gas tax passes along party lines in Augusta, Maine drivers would be hit with two gas tax increases in the same year.

Along with that prospect, reports now indicate that Senator Bill Diamond, a member of the Blue Ribbon Transportation Commission, is floating the idea of adding a number of new toll booths across Maine. Evidence of that push is available in Diamond's appearance on the Augusta-based TV show "The Maine Event." Diamond was asked about a rumor of a proposal that the group may want to "sort of" turn the "rest of the interstate system into a turnpike type authority" and use tolls to extract revenue from drivers. In response, Diamond raised the issue of tolling Interstate 295, which he called the "free" highway, along with tolling the seven miles of the Maine Turnpike that are not currently subject to tolls. Diamond also suggested that currently that most of Maine's highways are not subject to tolls and "tolling other parts" of Maine's highways was something that needed to be looked at.

The steady fixation of Democrats looking to raise gas taxes and other costs on drivers is not new. In the most recent legislative session, multiple bills were brought forward in efforts to raise the tax. None of the bills passed, despite some receiving support from a majority of Democrats in the legislature.

One proposal, brought forward by Rep. Deane Rykerson with the support of Speaker Sara Gideon and cosponsored by more than half of Democrat legislators, would have imposed a 40 cent per gallon tax on gas and heating oil. None of the revenue for that tax hike was dedicated to fixing roads, however. Rep. Rykerson instead chose to propose a byzantine government-run rebate system to filter the money through. The proposal never got off the ground as Mainers marched into the State House during public hearings in a show of force to oppose the bill.



Maine would see 40 cent per gallon increase in gas & heating oil with carbon tax

Rep. Andrew McLean also proposed higher gas taxes. One of McLean's proposals would have raised the gas tax by 25% and raised numerous fees associated with driving and automobile ownership as well. Another proposal from McLean would have raised the gas tax by 7.5 cents from June 1 through October 31, then reducing the gas tax by 2.5 cents the rest of the year. A specific point Republicans are making in opposition to efforts to raise the gas tax is that existing resources have not been properly allocated and road funding should be a higher priority.

They point to the fact that Governor Mills' recent state budget failed to provide any increased funding for Maine's roads and bridges, despite a more than 10% increase in spending overall. Republican lawmakers have hammered that point home repeatedly, pointing out that Gov. Mills and Democrats increased spending on welfare for non-citizens, hiring hundreds of new state workers, taxpayer funded abortions and many other things, but did not provide increased funding for roads.

The place Republicans point to when the conversation around funding for Maine's roads arises is a resource Democrats have so far chosen to continue spending elsewhere. That resource is tied directly to Maine's roads.

The state of Maine collects more than \$230 million annually in sales taxes on new and used vehicles each year in Maine. Republicans argue that some of this revenue, tied to Maine's roads in a similar way as the gas tax, should be put into the state's highway fund and not sent out into the general fund where lawmakers can spend it on anything they wish.

With the state of Maine currently experiencing revenue surpluses but roads and bridges languishing or deteriorating due after not receiving the same funding boost, many say the problem is not a lack of money, but where that money is spent.

Several published estimates of the current shortfall suggest that the entire \$230 million from vehicle sales taxes would be more than enough to close the current funding gap. The state's revenue forecasting commission just announced another \$70 million revenue surplus for the general fund last week. If there is a time to redirect the vehicle sales tax to Maine's Highway Fund, it is now, supporters of that approach say.

Whether opponents of the gas tax can steer their liberal counterparts away from both gas tax increases and a new array of toll booths across Maine remains to be seen. Maine drivers currently face the 21st highest gas tax in the nation. Just a 3 cent per gallon gas tax increase would move Maine to 13th highest and a 6 cent increase would move Maine into the top 10.

Mainers spoke out strongly against Governor Mills' participation the TCI agreement, with 68% of Maine people who sent in official public comment saying they oppose Maine entering the agreement.



On Janet Mills' gas tax, records show many more Mainers spoke out against agreement than for it

Any action by the Blue Ribbon Commission on a gas tax increase or tolling Maine's highways will require action by the Maine Legislature. It is unclear how Governor Mills' participation in the twelve-state TCI agreement will move forward.

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Flags to be flown half-staff in honor of State Representative on Monday

Verow Flags



By News Desk | Posted: Fri 5:22 PM, Dec 27, 2019 | Updated: Fri 7:15 PM, Dec 27, 2019



BREWER, Maine (WABI) - Flags will be lowered Monday to honor the life of State Representative Arthur "Archie" Verow.

Governor Mills has directed that the United States and State of Maine flags be flown at half-staff at the State Capitol and in the City of Brewer.

Verow served as Brewer City Clerk for four decades.

He was also a two-term mayor.

Verow was in his third term in the current Maine House of Representatives.



[Click here to view video.](#)



Letter to the editor: Gorham connector plan at odds with Climate Council goals

A feasibility study has the right idea: Explore public transit, land-use planning and upgrades to existing roads.

A feasibility study has the right idea: Explore public transit, land-use planning and upgrades to existing roads.

Here at Maine Audubon, we're noticing a disconnect between transportation planning and the work of the governor's Maine Climate Council.

On Nov. 29, we read with interest that the Maine Turnpike Authority Board of Directors [had authorized staff](#) to begin securing lands to build a 5-mile connector from Gorham to South Portland. On Dec. 15, the Telegram published a lengthy [article on transportation and climate](#) that said, in part, that reducing vehicle emissions will require "widespread adoption of electric vehicles, public transit expansion, denser and more efficient towns and cities, and overcoming Mainers' reliance on single-occupancy vehicles to travel everywhere."

This is exactly what was proposed in a 2012 report commissioned by the Legislature, the [Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study](#). Rather than constructing a new connector, the study recommends using a combination of regional land use planning, new and expanded public transit and specific roadway improvements on existing roads to reduce congestion and the number of cars on the road. The underlying issues addressed in the report – more sprawl, more cars on the road – will likely not be solved by the proposed connector.

In fact, studies show that building new roads often [increases cars](#) on the road, disrupts existing [human](#) and [natural](#) communities and creates barriers for [aquatic](#) and [terrestrial](#) animals to move safely across the landscape. It's time to resurrect and update the excellent recommendations from the 2012 report, which, if fully implemented, should reduce carbon pollution from transportation – a step in the right direction toward meeting the Climate Council goals.

Sally Stockwell | *director of conservation, Maine Audubon, Cumberland*

[Click here to view online.](#)