

## 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.