



"One angry man  
with a laptop"

Welcome to the 3rd quarter of 2020, year twenty of the controversial \$100 million I-395/Route 9 connector boondoggle; the annual shortfall in the road and bridge budget is now \$232 million with 142 projects cancelled in the Work Plan. In April, the DOT projected a loss in the Highway Fund of \$125 million over the next 18 months. We can't afford this project, but that does not deter the MaineDOT—nothing ever does...

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Amidst a pandemic, with unknown financial outcomes, it makes no sense to go ahead with such a controversial \$100 million project when many other transportation projects, in addition to the 142 projects already cancelled in January, may have to be cancelled due to the loss of revenues during the pandemic.

- It can't be business as usual as Mainers are suffering.

Mid-June, five bids were received for the first phase of the connector, the replacement of the Wilson St./I-395 Bridge. The low bid was Wyman Simpson of Richmond, Maine @ \$10,744,235.

That's \$2.75 million below the DOT's own estimate—now they'll say that they have to proceed as they are saving money...

## This is how an ill-conceived project affects a neighborhood:

670 Eastern Ave, Brewer, ME 04412

\$179,900 ~~-\$30,000 (-14.29%)~~ **PRICE REDUCED**

For Sale | Active | Single Family | 4 Beds | 3 Full Baths | 3,696 Sq. Ft. | 1.55 Acres | 3 Car Garage | Updated 3 days ago

19 Photos | Map & Location | Street View



Once the most expensive property in this Brewer neighborhood—now the cheapest—fallen into disrepair and the original owners have walked away. Assessed @\$328,500 for 2018, the price has gone down \$112,600 since just February when it was first listed @\$292,900.

The house is only 14 years old and was permitted and built during the connector study when 3EIK-2 was the preferred alternative by both the MaineDOT and the FHWA. The disrepair and drop in value of this property affects the whole neighborhood and I contend the disrepair was caused by the connector project and the affect it had on the owners since 2B-2 was forced upon Brewer at the end of 2011—try living for a decade with the stress of a new highway abutting your property!!

From the [Coldwell Banker Realty](#) listing: "The proposed I-395/Route 9 bypass will be crossing the lot next to this property. The ROW begins about 95' from the right property line. It will be a two lane road that is mostly below grade as it will pass under Eastern Avenue. Construction may begin the fall of 2021."

MaineDOT has already taken the property (eminent domain) directly abutting the rear (north) of this property; when the DOT purchases the ROW as mentioned above, the MaineDOT will also abut this property to the east—all of this without monetary compensation for the decreased quality of life that brought us all to country-living.

## Maine state budget facing COVID-19 shortfall of \$1.4 billion over next three years

Lawmakers and Gov. Janet Mills will have to deal with a more than \$520 million loss in state tax revenues in the current fiscal year, as the economy wilts under the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

BY [SCOTT THISTLE](#) | JULY 29, 2020 | [Click here to view online.](#)

State budget writers will be facing a \$1.4 billion decline in tax revenues for the next three years because of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a new report.

The forecast, laid out by the Legislature's Revenue Forecasting Committee, includes a \$523 million drop for the fiscal year that began July 1, a continuing shortfall of \$433 million in fiscal 2022 and \$449 million in fiscal 2023, as an economy plunged into recession by the spread of the COVID-19 virus slowly begins to recover.

The figures represent a significant impact on the state's \$8 billion, two-year budget, which entered its second year on July 1 and expires next June 30.

Key highlights in the forecast include sharp declines in sales and income tax receipts, and decreases in corporate income taxes as well.

In 2021 sales tax and use receipts are projected to be down by \$238 million while income tax receipts will be down by \$260 million. Corporate income taxes in 2021 are forecast to be off by \$34.6 million.

Other areas hit by the pandemic include revenue the state receives from its two casinos and projected revenue from a retail marijuana industry that was expected to launch this year but has also been delayed by the coronavirus.

The numbers released Wednesday will be key as Gov. Janet Mills and the Legislature's Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee begin their work to craft a balanced state budget, as required by the Maine constitution.

But before any budget adjustments can be made, Mills would have to call lawmakers back to Augusta for a special lawmaking session.

"The Governor is reviewing revenue reports, examining forthcoming revenue forecasts, and monitoring Federal efforts to provide additional aid and flexibility to State governments," Lindsay Crete, Mills' press secretary said in a message to the Press Herald. "The Governor will then confer with legislative leaders about next steps. Governor Mills is urging Congress to provide additional direct support to states as well as flexibility with funding already authorized in order to continue to protect the public health and safety and to spearhead an economic recovery."

## Comments to the Route 9 Connector project 18915.00:

***“The Department...is particularly interested in learning local views...and identifying local concerns and issues.”***

Our citizen's i395rt9hardlook.com website is directly based on documentation gleaned from the original MaineDOT I-395/Route 9 Transportation Study website (no longer online). Our website offers a complete record of the study, from the start to the present, with local views, concerns and issues in communications with the MaineDOT, the FHWA, state and federal Inspectors General, the Governor, state and federal Legislators, and in comments to the 2012 DEIS, the 2015 STIP, the 2015 FEIS, the March 2016 BACTS meeting and testimony in support of LD47 and LD 783 in efforts to legislatively remove 2B-2 from further consideration. Representative Verow, Representative O'Connell and Brewer civil servants and elected officials have clearly voiced their views, concerns and issues in council meetings, in the media, at numerous public meetings, and legislative sessions—unanimously enacting resolutions of non-support in 2012, 2013 and 2015. MaineDOT has summarily dismissed the views and concerns of Brewer's leaders and residents.

### **The DOT has controlled the conversation by never discussing 2B-2's documented deficiencies:**

Regulations defining the EIS process are too overwhelming for the average citizen to comply with; MaineDOT's lack of transparency compounded the situation and the DOT used that to their advantage. It wasn't until after submitting 37 specific comments/questions, to what would become 68 pages in April 2013's "Responses to Substantive Comments", that we first heard the word "substantive". Nearly all of those comments were deemed as "not substantive for comment" by MaineDOT officials who became the judge, jury and executioner—controlling the process and silencing our views, concerns and issues.

You will not find a specific definition of "substantive" in CFR's (Code of Federal Regulations); that lack of specificity allows agencies to determine solely what is and what is not substantive. The Park Service, unlike the DOT/FHWA, will answer almost every public comment. As an example: "I don't like 2B-2" would not warrant a comment, yet, "Limited opportunities exist to control access management on this section of Route 9" would have warranted a comment.

The MaineDOT controlled the public's views, concerns and issues by manipulating DEIS commenting to what the DOT felt comfortable responding to with canned talking points, thus burying the public's views, concerns and issues in the back of a book that no one will ever read.

### **What about the MaineDOT/FHWA's hard look at 2B and Rte. 9 in October 2003 that removed 2B from further consideration for the "potential for new safety concerns and hazards?"**

- **“This alternative would not be practicable because it would fail to meet the system linkage need, and would fail to adequately address the traffic congestion needs in the study area. Alternative 2B would use approximately 5 miles of Route 9. Traffic congestion and conflicting vehicle movements on this section of Route 9 would substantially increase the potential for new safety concerns and hazards.”**

- “Additionally, this alternative would result in: • **substantially greater proximity impacts** (residences within 500 feet of the proposed roadway) **in comparison to Alternative 3EIK-2 (200 residences v. 12 residences).**” [Proximity displacement was abandoned in April 2009.]
- “To meet the need of improved regional system linkage while minimizing impacts to people, **it was determined that an alternative must provide a limited-access connection between I-395 and Route 9 east of Route 46. Alternatives that do not provide a limited access connection to Route 9 east of Route 46 would not be practicable** because that **would not provide a substantial improvement in regional mobility and connectivity** and **would negatively affect people** living along Route 9 in the study area. Alternatives that would connect to Route 9 west of Route 46 **would severely impact local communities** along Route 9 between proposed alternative connection points and Route 46. Alternatives providing a direct connection between I-395 and Route 9 east of Route 46 will provide improved regional connections between the Canadian Maritime Provinces and the Bangor region and reduce traffic on other roadways.”
- “Alternative 2B was dismissed prior to PAC Meeting #16 on January 15, 2003 because it would **inadequately address the system linkage and traffic congestion needs.** This alternative would not be practicable because it would **fail to meet the system linkage need of providing a limited access connection between I-395 and Route 9 east of Route 46.** MDOT projects that the future level of service (LOS) for this section of Route 9 resulting from this alternative would be “D” — LOS D is where traffic starts to break down between stable and unstable flow and can become a safety concern in areas of level topography, vehicle mix, and fluctuating speeds. Future traffic volume (year 2030 no-build average annual daily traffic) would be approximately 8,800 vehicles.”
- “**Limited opportunities exist to control access management on this section of Route 9 from local roads and driveways.** There are **ten local roads and 148 existing drives or access points to undeveloped lots.** Assuming 10 trip ends per drive and an equal number of left and right turns, **Alternative 2B’s ability to satisfy the system linkage and traffic congestions needs is questionable.** There are several hundred acres that can be developed along this section of Route 9. Additionally, 200 buildings (residential and commercial) would be located in proximity (within 500 feet) of the proposed roadway.”
- “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,** and the **inability of Alternative 2B to satisfy the system linkage purpose and need effectively.**”

The forewarnings of “**would negatively affect people**” and “**would severely impact local communities**” were included in my comments to the DEIS, yet, the DOT determined it was more important to make believe that 2B-2’s safety issues didn’t exist by claiming they were not substantive instead of addressing the deficiencies head-on and I find that astonishing!!

**I will never be convinced that somehow a hardlook at Route 9 was all it took to magically rehabilitate 2B-2 from an alternative meeting only 20% (1 of 5) of the purpose and needs in April 2009, to become the preferred alternative of this project.** Nothing has physically changed since 2003 except for the MaineDOT’s “hard-look at Route 9”. **The same access management**

**issues still exist with ten local roads and 148 other access points. Why was Route 9 deemed so dangerous in 2003 yet okay in 2020? I questioned that in the DEIS and it was not substantive!**

A hard-look cannot erase the documented deficiencies that exist with 2B and 2B-2. The above facts, provided by MaineDOT and FHWA professionals in 2003, soundly removed alternative 2B from consideration. 2B-2 should have never been allowed to be resurrected in September 2003 by the ACOE and local Holden residents against the wishes of both the MaineDOT and the FHWA. Something has always smelled fishy with the 2B-2 selection, leading many of us to believe that 2B-2 was a nod to a few influential individuals outside of Brewer that did not want 3EIK-2, the MaineDOT/FHWA's first preferred alternative from July 2003 to September 2010.

In October 2011, the preferred alternative was downgraded to a two-lane/2-lane ROW with no future expansion to a 4-lane/4 lane ROW as planned, and in December 2011, the FHWA ROW Mgr. (M.H.) advised that the preferred alternative (2B-2) no longer met purpose and needs and further comparison to other alternatives was an apples to oranges comparison because of recent changes in criteria. "Mark is concerned the criteria change to a 2-lane/2-lane ROW of the Preferred Alternative will alter the impacts and prior alternatives analyses is not comparable (apples to apples) as those were done with 4-lanes/4-lane ROW...he questioned the identification of the logical termini." (DOT Project Mgr. J.L.) The FHWA manager's concerns were squashed and the study continued without reconsidering previously removed alternatives under the new criteria. Did the DOT take another look at 3EIK-2 (1st preferred alternative)? NO. Did the DOT take another look at 4B which had widespread support but dismissed for too much cut and fill? NO. A Jan. 2003 email from a PAC/BACTS member to the DOT suggested 4B was more likely cancelled to please the influential people of Holden: "The original 4B route was eliminated by the study team after a series of meetings held outside the PAC with the Town of Holden and some of its more influential citizens..." **There have been too many irregularities in this study and this has been anything but an honest, transparent and fair process.**

"Adding more miles to our transportation system in this current fiscal environment doesn't make financial sense," said Bernhardt, "Our responsibility going forward is to manage our existing infrastructure within our existing budget...We are struggling to maintain the roads and bridges we currently have in safe and serviceable condition...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." This could have been said today about the Route 9 connector, it was said by Commissioner Bernhardt in August 2011 reference the Wiscasset Bypass project.

At a time when Maine can't afford to even maintain the roads we have—with a \$232 million shortfall carried forward in January that cancelled 142 projects and downgraded paving best practices—to the projected \$125 million project shortfall in highway taxes by June of 2021—and the latest report of a \$1.4 billion shortfall in tax revenues over the next three years by the Legislature's Forecast Committee—it's fiscally irresponsible to construct new infrastructure.

**Those are my views, concerns and issues—you may not like them and may not agree with them—but that is the way many of us view this project—now some specific questions:**

## **Why hasn't more effort been done to mitigate 2B-2's noise impacts?**

15 properties were identified as being impacted by high noise levels from 2B-2; 3 of those properties are within NSA4 where I reside. "Noise barriers were determined to be feasible but not reasonable and therefore will not be constructed." (DEIS) No barrier evaluated was determined to be reasonable because all options considered exceeded the \$31,000 per benefited residence criteria." (ROD) To be reasonable, DOT requires that the barrier cost not exceed \$31,000 per benefited residence, based on a barrier cost of \$31 per square foot in 2012. A benefited residence is one that receives an insertion loss of 7 dB A or greater.

Those of us impacted by high noise levels are apparently expected to just live with it as the state hides behind the regulations with data collected pre-2012-DEIS. Quality of life and property values will be diminished, with no compensation for the loss, and nobody seemingly cares! The failure of the DOT to recognize how these decisions affect impacted residents, and what we perceive as a total lack of empathy, is why many continue to push back. There is a groundless belief that, even though many of us will be impacted by this connector, we will still somehow benefit from the use of the connector and that is complete rubbish. Unless you live on the extreme ends of this connector, you may have to travel further just to gain access to the new connector than to transit as you always have through our existing roads. I would have to travel an extra 4.4 miles to get to the Route 9/46 intersection in Eddington using 2B-2, and thus will never get any use out of the connector—it is unreasonable to think that I somehow still benefit from my impacts.

The first 3 properties on Woodridge Road, impacted by high noise levels, are identified as sites R4-1, R4-2 and R4-3 in NSA4; 670 Eastern Avenue was not part of the study, but obviously needs to be. I would argue that the study's mapping was skewed when attempting to match airborne mapping to existing Brewer Tax maps—mitigation measurements were also skewed and I would argue makes the mitigation effort seem worse than it actual is and a second look needs to be done. Every effort must be taken to mitigate the noise from this connector.

DEIS Exhibit 3.29 indicates a 2,510' length of a barrier system for the 3 sites, benefitting 2 residences—the length of the northern boundaries of properties on Woodridge Road is 710.5' to 1425.1' when considering the first 3 to 5 properties—I do not see the 2,510' length on the tax maps. I believe that mapping inaccuracies were compounded by a lack of understanding of the area and the specific neighborhood.

The \$1,424,546 cost to mitigate that area of 2B-2 seems excessive and also an average 18.3' height seems to not have taken in the below grade of the connector going under Eastern Ave. Even at \$1,424,546 for complete noise barriers—that is only 1.4 % of the \$100+ million project!!

The DOT should go out of their way to minimize the noise of this roadway to those that they impact, not hide behind some regulation from 2012. If the DOT experienced a construction cost increase of 46% in October, from estimates in March 2019, it doesn't take much imagination to state that the \$31 per square foot noise barrier cost in early 2012 is no longer accurate and should be increased to reflect 2020 costs. This should be a no-brainer...

### **How will construction activities affect our properties?**

How does excavating some 40 feet under Eastern Avenue, a few hundred feet away from our neighborhood, affect the aquifer?

How will blasting affect our wells, septic systems and foundations?

How will this be monitored and who will be the liaison to the neighborhood?

How often will water be sampled and tested during construction activities?

Changes in water chemistry should be investigated immediately and bottled water supplied until such time as the water chemistry clears.

Any permanent damage to the aquifer, wells and septic systems should be compensated by the state either paying for city water and sewage hookups to the affected properties or pay for the repair of existing systems, to include foundation cracks.

### **Is the centerline cable barrier—promised to Senator Collins—still being considered?**

When I-95 north of Bangor was an undivided 2-lane road, several accidents occurred in that transition from the divided to the undivided roadway; this issue, now pertaining to 2B-2, was presented to the MaineDOT/FHWA by Carol Woodcock (Bangor Office Mgr.). The advantages of this centerline-cable-barrier system were touted in a 2006 University of Connecticut/University of Maine study examining the “severity of head-on crashes on two-lane rural highways”.

“Larry, I met with David Bernhardt on the project a few weeks ago, and he told me that he has addressed the safety concerns I addressed. It is still a two lane highway but they have added a very tall, cable divider that should make a big difference in the safety.” (C.W. July 2012)

An April 2013 conversation between C. Woodcock, Commissioner Bernhardt and Chief Engineer Sweeney was reported out in an April 8, 2013 email: “I asked about the cable dividers – they are still going to be included – and, yes, no passing.” No, these are not the normal cable barriers on the shoulders of the road; they are on the centerline between the two travel lanes which keeps vehicles from crossing into the opposing lane.

I do not support this project.

Larry Adams



## Janet Mills calls for sweeping budget cuts to offset pandemic losses

Caitlin Andrews | August 5, 2020 | [Click here to view online.](#)

AUGUSTA, Maine — Gov. Janet Mills on Wednesday directed most state department heads to identify 10 percent cost reductions in their agencies in her administration's most dramatic response yet to revenue shortfalls caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

An email from Department of Administrative and Financial Services Commissioner Kirsten Figueroa sent out Wednesday told department heads they have until Aug. 19 to submit their proposals to the Democratic governor's administration.

The reductions appear to be part of preparations to propose a reduction package to the Legislature. Figueroa said "we will either incorporate the curtailment initiatives you provide or replace those initiatives with alternatives" that achieve the savings but require legislative approval.

The sudden severity of the virus-induced recession is prompting an unprecedented response by the state. **Maine is facing a projected \$1.4 billion revenue shortfall over the next three years due to the pandemic with \$524 million falling within the budget year ending June 30, 2021.**

That total roughly adds up to what department heads are being asked to reduce, Figueroa noted. The benchmark for departments and agencies funded by the General Fund budget is 10 percent, while **programs funded by the transportation budget would be cut by 5 percent.**

"This information will be essential as the Administration considers curtailment options and these proposals will also help inform the biennial budget process as these percentages are equal to the percentage reductions required in the biennial budget," she wrote.

When Gov. John Baldacci faced a projected shortfall of \$570 million projected shortfall over two years during a recession in 2009, he proposed closing the gap with state employee furloughs, the elimination of merit pay increases and requiring new hires to pay portions of health insurance. Those changes will look minor next to the amount requested by Mills.

Sen. James Hamper, R-Oxford, a member of the Legislature's budget committee, said it was "high time" the solicitation was made, saying it seemed clear for months that cuts would be necessary as key revenues like use and sales tax plummeted. He was glad Mills took the action, but he said "more action is needed."

Democrats on the panel recently caucused virtually to discuss what could be done to address the shortfall and budget reductions were one option floated, said Rep. John Martin, D-Eagle Lake, a former House speaker. He supported the action, noting that Maine must balance its budget while saying the action does not necessarily mean all cuts will be made.

"We're in a good place right now," he said.

Under Mills' guidelines, department heads are not allowed to eliminate any program or reduce payments for centralized government services that are subject to their own targets, according to the email. They were also asked to review all resources from prior years' unencumbered balances and reserves.

The drivers of the state budget shortfall have long been known: Sales and use tax revenue is expected to be down \$230 million by the end of the 2021 fiscal year next June, a 6 percent decrease caused by dips in demand and associated economic restrictions from Mills as a way to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Mills has taken some actions to try to stop the bleeding. She ordered a spending freeze earlier this year expected to free up around \$250 million. A supplemental budget proposal for this biennium was scaled down by \$54 million from the original proposal.

Minority Republicans have continued to chide the governor for a two-year budget of just under \$8 billion passed last year. It was 11 percent over the baseline when proposed, roughly the amount that the governor wants to cut.

The state has a rainy day fund with \$258 million and other reserves that could soften the blow. But the shortfall still presents a daunting challenge for lawmakers when they return to Augusta either this year or after the 2020 election with additional relief from Congress uncertain.

## Mills asks state departments to trim spending by 10 percent

State Finance Commissioner Kirsten Figueroa directed state department leaders to find ways to reduce costs as the state grapples with COVID-19-related revenue losses.

BY [SCOTT THISTLE](#) STAFF WRITER | AUGUST 6, 2020 | [CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE.](#)

Gov. Janet Mills is asking state department heads to cut spending by 10 percent, as the coronavirus pandemic eats away at state revenue.

“Like every state in the nation, Maine is facing significant budget shortfalls caused by the coronavirus pandemic,” Mills said in a prepared statement Thursday. “While the steps we have already taken have protected Maine’s fiscal stability in the short-term, we still need to make difficult decisions in the months and years ahead.”

State Finance Commissioner Kirsten Figueroa, in an email to state department heads late Wednesday, detailed revenue shortfalls that will leave the state’s budget out of balance without spending reductions or new sources of revenue.

Figueroa’s memo asks department leaders for their suggestions to reduce spending before Mills moves to issue what are known as “curtailment” orders, which will force the reductions.

Curtailing is the practice of reserving funding appropriated by the Legislature, rather than spending it, so that if a budget shortfall occurs, the reserved funding may be used to cover the shortfall and ensure that the State budget remains in balance as required by the Maine Constitution.

Utilizing a curtailment, or holding certain funds in reserve, allows State government to prepare for anticipated shortfalls while maintaining the flexibility to adjust the curtailment in the event that available resources — including additional federal funds — become available.

Figueroa’s memo also details a proposed 5 percent reduction to the state’s highway fund, used for road and bridge repair and construction and other transportation services, like state-operated ferry services.

The state’s [Revenue Forecasting Committee last week projected revenue losses of \\$528 million](#) in the current fiscal year, which will end on June 30, 2021 and \$883 million in losses for the following two-year budget cycle in 2022 and 2023.

A 10 percent reduction in spending for the current fiscal year would make up about \$500 million of the lost revenue. Unspent funds and surplus revenues will help soften the blow by about another \$120 million in the current fiscal year but decreasing tax revenues, mostly from sales and income taxes, are expected to continue to hamstring government spending over the next two years.

The state is half-way through its two-year budget cycle. The current budget was approved by the Legislature in June of 2019 and runs through June of 2021. But lawmakers on the Legislature's budget-writing Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee are anticipating a supplemental budget proposal from Mills later this year that will set the budget in balance.

Mills has already moved to reduce government spending, ordering a freeze on new hiring in her first set of executive orders when Maine first went into a state of civil emergency in mid March.

The move toward curtailments is unlikely to result in any immediate layoffs in state government, but the spending trim will probably result in fewer state workers as jobs are eliminated by attrition over time.

Sen. Jim Hamper, R-Oxford, the ranking Senate Republican on the Appropriations Committee, said he was not surprised by the move toward curtailment but was surprised Mills did not begin the process sooner. Still, Hamper credited Mills for acting to slow spending quickly as the pandemic reached Maine.

"Early on she told the commissioners to curtail their spending and implemented hiring freezes," Hamper said. "So we have to give her credit for that. She pulled in the reins so there was money left over in a number of accounts."

Hamper said Figueroa had given budget-writing lawmakers a "heads up" that she was going to recommend curtailments to Mills.

In her memo to department leaders, Figueroa says the recommendations for reductions will be considered by Mills as her budget team plans for balancing the state's budget, as required by the state's constitution.

"This information will be essential as the Administration considers curtailment options and these proposals will also help inform the biennial budget process as these percentages are equal to the percentage reductions required in the biennial budget," Figueroa wrote.

She goes on to note that, "no departments or branches of government have been excluded from this calculation."

“In order to preserve budget stability, it is important for each department of State government to evaluate expenditures and assess any areas of possible curtailment,” Mills said. “The governors across the country continue to advocate as well for the federal government to provide additional aid to State and local governments, along with flexibility for funding already awarded, so that we may preserve critical services and chart a full economic recovery.”



**"One angry man  
with a laptop"**

Welcome to 2020, the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the I-395/Route 9 connector boondoggle:

Amidst the failure of the blue-ribbon funding commission to reach consensus, and a 46% increase in project costs from a March 2019 estimate that bloated the annual road and bridge maintenance shortfall to an annual \$232 million by October 2019 cancelling 142 projects in the DOT's 2020-2021-2022 Work Plan:

- 2B-2's \$79.25 million cost in 2017 has ballooned by \$20.75 million (+26.2%) to \$100 million—a 64.0% increase since the 2012 cost of \$61 million.
- By April 2020, the MaineDOT was anticipating a \$125 million drop in Highway Fund revenues to June 2021.
- Considered the first phase of the connector project, the Wilson St./I-395 Bridge replacement was awarded to Wyman Simpson for \$10,744,238 on June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- As of July 14<sup>th</sup>, the \$105 million transportation bond for 2021 was passed—the DOT will begin using the new bond money this year—creating a 2021 shortfall.
- As of August 6<sup>th</sup>, the DOT's Highway Fund has lost \$31 million in revenues; Governor Mills has asked for a 5% reduction in the fund as Maine faces a \$528 million shortfall this FY and \$1.4 billion over the next 3 years.

What's wrong with you MAINE—we have no money!!

## Janet Mills signals her aversion to job cuts or reduced education aid in budget overhaul

Caitlin Andrews | 8.13.2020 | [Click here to view online.](#)

AUGUSTA, Maine — Gov. Janet Mills has said in recent days that her demand of most state agencies to submit plans to slash spending would focus on items with the “least impact” on workers and services. She also seems to want to spare education aid.

The Democratic governor looks to be trying to reassure state employees and others that her request for most department heads to identify 10 percent cost reductions — programs funded by the transportation budget have been asked to identify 5 percent reductions — will not result in seismic changes in government. Many are skeptical.

The economic recession induced by the coronavirus pandemic promises to be a defining issue of Mills’ first term. The state faces an estimated \$1.4 billion shortfall over three years, with \$524 million falling within the budget year ending in mid-2021, dwarfing the two-year, \$570 million shortfall the state faced during the 2009 recession.

Mills and her aides have characterized the efforts as “curtailments,” saying the money would be held in reserve rather than cut outright from the budget, in case additional federal aid comes. In practice, it still means the money may not be spent and it could set the tone for cuts in the next two-year budget. Departments cannot propose to eliminate entire programs to meet their goals.

“I want to assure you that, as we begin a thoughtful review of potential savings, we will focus on items that have the least impact on state employees and on vital programs and services,” Mills said in a Friday email to state workers.

The governor’s office has not fleshed out these plans. Mills spokesperson Lindsay Crete reiterated a desire to “preserve vital services and the jobs of those who help administer them,” but did not address what metrics would be used to determine impact on jobs and services.

On Wednesday, Mills said on a Maine Public call-in show that she is “not eager to cut or claw back” funding for public education, which the state is required by law to fund at 55

percent, a goal it has not yet reached but inched toward in a scaled-back supplemental budget this year.

She also pointed to the importance of increases made in the Department of Health and Human Services — which takes up about 50 percent of the state budget — in important but also expensive areas including expanded Medicaid and the child welfare system.

“We don’t want these people falling through the cracks,” she said.

The Maine Service Employees Association, which represents over 12,000 state employees, appears nervous. A message last week from union president Dean Staffieri urged members to pressure U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, to back a massive aid package proposed by House Democrats but opposed by Senate Republicans that includes \$1 trillion in state and local aid.

There is no deal in sight on a stimulus package in Congress. Mills said on Maine Public that she is still hopeful Congress will provide additional aid, but that will not affect the “belt-tightening” her administration plans to do.

Staffieri also encouraged lawmakers to repeal tax cuts made in 2011 under former Republican Gov. Paul LePage as an alternative to cuts, saying it would be “wrong and reckless” to make state workers “bear the brunt” of reductions.

“The state can’t cut its way out of this pandemic without causing real harm to state and local workers, public services and the people we serve,” Staffieri said.


Staffieri said Wednesday that the union would look to engage the governor in impact bargaining if staff reductions were proposed, but is now just “trying to wrap our heads around” what a 10 percent reduction could look like.

Mills’ letter to state workers was “misleading” about the effect a curtailment would have on services, said Julie Rabinowitz, once the spokesperson for former Republican Gov. Paul LePage who now works for Maine People Before Politics, a LePage-affiliated nonprofit.


Rabinowitz noted the letter does not define how Mills would measure harm to jobs or services, but said any curtailments made this year will likely serve as a “big signal” of funding priorities when the governor and Legislature begin negotiating the next two-year budget in 2021. “When you stop spending on the program, you’re cutting spending on the program,” she said.



Key project information presented in the MaineDOT's virtual meeting that is no longer available:




Route 9 Connector Project, Overview & Description | MaineDOT




Watch later

## Design

- New Roadway will be approximately 6 miles in length
- Highway will be controlled access (access only at Route 1A and the Route 9 intersection)
- Project will have one 12' lane in each direction with 8' shoulders
- The project will also create a "T" intersection with the current Route 9.
- The new Connector will be designated Route 9. The section of Route 9 from this intersection to Brewer will be designated Route 9 Business.
- Speed Limit on the new Route 9 Connector will be 55MPH



Route 9 Connector Project, Overview & Description | MaineDOT



Watch later

## Bridge Design

- Roadway Crossings
  - Connector will go under Route 1A
  - Connector will go under Eastern Ave
  - Connector will go over Lambert Road
  - Connector will go under Clewleyville Road
  - Connector will go under Levenseller Road



## Traffic Control for Bridge Construction

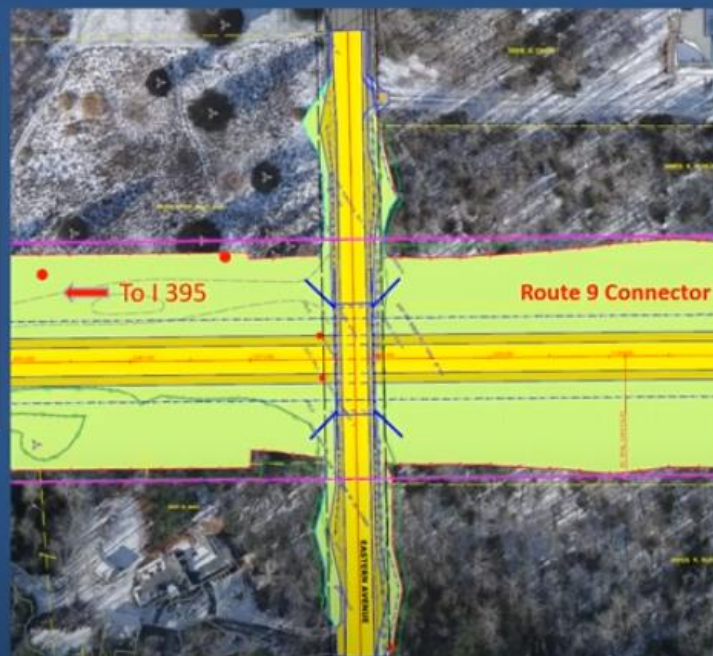
The following roads will be temporarily closed for bridge construction

- Eastern Avenue (6.5 mile detour using local roads)
- Clewleyville Road (2.9 mile detour using local roads)
- Levenseller Road (2.9 mile detour using local roads)

The road closures will be staggered and not overlapping  
Road closures will last between 4 and 6 months.



## Route 9 Connector and Eastern Ave

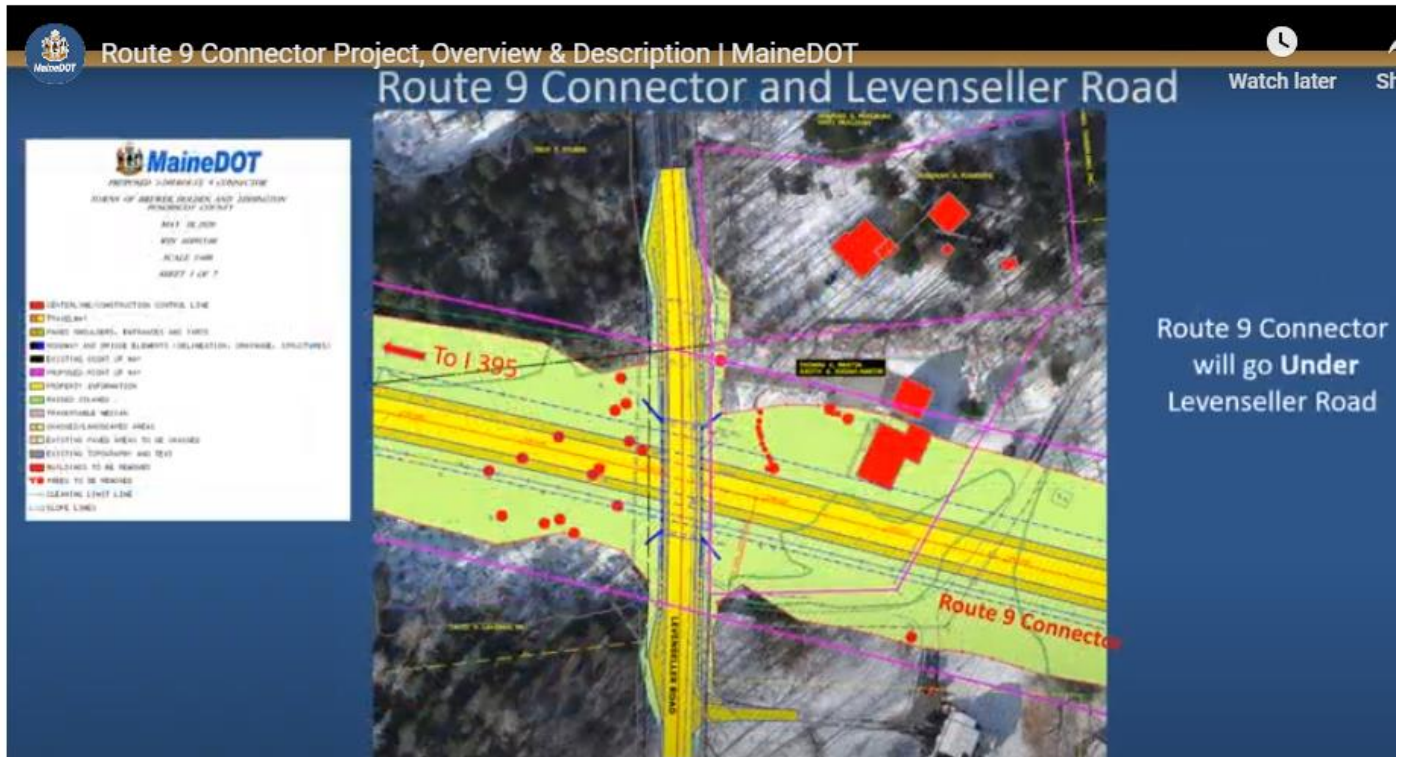



Route 9  
Connector will go  
**Under** Eastern  
Ave







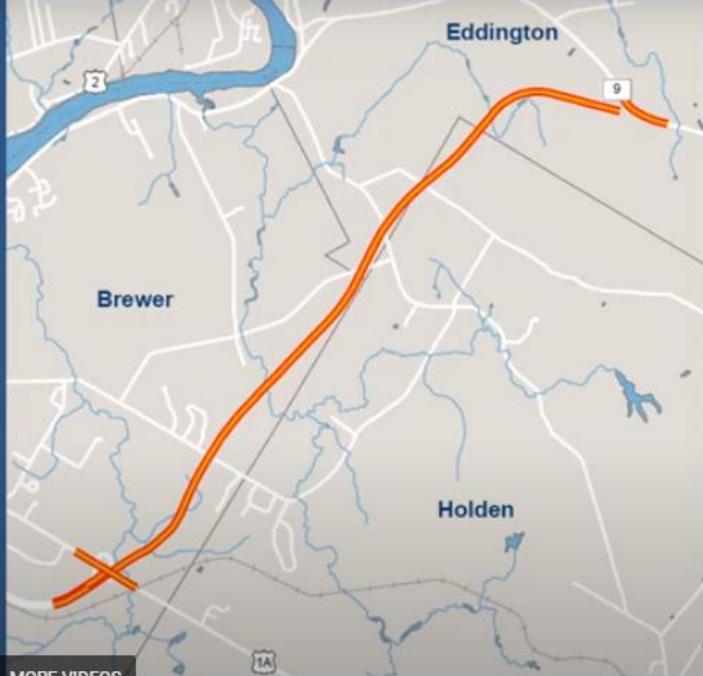





Route 9 Connector, Right of Way | MaineDOT

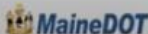
Watch later
Share






## RIGHT OF WAY

Route 9 Connector will cross through Brewer, Holden, and Eddington. There are just over 60 parcels that are directly affected with property acquisitions.

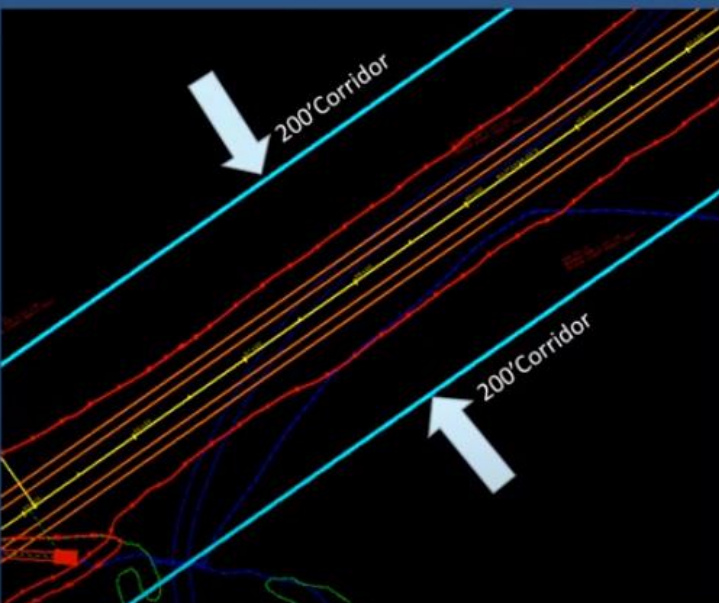
Initially, eight homes were identified during the planning process that would need to be acquired. Two additional homes have been identified during the design phase. To date, seven homes have been acquired by the MaineDOT for this project.




Route 9 Connector, Right of Way | MaineDOT

Watch later
Share



The Route 9 Connector will be located within a 200 foot wide Limited Access Corridor that is approximately 6.1 Miles long.

The Limited Access Corridor does not allow driveway or other access to the roadway other than I-395 to the south and Route 9 to the north.





## MAPPING AND APPRAISAL

\*At this time, the Department is updating titles of the directly affected parcels. Upon the completion of the title research the Right of Way mapping of the balance of the project will start. This process is expected to take 6 to 9 months.

\*Once the mapping is complete on the entire project, the valuation process with the appraisals can start on the directly affected parcels.

\*Under both Maine State Law and the Uniform Act, the appraiser is required to invite affected property owners to accompany them during their inspection of your property.



## NEGOTIATION

\*After the appraisals are completed, reviewed and accepted by the Department a Negotiator will contact each directly affected property owner with the State's offer of "Just Compensation".

\*The current schedule proposes that the Right-of-Way for the corridor be acquired in late Summer to early Fall of 2021.

\* Note: This time frame is the current projection. The negotiator will provide you with a much more accurate date when they contact you with the state's offer.

**BREWER** — Construction on the first major phase of the [controversial Interstate 395-Route 9 connector](#) is scheduled to get underway Tuesday.

The Maine Department of Transportation is replacing the Wilson Street Bridge and has hired Wyman & Simpson out of Richmond to do the job for just over \$10 million.

The Wilson Street Bridge is located at the end of I-395, near the Brewer-Holden town line.

“While the construction is starting on the bridge part of the project right now, the I-395-Route 9 connector is still in the design phase but it’s moving ahead as scheduled,” said Maine DOT spokesman Paul Merrill.

crosses Eastern Avenue, then Lambert, Cleweyville and Levenseller roads before connecting with Route 9 in Eddington.



Some of the eight homes scheduled to be displaced are already gone and another 54 properties in Brewer, Eddington and Holden will be affected in some way.

Planning for the \$104 million connector project, designed to ease heavy truck traffic heading to and from the Canadian Maritimes, was started in 2000.

The replacement of the bridge is expected to be completed by the end of November of next year.

[Click here to view online.](#)

To: 'Larry Adams';

Good morning

Thank you for your comments. The Record Of Decision outlined which alignment would be used and describes the factors for that decision. I realize that decision may be unpopular with some but it is the one I have been directed to move forward with. Pertaining to your questions specific to design, I have provided responses below.

**Why hasn't more effort been done to mitigate 2B-2's noise impacts?**

The FEIS, page 76, determined that noise barriers are not "reasonable" (i.e. cost-effective) based on MaineDOT's noise policy and will not be constructed.

**Is the centerline cable barrier—promised to Senator Collins—still being considered?**

I assuming the idea a centerline cable barrier is not part of the project?

There is no centerline cable barrier being designed. When the design considerations went from divided lanes to two lane undivided that was no longer an option.

**How will construction activities affect our properties?**

How does excavating some 40 feet under Eastern Avenue, a few hundred feet away from our neighborhood, affect the aquifer?

How will blasting affect our wells, septic systems and foundations?

How will this be monitored and who will be the liaison to the neighborhood?

How often will water be sampled and tested during construction activities?

MaineDOT will be conducting a Pre-Construction Potable Water Supply Characterization Assessment prior to construction. This assessment is undertaken to establish a baseline relative to the quality of water extracted from residential and commercial potable water supplies located along the project corridor. Samples are typically collected from water supplies positioned adjacent to the proposed construction and are analyzed for coliform bacteria, nitrate, nitrite nitrogen, fluoride, chloride, hardness, copper, iron, arsenic, manganese, sodium, lead, uranium, pH, color, turbidity and odor. The analytical data is maintained in a state-wide database and is used for comparison purposes should any potential claims arise relative to water supply impacts associated with MaineDOT's construction or long term winter maintenance initiatives. The contractor is responsible for monitoring foundations pre-blast and post-blast if there is any blasting required.

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# Portland Press Herald

**Gov. Mills gives state agencies more time to submit their budget requests**

**Facing a revenue shortfall of more than \$500 million, Gov. Janet Mills is giving agencies more time to submit proposals for the next two-year budget in hopes Congress delivers more pandemic assistance to states.**

BY [SCOTT THISTLE](#) | STAFF WRITER | 9.01.2020 | [CLICK HERE TO VIEW ONLINE.](#)

Gov. Janet Mills is pushing back the deadline for state government agencies to submit their spending requests for the state's next two-year budget.

Mills, a Democrat, issued an executive order Monday moving the deadline from Sept. 1 to Oct. 19, partially in hopes the U.S. Congress will soon deliver additional financial aid to states grappling with sharp revenue losses triggered by a pandemic-induced recession.

Maine is facing an estimated revenue shortfall of more than \$520 million in the current fiscal year, which will end on June 30, 2021 – and a total estimated revenue shortfall of [\\$1.3 billion over the next three years.](#)

Sharp decreases in sales tax receipts, triggered in large part by a truncated tourism season that saw restaurants and hotels shuttered for most of the spring and operations constrained over the summer with restrictions meant to slow the spread of COVID-19 infection, have led to the losses in revenue for the state.

The state's current two-year general fund budget is pegged at just shy of \$8 billion and is about 11 percent more than the previous two-year budget.

Total state spending, including federal funds, in 2020-2021 is set at about \$9.4 billion, with more than \$4.3 billion of that spending coming from general and highway funds revenue.

The forecast also suggests the state will see \$883.2 million in continued revenue shortfalls over the next two-year budget cycle, which will start on July 1, 2021.

And because the state's constitution requires a balanced state budget, Mills and the Maine Legislature soon could be forced to pass a supplemental budget package, whacking at spending, especially if sales and income tax revenues coming into the state continue to tail off in an economy that's the worst the U.S. has seen since the Great Depression.

If the federal government, which is not required by the U.S. Constitution to maintain a balanced budget, does not provide any additional aid to states or does not increase flexibility for the use of some \$1.25 billion in relief aid already sent to Maine, state lawmakers and Mills will have a difficult road in reconciling state spending with incoming revenues.

"The extension is to give the departments and agencies more time to see whether Congress and the Trump Administration act to provide additional financial relief and flexibility in previously awarded funds to state and local governments," Kelsey Goldsmith, communications director for the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services, which handles the state's budget, wrote in an email explaining the reasoning for pushing back the deadline. "Without additional financial relief from the federal government, Maine, like other states, will face significant budget reductions."

In early August, Mills also asked all state department and agency leaders [to make suggestions for curtailing spending](#) by 10 percent for the current fiscal year in hopes of making up some of what is expected to be an immediate \$523 million shortfall.

Those spending curtailments were due for submission to Mills early last week but were still being finalized Tuesday, and Goldsmith said additional details on those suggestions would become available sometime next week.

## Janet Mills accepts emergency Maine budget plan, will ask for more changes in January

Caitlin Andrews | 9.17.2020 | [Click here to view online.](#)

Gov. Janet Mills speaks at a news conference on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, in Augusta. Credit: Robert F. Bukaty / AP

AUGUSTA, Maine — Gov. Janet Mills approved a hiring freeze and the use of reserves to stem the coronavirus-related shortfall the state is facing this year and plans to ask for additional changes when the Legislature returns in January, her office announced Thursday.

An executive order included most of the items suggested by budget commissioner Kirsten Figueroa proposed last week to cover a \$528 million revenue shortfall projected through mid-2021 due to the drop in tax revenue amid the pandemic. Next year's regularly scheduled budget talks will consider how to fill an \$800 million gap expected over the next two years.

Figueroa's plan accepted by the Democratic governor on Thursday takes \$130.5 million from unspent appropriations and reduces state budget spending by \$125 million through continued cost-savings efforts like reducing travel and delaying technology to counter the bulk of the shortfall. It also takes advantage of higher federal Medicaid matching rates.

The order takes effect today. Reductions will be made on a quarterly basis until June 30 of next year. In addition, Mills plans to ask the Legislature to approve an additional \$130 million in reductions early next year when it reconvenes, according to a press release.

The plan also included use of funds generated by the state's liquor contract, which have exceeded expectations for years. The \$70 million pulled from the

fund will mostly drain a fund currently sitting at \$77 million, according to a state spokesperson. But use of that money will require legislative approval, a budget department spokesperson said.

The remainder is expected to be covered by \$97 million of federal aid provided in March, as well as \$106 million in unspent funds from the last fiscal year. It does not pull from Maine's rainy day fund. The highway fund will be reduced by \$23 million, according to the release. Another \$17 million in reductions could occur, subject to Legislative approval.

Mills said the actions will ensure "Maine's fiscal stability in the short term" and prevent reductions in services to health care and state employee jobs for now. She continued to call on Congress to pass federal aid that would prevent future cuts.