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Gov. Mills' bond package gets first hearing



Gov. Mills' infrastructure bond package gets first hearing

By Paul Dwyer | Posted: Wed 6:20 PM, Mar 11, 2020

AUGUSTA, Maine (WABI) State lawmakers held a public hearing Wednesday on Governor Janet Mills' proposed bond package. It would provide over one hundred million dollars for Maine's infrastructure.



"People from both parties talk about how important this is, but I think we need to put our money where our mouth is and come through for Maine people on this," said Rep. Drew Gattine (D) Westbrook, who sponsored the bill on behalf of Mills.

The bill proposes \$105 million in bond funding for roads and bridges, and \$15

million for broadband expansion. These funds would also be able to leverage federal and private funds. Democrats are on board.

"We really need to do whatever we can to expand access to broadband into our rural communities," said Gattine. "People who live in more urbanized areas obviously have better access, but we can't just leave our rural communities behind."

Republicans say they are waiting to take a position on the bill. They are citing a desire to fix roads and bridges, but with a long-term solution instead of bonding.

"We are very much in favor of addressing the problem, particularly on a long-term basis," said Rep. Sawin Millett, R-Waterford. "And bonding is one way of dealing with it."

It's the way we've been dealing with it for the last decade. It's 100 million a year, every year. We don't think that's the long-term solution."

The commissioners of the Department of Transportation and the Department of Economic and Community Development testified in support of the bill.

"Critical infrastructure is the only way the economy can grow," said DECD Commissioner Heather Johnson. "Having good roads is the path for goods and services and people. And having good broadband infrastructure is the path for data and information. Both are now critical in our economy."

We're told they're likely to have a work session on the bill Thursday.

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Let's see, borrow another \$105 million again this November or cancel the \$100 million I-395 connector project and put that money back into the unmet transportation needs of our state? They just don't get it...