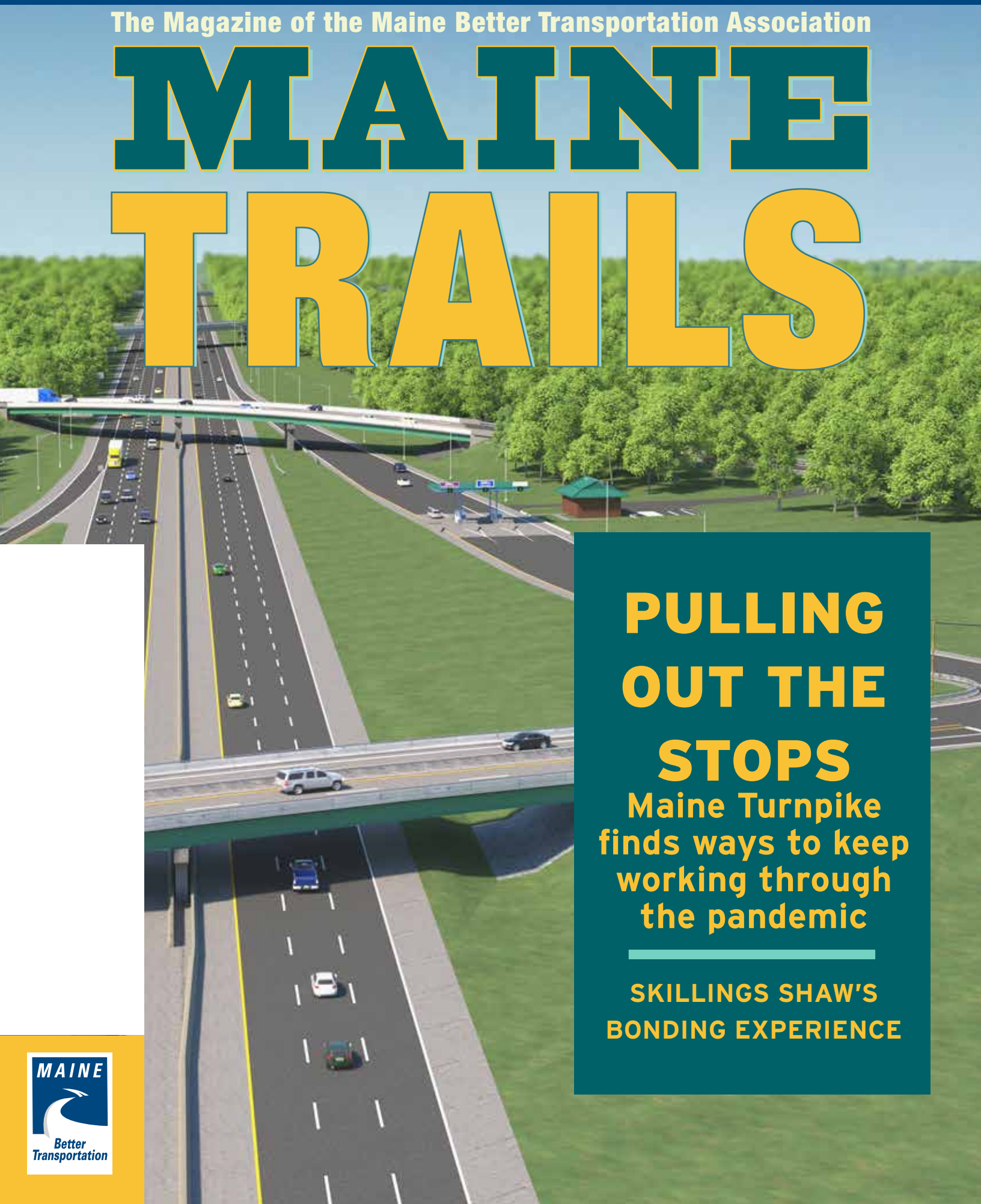
VOLUME 39 ▪ APRIL / MAY 2021 ▪ NUMBER 2

The Magazine of the Maine Better Transportation Association

MAINE TRAILS



PULLING OUT THE STOPS

Maine Turnpike finds ways to keep working through the pandemic

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MAINE Better Transportation

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Irvin Smith, MBTA President

The long and short of it

Getting an 8-year jobs bill passed is just the beginning. We need to be thinking even longer term.

There's no getting around it. However you cut it, and it will be cut, this year's $1.3 trillion infrastructure proposal is a "once in a generation investment in America" according to the president, a short-term fix for what we know is a deepening long-term problem that has been eating away at our nation's very foundation. Which means we still need a funding plan for the long term.

In Washington and elsewhere, what became known as Infrastructure Week simply served as the foundation for a running joke. It was the week you knew little infrastructure was going to get built and little having to do with infrastructure would be seriously discussed. This year has been different. We hope. We are still waiting to hear how the Biden administration's $1.3 trillion infrastructure proposal is going to fare in Congress.

As it stands, it's an ambitious plan. It's called the American Jobs Plan and it includes $621 billion for modernizing the nation's surface transportation networks, $25 billion to airports, $111 billion for clean drinking water, $100 billion for broadband and $17 billion to inland waterways and ports. The plan proposes rebuilding the nation's infrastructure systems, which would generate employment opportunities and boost economic growth.

Anyway you cut it, it could pump a lot of money into the economy right when we need it. It's also a plan in which everybody can find something to like – and something not to like. In other words, a plan created in a democracy. There are some items that many of us in the business of building or operating roads, bridges, ports, airports and railroads might not think of as "infrastructure" – but there's a lot that is targeted to creating and supporting jobs in our industry.

I hope that Congress can come to an agreement soon – because our state and our country need these jobs, and we need to get this work done.

Still, as I've said, because it can't be said enough, it will be a short-term fix for what has become a deepening, long-term problem that's only going to get deeper and make it harder to dig our way out, unless. . . . and you all know what I'm going to say.

One problem: How do we pay for what needs to be done? It doesn't help that we haven't raised the federal gas tax since 1993 – that's 28 years ago! I would be interested to know how many people are finding they still can operate with the same household budget they had 28 years ago. The cost of everything has gone up - food, gas, asphalt, labor - and our dollars are definitely stretched about as far as they can be.

To make ends meet, we're now paving with a mix that's skinnier than skinny mix, and while it's become a necessity to stretch our dollars as far as they will go, that's not the kind of long-term work that will preserve transportation infrastructure – it's just a short-term fix.

The MBTA Funding Task Force is a group that's been meeting over the past few months to address that long-term funding question here at home in Maine. The group has put together a funding fact sheet that pulls together some interesting facts. Did you know that: Maine's transportation system connects 430 towns and 23 cities throughout the state? At 35,385 square miles, that's three times larger than any other New England state. That system includes highways, bridges, deep water ports, transit vehicles, state-owned rail lines and

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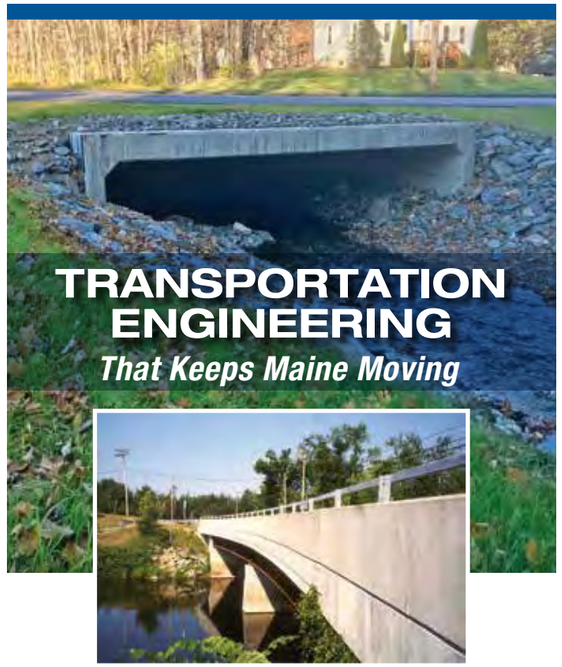

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commercial airports. That's the big picture. Did you also know that in inflation-adjusted dollars, Mainers pay 8 percent less today in fuel tax than they did 28 years ago, but are driving 19 percent more miles?

"It doesn't help we haven't raised the federal gas tax since 1993 – that's 28 years ago! I would be interested to know how many people are finding they still can operate with the same household budget they had 28 years ago."

The MBTA Funding Task Force is hoping we can continue building on the state-level discussion that was begun almost two years ago with the establishment of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Funding. While that group was able to attach a dollar amount to the funding short fall ($232 million a year), there is still a lot of work to do to educate the public, build a coalition in support of new funding – and identify potential new funding sources.

I am so grateful to my fellow MBTA members who have stepped up to lend their time and their brains to this effort.

And talking about the long and short of it, I am so proud the board has asked me to stay on for a second term as MBTA president. They have taken this step due to the pandemic and I am more than happy to help out.

This has been a rewarding year all in all, despite how hard it has been. For me, I was able to fulfill one of my childhood dreams of becoming a pirate — even if it was just for a day during our Fall Meeting and Auction.

By the time you read this, we will have wrapped up our 82nd MBTA Annual Meeting. The theme of the meeting is Survivor Island, and I can't think of a better group of smart, generous and hardworking people I would rather find myself stranded with - metaphorically - throughout this last year.

Thank you all for your generous support and creativity that have helped MBTA get through this tough time. And thank you for all you do every day to keep Maine moving! ■

2021 MBTA CALENDAR

THURSDAY, JULY 15
Infrastructure Golf Tournament
Waterville Country Club
Oakland

THURSDAY, AUGUST 5
Aroostook County Meeting
Caribou

SEPTEMBER 10 - 11
Fall Convention & Golf
Samoset Resort
Rockport

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1
PDH Tour

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2
Maine Transportation Conference
Augusta Civic Center

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9
Bangor Area Meeting
Black Bear Inn
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ONRAMP

'Urban' or 'rural'?

How the government classifies metropolitan and non-metropolitan or urban or rural and distributes benefits and more may be changing.

On the last full day of the Trump administration, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which operates under the president's direction, proposed changing how the government decides which parts of the country are urban and which are rural. The change, if enacted, would expand areas defined as "rural."

Government officials in both parties from both urban and rural areas worry that the new classifications will disqualify them from federal programs and funding they're receiving and have objected to the change. Transportation funding is a big concern, as that is one form of federal funding that uses OMB classifications. Further, officials from rural areas worry that they'll be competing for funding with newly "rural," wealthier areas.

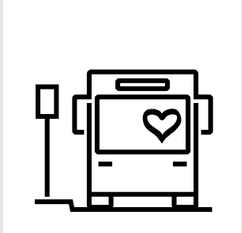
Although the Biden administration now has the reins, the OMB's proposed classification change is still working through the system. Before a proposed rule takes effect, federal law requires four steps: publication in the Federal Register; receiving public comments; reviewing comments and changing the rule as appropriate; final publication, stating when the rule becomes effective.

Both Republicans and Democrats objected to the change. One-quarter of U.S. senators, from both parties and many from rural states, have urged officials to reconsider, according to the *Washington Post*.

U.S. politics has become divided between urban and rural voters. Those political divisions are strongly affected by perceptions of who is left out of the government benefits. How the government defines each area could affect those political tensions, as well as how federal transportation dollars are allocated. ■

Looking for love? On transit?

According to a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*, there are single people wandering through the world who find it difficult to find someone who loves all the right things: parks, subways, bike lanes, human-scale buildings, high-density housing, debates over the ideal length of a city block.



The story goes on to say that, if this is exactly the sort of partner – or friend or fling – you're looking for, there is a solution: join the wildly popular Facebook meme group and leftist community NUMTOTs ("New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens," which isn't really just for teens) and request access to its private spin-off group, NUMTinder.

With about 8,000 members living mostly in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia, NUMTinder is a makeshift dating environment for those who consider liking public transportation to be a core part of their personality, or those for whom a lack of interest in urban planning is a deal breaker. Almost everyone in the group posts at least one selfie with a bike or a subway entrance to demonstrate commitment to the lifestyle, and when new members introduce themselves, it's not uncommon for them to brag about the fact that they don't have a driver's license.

NUMTinder was created in 2018 by Nigel Tate, a construction-project manager and pizza delivery driver from Flint, Michigan. He says that he started it as a joke, but people took it seriously almost right away. ■

Just before dawn at the new York Toll Plaza under construction in April 2021. The Maine Turnpike has kept several major construction projects on track throughout the pandemic.

MAINE TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

Pulling out the stops

The Maine Turnpike and its contractors have found ways to keep work going – and safe – throughout the pandemic

By Betty Adams

While the pandemic halted some businesses in their tracks, it failed to put a stop to construction work along the Maine Turnpike.

Projects continued both in the southern portion of the highway and near the northern terminus, and more construction contracts were signed.

In one of the latest ventures, Shaw Brothers Construction, Inc., has begun work on a $28.2 million contract to add a third travel lane for both north and southbound traffic between Scarborough and Portland between mile markers 43 and 46.4. (The Maine Turnpike Authority uses a mileage-based system starting in southern Maine.) But that contract almost didn't happen.

"Thirteen months ago there was a crisis discussion," Peter Mills, executive director of the Maine Turnpike Authority, said in late April. "We had all kinds of work under contract, and we had a $28 million contract that had just been opened and bid on to widen three miles of road around Portland." That contract was a continuation of other widening work and safety upgrades that have been underway since 2019.

"The question on the table was 'Do we go ahead with that contract?' We lost $40 million in 2020. We saw it coming in March. Would we keep contractors busy on capital projects?"

KEEPING PEOPLE EMPLOYED

The authority weighed the circumstances. "Bad: no money. Good: no traffic," Mills said succinctly. In the end, the authority negotiated with Shaw Brothers. "We took the bid on the widening and gave them extra time to do the work. We had $106 million in 2020 capital programs already launched and one sizeable new one," Mills said. "We had an obligation to keep people employed and food on the table."

Jon Shaw, president of Shaw Brothers, Construction, Inc., said the company also was concerned about the effect of the newly erupting pandemic both on the awarding of the contract and on the project.

"The whole country didn't know what was going to happen," he said. "We worried about what would happen if the subs couldn't perform or half the crew got sick. We said to the Turnpike, 'We don't want any more money, but we don't feel comfortable with this date because there's too many unknowns with this COVID.' We negotiated some more time without any more money."

The completion date is now August 2022. "We feel we're going to make that date fine," Shaw said.

Part of the project includes installation of specialized, tall concrete median barriers designed to withstand the impact of a fast-moving heavy truck – preventing it from crossing the median and entering the flow of traffic in the opposite direction – and to redirect it back into the travel lane.

"It's designed to slow people down and save lives," Mills said. He noted that the new barriers will be used in places where the northbound and southbound roadways are as close as 18 inches apart.

"Thirteen months ago there was a crisis discussion. We had all kinds of work under contract, and we had a $28 million contract that had just been opened and bid on to widen three miles of road around Portland. The question on the table was 'Do we go ahead with that contract?' We lost $40 million in 2020. We saw it coming in March. Would we keep contractors busy on capital projects?"

Peter Mills, Maine Turnpike Authority

TRAFFIC ON AN UPSWING

In all, 2021 may prove one of the busiest seasons, both in terms of work by the Maine Turnpike Authority and in terms of traffic volume.

Doug Davidson, chief financial officer and treasurer for the Maine Turnpike Authority, said traffic had five record years in a row up to 2019 and was headed for another in the first three months of 2020.

"Coronavirus hit March 16, and traffic dropped by as much as 40 percent," Davidson said. "May, June, July, and August recovered, but it kind of faded again in the fall."

But this year, traffic counts and toll revenue are on the upswing. "Since the vaccine has come out, traffic has rebounded," he said. "If we compare this year to last year, we're up 100 percent because there's been such a pent-up demand."

Spreadsheets provided by Davidson show that for the first quarter of 2021, tolls generated $27.9 million. Contrast that to the $31 million in toll revenue from the first quarter of 2019, and there's a 10 percent drop so far in 2021.

Figures show that over the same two-year period, passenger vehicle traffic decreased by 16 percent while commercial traffic increased by 3.6 percent.

Toll plazas and barriers generating the most revenue are York with 38.7 percent, New Gloucester with 12.9 percent, and Gardiner I-295 and West Gardiner each with 5.4 percent.

Davidson said when he looked at the financial picture early in 2021, he projected the Maine Turnpike Authority would probably lose $20 million, but by late April, with every toll plaza showing an increase over 2020, he halved that figure.

Davidson noted, too, that the authority has delayed putting out a second widening contract that would cover the area between the Shaw Brothers' work and the new Warren Avenue Bridge in Portland. He said he now anticipates it will go out to bid in February of 2022.

RAISING THE STAKES

This year's increasing traffic volume also raises the stakes and the challenges for those on the job.

"The worst part is the traffic," said Jon Shaw. "Traffic is fast; people don't want to slow down. That makes it very, very dangerous."

Much of the work on the highway is restricted to nights as well. While some other construction projects were able to shift to days because of lower traffic volumes during the pandemic, those numbers didn't go low enough for the Scarborough-Portland widening project.

Add to that, the significant travel miles for work vehicles and crews. "You just can't go backwards anywhere," Shaw said. "You go up to the next exit, get off and go all the way back around. It costs a lot more to work out there than a regular job. There's not any two-ways, only one way. It may be a 10-mile ride."

Shaw also noted that working on the highway has benefits for the Gorham-based Shaw Brothers in particular.

"These are the jobs that we like, because they are heavy in excavation and heavy in paving," he said. "Another good thing for Shaw Brothers: It's close to home, close to our gravel pit and asphalt plant."

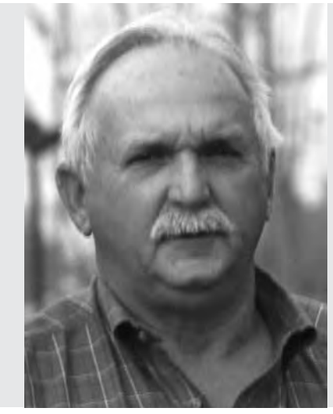
"We've been pretty lucky," he added. "We've had the bulk of the work from Lewiston to Kennebunk for quite a few years." Like many other construction firms, the company frequently works as subcontractors on other jobs.

MAKING WAY FOR MORE TRUCKS

Shaw Brothers has been working on another Maine Turnpike Authority

"The whole country didn't know what was going to happen. We worried about what would happen if the subs couldn't perform or half the crew got sick. We said to the turnpike, 'We don't want any more money, but we don't feel comfortable with this date because there's too many unknowns with this COVID.' We negotiated some more time without any more money."

Jon Shaw, Shaw Brothers Construction, Inc.



A Shaw Brothers truck on site at the Portland area widening.

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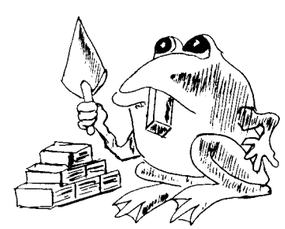

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"Coronavirus hit March 16, and traffic dropped by as much as 40 percent. May, June, July, and August recovered, but it kind of faded again in the fall. But this year, traffic counts and toll revenue are on the upswing. Since the vaccine has come out, traffic has rebounded. If we compare this year to last year, we're up 100 percent because there's been such a pent-up demand."

Doug Davidson, Maine Turnpike Authority

contract as well, a $9.27 million parking expansion at the two Kennebunk travel plazas, that carries a projected completion date in November.

That work has been driven largely by the increased volume of heavy trucks along the turnpike.

Davidson, the Maine Turnpike Authority's numbers guru, projected that if traffic continues as it was in late April, then 2021 could be an all-time record "due to heavy, heavy trucks." He defined those as Class 5 18-wheelers or heavier trucks, mostly headed to grocery stores and to Walmart, adding Walmart is the authority's largest commercial customer.

"There's a steady stream of trucks to the Lewiston Walmart Distribution Center," he said.

Davidson said the Maine Turnpike Authority has spent $15 million to increase truck parking by 40 percent this year because trucks have been filling the Kennebunk parking lot, especially at night. "It bodes very well for the economy of Maine."He also noted that Amazon has been looking at three different locations in Maine for distribution centers, all close to the turnpike.

RECONSTRUCTING 45

More work continues along the turnpike for the reconstruction of Exit 45, also known as the Maine Mall exit. In February 2021, the authority awarded CPM Constructors of Freeport a $27.6 million contract to do the second phase of the Exit 45 reconstruction, which includes putting in two new ramp toll plazas and a new, higher bridge.

"That bridge has been hit so many times," said Mills. The bridge that carries the southbound off and on ramps over the highway at Exit 45 was hit in July 2019 by a piece of construction equipment being hauled by a tractor-trailer. A similar incident occurred three years prior.

The new bridge is designed to have a 16.5-foot clearance over the highway, which should make it about three feet higher than the current bridge. Mills noted that all the bridges south to Kittery are higher already.

"We're very happy about the award of the project by the Maine Turnpike Authority," said Paul Koziell, president of CPM Constructors and MBTA past president. "We enjoy working with the Turnpike; they're a good client and owner."

Koziell said work is currently going on at all the toll plaza locations at Exit 45. "By the start of summer, we will be underway with constructing the center pier for the new bridge."

CPM Constructors' contract follows a $14.8 million Phase 1 job performed by Stillwater-based Sargent designed to minimize settlement of a new ramp bridge at the exit. For that work, Sargent brought in extra soil to compress the ground and installed 30,000 wick drains — totaling 2 million vertical feet — to allow moisture to escape and firm up the ground.

"Think of something like a sponge," said Doug Morrison, Sargent's southern Maine operations manager, as he explained the work. "If you squeeze all the water out of it, it becomes a hard product."

"Essentially it reduces the time period so they can build on it faster," said Adam Tenan, Sargent's superintendent for the job. Phase 1 was completed in December 2020.

He also noted that because of the large number of dump trucks needed on the job, "It took a lot of planning and working with the authority to make sure that it was safe, both for the trucks plus the traveling public."

Morrison praised that cooperation. "Our experience has been pretty good from a collaboration standpoint with the Turnpike. I think we've enjoyed it as a company."

CONNECTOR-READY

The reconfiguration of Exit 45 provides a segue to an anticipated construction of the Gorham Connector, a spur designed to join the highway and the Gorham Bypass at Route 114. Mills said that while some survey and environmental work has been done for the project,

"We're very happy about the award of the [Exit 45] project by the Maine Turnpike Authority. We enjoy working with the turnpike; they're a good client and owner. By the start of summer, we will be underway with constructing the center pier for the new bridge."

Paul Koziell, CPM Constructors

Sargent crews at work on the Gardiner open-road toll plaza in October 2020.

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A full lot. Trucks parked at the Kennebunk travel plaza.

MAINE TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

there are no permits filed yet.

"I have been to 50-60-70 households, called on people in the area where we wanted to study for wetland evaluation and environmental studies," Mills said. "The groundwork has to be done before you can do an alternative or potential alignment."

"There's a lot of interest in it," Mills added. The link is aimed at easing congestion in the busy corridor. A 2017 law authorized construction of a Gorham Connector if certain requirements were met. On the authority's web site, the cost estimate for the connector itself is $217 million, with the funds to come from private bonds repaid through toll revenue.

Mills said that while the Exit 45 reconstruction is a stand-alone project, the Gorham Connector could not be built unless Exit 45 was rebuilt and the roadway widened. "It is a necessary predicate. We would not put the Gorham Connector into play with a four-lane highway. It needed to be six lanes independently of anything else."

"Exit 45 will be done by Christmas of 2022," said Mills, noting that it will be the final one to be equipped with the new electronic tolling system, including open-road tolling. "We have overhauled 19 different toll plazas with new electronic systems."

In fact, new toll plazas in both York and Gardiner are set to open in 2021. The open road tolling system allows drivers to continue at highway speed as they pass under gantries holding equipment that captures tolls electronically through the motorists' E-ZPass transponders.

HEADING NORTH

At Exit 103 in Gardiner/West Gardiner, the highway's northernmost toll barrier, Sargent continues work on a $30 million, two-year project to replace the toll plaza and add open road tolling. At the same time, Woolwich-based Reed & Reed nears the end of a three-year, $39-million project to relocate the York Toll Plaza.

Then there will be the question of what to do with all the spare parts the Maine Turnpike Authority amassed to keep its old electronic toll system operating up to that point. "We were nervous about whether the old system would last long enough," Mills said. "We have a huge stockpile of spare parts for an obsolete system. It was a prophylactic maneuver on our part."

And next up will be readers on toll collections' systems that don't require transponders, but can accommodate stickers as well as a phone app.

"We're part of a consortium, an interagency group from Illinois to Florida, and all working on getting to where any of three technologies will all work on every road," said Davidson. That goal might be achieved by about 2025, he said. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Betty Adams is a freelance writer and journalism instructor. She lives in Augusta and can be reached at adamsbetty00@gmail.com.

A Walmart truck near Exit 45. Commercial freight traffic has increased on the turnpike this year.

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Governor Mills presents economics bond package

Proposes $100 million for roads and bridges and $40 million for land conservation

Governor Janet Mills presented a transportation and conservation bond proposal to the Maine Legislature on May 8, 2021. The bond package dedicates $100 million to maintain and upgrade Maine's transportation system through the Maine Department of Transportation. Also included in the governor's bond package is a $40 million bond to conserve lands and waters for Maine people through the Land for Maine's Future (LMF) Program. The conservation bond was presented in honor of famed Maine sportsman George A. Smith, who passed away in February after a long battle with ALS.

The bond proposal has been scaled-back from the preview offered by Governor Mills in her State of the Budget Address earlier this year. Many of the investments she originally posed – such as funding for innovation in Maine's heritage industries – are now being made through newly available federal funds in her Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan. That plan is based on the recommendations of the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee and the State's 10-Year Economic Development Strategy.

The package, which has broad support among organizations across the state, also aligns with the intent of several bond proposals introduced by lawmakers. With its focus on land conservation and continued commitment to fixing roads and bridges and other transportation modes, the new bond proposal complements the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan. It also comes at a time when interest rates remain at historic lows, according to Maine State Treasurer Henry Beck.

"We will be entering the market having just received better than expected revenue forecasts thanks to the governor's fiscal management and Federal assistance," said Maine State Treasurer Henry Beck. "Interest rates are at historic lows to the benefit of issuers. Maine bonds are a quality investment now more than ever and will finance vital projects to benefit Maine people."

Under the leadership of Governor Mills and Beck, credit rating agencies have affirmed Maine's credit ratings during the pandemic, even as they downgraded other states' ratings. The State's Budget Stabilization Fund, or "Rainy Day Fund", has grown by more than $50 million during Governor Mills' tenure.

THE TRANSPORTATION BOND

According to a press release issued by the governor's office, the $100 million transportation bond represents a critical part of the capital funding in the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) three-year work plan.

Since the LePage administration, the state has relied on bonding of approximately $100 million per year to support critical maintenance and reconstruction of the state's highway, bridge, rail, port and bike-ped infrastructure. The proposed bond builds on the governor's commitment of $50 million

What's in the transportation bond?

The $100 million transportation bond represents a critical part of the capital funding in the MaineDOT's three-year work plan. The bond and matching Federal funds, depending on funding sources and costs, is expected to support capital projects statewide in calendar year 2022, including:

- 304 miles of highway preservation paving, totaling $109 million;
- 74 highway safety and spot improvement projects, totaling $41 million;
- 28 miles of highway reconstruction and rehabilitation, totaling over $30 million;
- 68 bridge projects, totaling $169 million;
- 33 multimodal projects including rail, port, transit, and active transportation projects totaling almost $59 million; and
- $8 million for Municipal Partnership Initiatives projects.

to Maine's transportation system in the Maine Jobs & Recovery Plan.

According to federal estimates, the transportation bond and matching funds will support thousands of good-paying jobs now and lay the foundation for economic prosperity in the long-term. If the capital funding for transportation represented by this bond is not approved by the Maine Legislature and passed by Maine voters in the fall of 2021, MaineDOT will have to make significant cuts in its 2022 Work Plan.

"State bonding remains critical to delivering our work plan," said MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce A. Van Note. "Because this bond will be used to match federal and other funds, the impact of any reduction of bond funding is amplified. We are fortunate that lawmakers and voters have shown strong support for transportation bonds. We hope that remarkable level of support continues."

"Transportation impacts everyone in Maine every day, and we know investments in infrastructure pay off in terms of safety, economic prosperity, and quality of life," said MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes. "Not only will this $100 million in bond funding improve roads, bridges, and other modes of transportation, but also this investment will have an economic ripple effect throughout Maine."

"Investment in Maine's federal, state and local road network is key to Maine's economic health and our presence in the national economy. Good roads ensure that locally grown, harvested and processed products are delivered to businesses throughout Maine and across the county," said Maine Municipal Association President and Easton Town Manager James Gardner, Jr. "The presence of McCain Foods and Huber Engineering Woods in Easton creates jobs and economic opportunities for our rural community, as well as for the residents and businesses in surrounding municipalities. The inclusion of a $100 million transportation initiative in Governor Mills' proposed bond package will ensure that Maine products are delivered in a safe, timely and efficient manner. Municipal officials appreciate the governor's lead on these issues." ■

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Rep. Bailey advances aviation bond

L.D. 1086 calls for $14 million bond to expand international travel and freight opportunities

On April 29, the Maine Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation heard testimony for L.D. 1086: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Upgrade Customs Facilities at the Portland International Jetport and the Bangor International Airport.

The bond proposal, sponsored by Representative Kyle Bailey (D-Gorham), would invest $7 million to construct a federal inspection services (FIS) customs facility at the Portland Jetport and another $7 million to construct a temperature-controlled, customs-bonded freight warehouse at the Bangor International Airport (BIA). At the Jetport, the bond would enable the airport to make a long-planned expansion that would allow for international commercial passenger flights. The work planned for BIA would expand import-export opportunities for Maine businesses.

The need for an aviation bond is a direct result of the pandemic that has severely impacted air travel worldwide. The loss of revenues for both of Maine's largest international airports has hindered the airports' ability to make critical investments, including facilities that will increase international commercial and freight flights.

Representative Bailey spoke eloquently at the hearing, laying out the case for investing in the two airports.

Said Bailey: "These affordable and shovel-ready investments in Maine's transportation and economic development infrastructure projects will generate significant returns on investment for Maine taxpayers. Consider the new economic activity generated from the doors that these projects would open to connect Maine to the world; the existing and new jobs supported; and the revenues collected from taxes and fees on airport travel and shipping, rental cars, meals and lodging, sales of goods, gas purchases, and so on."

The legislator said that the investment would help diversify the tourism industry by bringing more international travelers to the state, and it would promote Maine exports, including agriculture, fishery and manufacturing products. He specified several opportunities for expanding international air travel with a new FIS facility in Portland, including service to Iceland, Quebec City, the United Kingdom and Mexico.

Representative Kyle Bailey

L.D. 1086: What's in the bond?

L.D. 1086: An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Upgrade Customs Facilities at the Portland International Jetport and the Bangor International Airport calls for a general fund bond that would invest $14 million in Maine's two largest airports and enhance their ability to increase new international tourism and freight – including imports and exports – in Maine.

At the hearing, several transportation leaders spoke in favor of the bond. Paul Bradbury, Portland International Jetport director, discussed the critical need for these investments due to recent innovations in aircraft design and technology.

"The opportunity for servicing international markets from the Jetport is timely. Recent advancement in aircraft engine technology allows service to international Caribbean and transatlantic markets with the narrow body twin-engine aircraft carrying from 140 to 190 passengers that currently serve the Jetport," said Bradbury. "These aircraft are 15 percent more fuel efficient, 50 percent quieter and have a range of up to 3,800 nautical miles, providing an opportunity for international service that didn't exist just five years ago."

He told committee members that investments at both airports would support 82 jobs and generate $11 million a year within five years, and would be critical to supporting the continued health of the local economy, by keeping the two aviation hubs competitive.

BIA Director Anthony Caruso said: "Both Bangor and Portland are economic engines for two of the largest cities in Maine. Economic impact studies for both airports done by the Maine Department of Transportation in 2017 show a combined economic impact of nearly $1.5 billion supporting over 13,200 jobs. It is critical for Maine businesses and citizens to have a robust connection to the national and global air transportation system. This can only be accomplished through the continuous investment and support of our existing local aviation infrastructure."

Both Caruso and Bradbury are members of the MBTA board, and support the bond bill because it will make critical investments to Maine's transportation and economic infrastructure. The much-needed "connectivity enhancements" would better position Maine businesses in the global economy.

MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes also spoke in favor of the bond: "The connectivity and access these investments would create are vital for a modern global economy. These long-term, job-creating and -sustaining investments will help our businesses capture overseas exporting opportunities, while providing more mobility and travel options for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. . . L.D. 1086 is a smart investment for Maine as it would result in transformative, long-term capital projects that will pay dividends for decades to come." ■

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To fund or not to fund?

That is the question as Congress and the Biden administration debate the American Jobs Plan

In late March, President Joe Biden unveiled the American Jobs Plan that includes $621 billion for modernizing the nation's surface transportation networks, $25 billion to airports, $111 billion for clean drinking water, $100 billion for broadband, and $17 billion to inland waterways and ports.

The plan proposes rebuilding the nation's infrastructure systems which would generate employment opportunities and boost economic growth. That transportation investment is part of a proposed $1.3 trillion spent on a broad laundry list of infrastructure investments, to build, repair, and upgrade highways, repair aging water systems, provide affordable housing, build new schools, and more.

Announcing the plan at an event on March 31 in Pittsburgh, President Biden said: "It's not a plan that tinkers around the edges. It's a once-in-a-generation investment in America unlike anything we've seen or done since we built the interstate highway system and the space race decades ago. In fact, it's the largest American jobs investment since World War II. It will create millions of jobs, good-paying jobs. . . I'm convinced that if we act now, in 50 years people are going to look back and say this is the moment when America won the future."

"The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) applauds President Biden's American Jobs Plan, a truly historic proposal for modernizing and improving the nation's infrastructure," ASCE President Jean-Louis Briaud said in a statement issued supporting the plan. "The ASCE urges Congress and the Administration to now work together to develop a comprehensive, bipartisan, infrastructure bill that will set the plan in motion – rebuilding and modernizing our infrastructure systems, while growing the economy, increasing public safety, and creating jobs and more resilient communities."

Other initiatives in the plan call for addressing climate change, racial equity and environmental justice. The package of funding and policy proposals carries a total price tag of $2.3 trillion invested over eight years and would be paid for with an increase in the corporate tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent and by closing up loopholes that have allowed many corporate giants to avoid paying taxes altogether, according to the Biden administration.

While the plan does not strictly hew to a traditional definition of infrastructure, the plan does contain a sweeping set of initiatives that promises to create jobs as the country recovers from the coronavirus pandemic, as well. All in all, the plan would create an estimated 2.7 million jobs by 2030, according to Moody's Analytics chief economist Mark Zandi, and the bulk of those jobs would be in construction and manufacturing.

Another analysis estimates that between 1 million and 1.2 million "green jobs" per year would be generated in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Robert Pollin, economics professor and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst said that includes jobs in wind energy, solar energy, making industrial buildings more energy efficient and in manufacturing high efficiency cars.

IMPACT ON MAINE

Maine transportation leaders have long seen the need for a significant increase in transportation funding at both the state and federal level. The most recent Infrastructure Report Card issued by the Maine Section ASCE gave poor grades to much of the state's transportation infrastructure, including a C- for bridges, D for roads and D- for transit. A bipartisan blue ribbon commission tasked with studying the problem of underfunding of the state's transportation infrastructure issued a report in March 2020 that called for an additional $232 million in funding to address poor roads, bridges and other transportation needs.

After the announcement of the American Jobs Plan, state transportation leaders weighed in on how the plan could reinvigorate efforts to address long delayed repairs and upgrades to the state's surface transportation infrastructure.

In a statement issued in early April, MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note said: "It's an exciting time to work in transportation. In Maine, we have shown that investments pay off: they improve public safety, support economic opportunity, build quality communities, and improve our environment and climate for future generations. . . At the Maine Department of Transportation, we have been relying on discretionary federal funds and state bonding to meet basic needs in recent years. Long-term, sustainable funding solutions that allow us to improve – not just maintain – our transportation system are important to Maine people, our economy, and our future success. We hope Congress and the president can advance an infrastructure package to that end."

Patricia Quinn, executive director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) told *News Center Maine* that, with an $80 billion investment slated for the nation's freight and passenger rail systems, Maine may be able to take key steps to improving its rail network, including relocation of the Portland Transportation Center terminal to a more central location in downtown Portland, adding an additional rail line to make sharing the rail between passenger and freight cars easier, as well as possibly expanding the line to create an additional station in Rockland.

"A large majority of the corridor is single track. So it's kind of like a long one-way street. And so the more freight and passenger traffic you have, there aren't places for the trains to pass each other. I think that's definitely an opportunity to add some capacity," said Quinn.

The president has been advocating for passage of the plan, and has signaled he is willing to negotiate on some aspects of the

plan. Polling has shown voter support, with one poll finding that 73 percent in favor of the investments outlined in the plan. As the administration has continued its efforts to sell the plan, it is becoming apparent that there will likely be compromises made.

In one of several meetings the White House has organized to drum up backing for the American Jobs Plan, President Biden told a bipartisan group of senators who were all former mayors and governors, including U.S. Senator Angus King of Maine: "I am prepared to compromise. . . . It's a big package, but there are a lot of needs."

U.S. Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee, has said she would like to see the bill's scope reduced. "There is a lot to be done, but some of the priorities in the president's bill go far beyond infrastructure," she said. ■

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One-third of U.S. bridges need major repair

More than one-third, or 220,000, of the nation's 618,000 bridges need major repair work or should be replaced, according to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association's (ARTBA) seventh annual analysis of the latest U.S. DOT's National Bridge Inventory (NBI) database.

If placed end-to-end, these bridges would stretch more than 6,000 miles – long enough to travel from Atlanta to Los Angeles and up to Deadhorse, Alaska, the furthest point north on the state's highway system.

The association's report comes as the Biden Administration and the U.S. Congress continue deliberations on a long-term transportation infrastructure investment package. "The current 40-year timeline to repair bridges in poor condition is an unacceptable outcome for the American motoring public," said ARTBA Chief Economist Dr. Alison Premo Black, who led the team conducting the analysis. "The bridge conditions report highlights key national infrastructure challenges and underscores the need for congressional action this year on a robust multi-year transportation investment bill."

Of the 45,000 structurally deficient (SD) bridges, nearly 11,200 are in "serious" or worse condition. This includes 1,668 that are in "critical" condition, 440 that are in "imminent" failure, and 970 that are in "failed" condition and are out of service.

Maine's bridges at a glance

- Of the 2,472 bridges in Maine, 315 (12.7 percent), are classified as structurally deficient. This means one of the key elements is in poor or worse condition.
- This is down from 339 bridges classified as structurally deficient in 2016, and the deck area of structurally deficient bridges accounts for 7.8 percent of total deck area on all structures.
- Fifteen of the structurally deficient bridges are on Maine's interstate highway system. A total of 88.9 percent of the structurally deficient bridges are not on the National Highway System, which includes the interstate and other key roads linking major airports, ports, rail and truck terminals.
- 150 Maine bridges are posted for load, which may restrict the size and weight of vehicles crossing the structure.
- The state has identified needed repairs on 333 bridges at an estimated cost of $314 million. This compares to 786 bridges that needed work in 2016.

Maine was ranked sixth among the 10 states with the largest percentage of their bridges in poor condition (12.7 percent). In last year's ARTBA survey, Maine ranked No. 7, and this year it was one of only two New England states included in that ranking. The other nine states were: West Virginia (No. 1 - 21 percent); Iowa (No. 2 - 19.1 percent); Rhode Island (No. 3 – 19 percent); South Dakota (No. 4 – 17.7 percent); Pennsylvania (No. 5 – 14.6 percent); Louisiana (No. 7 – 12.7 percent); Puerto Rico (No. 8 – 12.1 percent); Michigan (No. 9 – 10.8 percent); and North Dakota (No. 10 – 10.3 percent).

All told, Maine has 2,472 bridges and 315 of those bridges are currently classified as structurally deficient. That is a significant improvement since 2016, when nearly 800 bridges in the state were in need of repair or reconstruction. MaineDOT has identified 333 bridges in need of repairs at an estimated cost of $314 million.

Bridge condition continues to be a major concern for states. The ARTBA report notes that nationally American drivers cross structurally deficient bridges more than 171 million times daily. The estimated cost to repair those bridges is $41.8 billion, based on average cost data published by the U.S. DOT. Of the 220,000 bridges needing repair, state and local government officials say that 79,500 bridges should be replaced totally, according to Black. Nearly one-third of interstate highway bridges (17,643 spans) have identified repair needs. ■

FMI: To view the full report, visit artbabridgereport.org.

Pike crew on Main Street in Rutland, Vermont in 1885.

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Funding study

Mileage fee is workable

Report finds technology will make implementation possible, but notes public does not yet see 'urgent' need for funding change

As states explore alternatives to the cash-strapped fuel tax revenue model that funds state transportation systems, new research from the Eastern Transportation Coalition says user fees offer a workable solution – but public opinion must first be addressed.

"Mileage-based user fees are a viable option," said Patricia Hendren, executive director of the coalition, which focuses on solving transportation challenges along the eastern seaboard. "The public is open to the 'user pays' principle and the technological capabilities exist, but our research highlights important issues to consider before implementation."

One issue is the public generally doesn't view transportation funding as an urgent need, according to the coalition's recently published report on its 2019 passenger vehicle pilots in Delaware and Pennsylvania, as well as early results from its 2020-2021 passenger vehicle pilots in Delaware, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and New Jersey. Guided by engineering consultant Jacobs, the work included statewide surveys, focus groups, and data analysis. Data for the study was collected over four months in 2018 and included 889 participants from 15 eastern states, including Maine. Those participants drove a total of 3.13 million miles in 42 states.

In Delaware and Pennsylvania, 74 percent of residents surveyed during the 2019 pilot believed transportation funding was increasing or staying the same, even though funding was actually decreasing. At the same time, 66 percent of residents held positive perceptions of their state's road conditions. Together, these numbers suggest policymakers may find it challenging to discuss new funding approaches without first alerting residents to the inability of the fuel tax to keep up with road maintenance needs.

The public's intuitive understanding of a "pay for what you use" approach may be a place to start. Nearly two-thirds of the general public — 61 percent — say "pay for what you use" would be a reason to support a mileage-based user fee (MBUF) model, according to statewide surveys the coalition conducted. After experiencing the pilot, 83 percent of 2019 pilot participants said MBUF was as fair or more fair than the fuel tax.

83 percent of the 2019 pilot participants said MBUF was as fair or more fair than the fuel tax.

Pilot participants also showed an openness to mileage reporting technology. While many participants expressed early concerns about privacy and reporting accuracy, concerns fell significantly as participants used MBUF technology. During the 2019 pilot, participants ranking privacy as a high concern dropped from 49 percent to 20 percent. Preliminary data from the 2020-2021 pilot suggest similar results.

"We appreciate the coalition's efforts to capture this vital information. It's important for us to hear from our customers so we can make data-driven decisions about the future of transportation funding," said Nicole Majeski, secretary of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). DelDOT has partnered with the coalition since 2017 to secure funding from Congressional grants set aside to study fuel tax alternatives.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Transportation Yassmin Gramian echoed the need for real-world research.

"We are committed to providing a transportation system that serves all Pennsylvanians," Gramian said. "As part of our Pathways program we're studying many different options, including mileage-based user fees, to find reliable funding approaches for our residents. Studies like these from the coalition provide important data for making smart, sustainable decisions."

Pilot studies provide the ability to explore public misconceptions about MBUF and test whether MBUF can replace the fuel tax, Hendren noted. Pilots also allow policymakers to explore implementation costs, logistics, equity, and other issues.

"Data-based decision making is critical as policymakers consider a path forward," Hendren said. "We believe our research plays an important role in that process."

The Eastern Transportation Coalition is a partnership of 17 states, including Maine and Washington, D.C., that is focused on bringing public and private stakeholders together to solve transportation problems. For more than 25 years, the coalition has pushed innovation in incident management, traveler information, emergency management, supply chain performance, freight planning and truck parking, toll reciprocity, connected and autonomous vehicles, and funding alternatives. As a nonpartisan independent partnership, the coalition is dedicated to advancing the national conversation around mileage-based user fees (MBUF) through real-world pilots, education, and outreach. The unique characteristics of the eastern seaboard – such as significant cross-state travel, numerous toll facilities, and several major truck corridors – make it a natural testing ground for the potential challenges of implementing MBUF nationally. The coalition is neutral regarding MBUF as the ultimate solution for transportation funding but wants to ensure the eastern seaboard is part of the national discussion. ■

FMI: To learn more about the coalition's findings, visit tetcoalitionmbuf.org/findings/.

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2021 Cumberland County Meeting

Looking ahead

FMI's Jay Bowman previews Maine's infrastructure markets beyond pandemics and shutdowns

Maine Better Transportation Association (MBTA) President Irvin Smith started the afternoon meeting off with a look all the way back to the 2020 MBTA Cumberland Meeting.

"It was just about this time last year that the association held its last in-person meeting indoors – at the Sheraton in South Portland," recalled Smith, expressing his wish that this would be one of the last virtual meetings for the MBTA. "After that we all had to batten down the hatches and quarantine. Some of you may not recognize me – the last time I saw many of you was at our November Virtual Cruise, which you may recall took place on a pirate ship which I was captaining. So, for old time's sake, let me just say one thing: 'AAAAARGH!'"

MBTA President Irv Smith

Smith then switched into full virtual meeting mode and made the round of introductions. First were greetings for several new MBTA members in attendance: Danielle Therrien, Sage Carpenter, Shawn Dennett and Joseph Lolli of Crum & Forster and Tasha Gardner, Sargent chief financial officer (while Gardner has represented Sargent at MBTA meetings for years, she is one of the group's newest individual members).

Then Smith introduced Patrick Brady of Bernstein Shur and Glenn Adams of Sargent. Patrick is chair of the MBTA Young Professionals, and Glenn is chair of the MBTA Membership Committee – and Smith made the case for MBTA members present getting active on those and other MBTA committees.

Smith also introduced meeting VIPs Karen Doyle, MaineDOT's chief financial officer, and Doug Davidson, chief financial officer and treasurer of the Maine Turnpike. Davidson also serves on the MBTA board.

That so many of Maine's transportation financial gurus were in attendance was to be expected. The meeting's speaker was Jay Bowman of FMI, a financial services and consulting firm that focuses on the engineering and construction industries. Bowman is managing director of research for the firm, and his talk was titled "Looking Ahead: Maine's infrastructure markets beyond pandemics and shutdowns."

FMI's Jay Bowman

Bowman said his goal was to interpret "the tea leaves" for the audience, and enable infrastructure-related businesses to make sound decisions about risk and growth. He noted that construction and transportation were among the industries that have fared reasonably well during the pandemic, though certain sectors such as aviation and transit have struggled, due to social distancing requirements.

He predicted that the economic downturn would be relatively short lived for the industry – just two years – and considerably less severe than the recession that swept the country during the late 2000s and early 2010s. He said over the next several years, the data shows transportation construction spending will remain flat, but he said, in context, the sector

will perform better than several other sectors in the construction industry.

"Overall for MBTA and members, the outlook is not great, but it could be a lot worse, right, it's kind of flat," said Bowman. He noted that there promises to be growth in some sub-sectors of the industry. "One of the fastest growing markets is electronic tolling and dynamic messaging systems, and there's more interest in air [travel] coming back sooner than in the transit systems."

Bowman also offered nuggets of advice for business leaders in the audience, as they looked to find opportunities.

"What are some of things to consider in a market that is flat or continues to hold its own?" said Bowman. "There's five things we've been thinking about and we've been counseling our clients on as it relates to the market."

First, he said, diversify. He noted that diversification can take many forms including adding new services and expanding the geographic base of a business.

Second? Avoid rash decisions.

"This goes back to what we saw in the last recession and others," said Bowman. "We consider diversification options or we do things without really thinking about how well it fits with our business. We might be looking at size or growth, but not really considering if this is something we are set up to do well. Does this really fit with our aspirations or capabilities, etcetera?"

Third, he talked about "right sizing" – evaluating the business's equipment fleet and making sure it fits the business.

"For most heavy civil construction companies, the equipment fleet is the biggest asset on the balance sheet," said Bowman. He said to look at the fleet and make choices about the mix and whether to lease or to own new equipment.

Fourth, he said "differentiate" the business from its competitors by looking closely at what the business does well and capitalizing on that.

"We think of differentiation, and this really ties into the 'avoid panic bidding,'" said Bowman. "One of my favorite quotes shared with me early in my career, is 'if you want above average results, you have to say 'no' to average opportunities.'"

Finally he offered this: "Avoid panic bidding. Think about, 'Is this something we're set up to do or do well? Does it really fit with our aspirations or our capabilities?'"

"When we looked back at the last recession and in the 1980s, we saw that people were really starting to do two things," said Bowman. "What we found was that the decisions people made fell into one of two categories." The first, he said, were businesses that opted to branch out into areas where they didn't have expertise. The second was by not understanding how to differentiate themselves, businesses risked becoming "'just another bidder,' so the only thing left was price."

Bowman said the key to doing well during times of downturn was to have a plan.

To close out the meeting, MBTA President Smith drew the winner of the traditional 50-50 Raffle. Be Schonewald of Schonewald Engineering Associates had the winning ticket. She took home $345, and a matching contribution of $345 went to the MBTA Scholarship Fund. ■

FMI: The MBTA holds regional meetings throughout the year where we discuss issues related to current events and the transportation industry. For more information, check out the Events tab at www.mbtaonline.org. To view the video of Jay Bowman's talk, visit mbtaonline.org/news/video/.

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Making *Maine Better*, one interview at a time

Senator Suan Collins

Representative Kyle Bailey

Ben Lucas of the Maine Jobs Council

Patrick Brady

Orion Breen

LAST YEAR before the November election, two MBTA members set about to interview candidates on key issues to find out their views on transportation. Orion Breen is the public affairs liaison for Global Partners and chair of the MBTA's Communications Committee. Patrick Brady is an attorney with Bernstein Shur and chair of the MBTA Young Professionals. They named their series of candidate interviews *Maine Better*, and both see them as a vehicle to bringing a variety of voices to the discussion about the challenges that face Maine's transportation system.

Breen and Brady expressed a desire to keep the conversation going beyond the electoral cycle, and this spring, the duo has launched a second series of interviews with Mainers who may not necessarily be running for office, but who are having an impact on the transportation industry and the state's economy.

"We were really excited about our conversations during the election season and, as enjoyable and insightful as those interviews were, infrastructure funding should not just be an election season buzzword thrown around to get votes," said Brady.

"Now that the elections have passed, I'm really interested in talking to a diverse group of people who play important roles in our transportation infrastructure and issues that affect MBTA's members," said Breen. "I'm also looking forward to talking with some of our congressional representatives about the big infrastructure plans being discussed in Washington and what it means for Maine."

The first three interviews of this new series are with Maine Senator Susan Collins (she is the series' first returning guest), Ben Lucas, executive director of the Maine Jobs Council, and Maine Representative Kyle Bailey (D-Gorham). Senator Collins told Brady and Breen of her hopes for a bipartisan infrastructure bill that is more limited in scope than the bill proposed by the Biden administration. "I hope there will be more than talk, I hope that there will actually be a bill that becomes law that will be a reasonable, focused, bipartisan bill," Collins.

Lucas spoke with the *Maine Better* team about how his organization sees a good transportation network as "critical" to his organization's goal of bringing new "foundational jobs" in manufacturing, construction, fishing, forestry, tourism and other traditional industries to the state.

Representative Bailey, who is serving his first term in the Maine Legislature, talks with Breen and Brady about two bond bills he has introduced with potential for economic development across the state. One of those bond bills calls for a $14 million investment in international aviation facilities at Maine's two largest airports: $7 million to build an international customs facility at the Portland Jetport; and $7 million to expand the international freight facility at Bangor International Airport. Representative Bailey's bill is featured in the *Maine News* section of this magazine.

The team has big plans for others they would like to interview, including Maine Governor Janet Mills and MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note.

"I would love to interview Pete Buttigieg [U.S. Secretary of Transportation], but he probably has a pretty full schedule," said Brady.

Senator Collins, who sits on the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, "is so important we actually might be able to get an interview with Buttigieg," countered Breen. He added: "In future episodes I would like to do more to highlight the social justice aspect of transportation and mobility, which can either alleviate or reinforce systemic discrimination."

The duo is open to all perspectives and points of view and would like to invite MBTA members to submit their interview questions and suggestions – and possibly consider being interview subjects themselves. "To the extent we can play a role in keeping the issue at the forefront of the conversation," said Brady, "we are happy to do our part." ■

FMI: You can view the Maine Better interviews at www.mbtaonline.org/news/video/ or listen at anchor.fm/maine-better/. Please submit your interview questions and suggestions to mainetrail@MBTAonline.org.

MBTA welcomes these new members

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Moulison Associates, LLC
10 Kimball Farm Lane, York, ME 03909
Phone: 207-468-2115
Email: ken@moulisonassociates.com
Contact: Ken Moulison
Recruited by: Eric Ritchie
Electrical consultants and engineers for airports and infrastructure.

Kaven Philbrook Consulting Services
8943 Cypress Street, Boynton Beach, FL 33436
Phone: 207-249-8437
Email: kavenphilbrook@icloud.com
Contact: Kaven Philbrook
Recruited by: Staff
Heavy civil structural estimating services. East coast Maine to Florida experience. Design build, CMGC, design bid build projects.

Rybski Enterprises LLC
53 Sacapee Road, Springvale, ME 04083
Phone: 207-602-8292
Email: shawn@rybskienterprises.com
Contact: Shawn Rybski
Recruited by: Glenn Adams
Rybski Enterprises is a small excavation and trucking company that performs comprehensive projects with more than 13 years of commercial experience.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Chris Abboud
Russell Bragg

STUDENT MEMBERS:

Katie Luce

Thank you for renewing!

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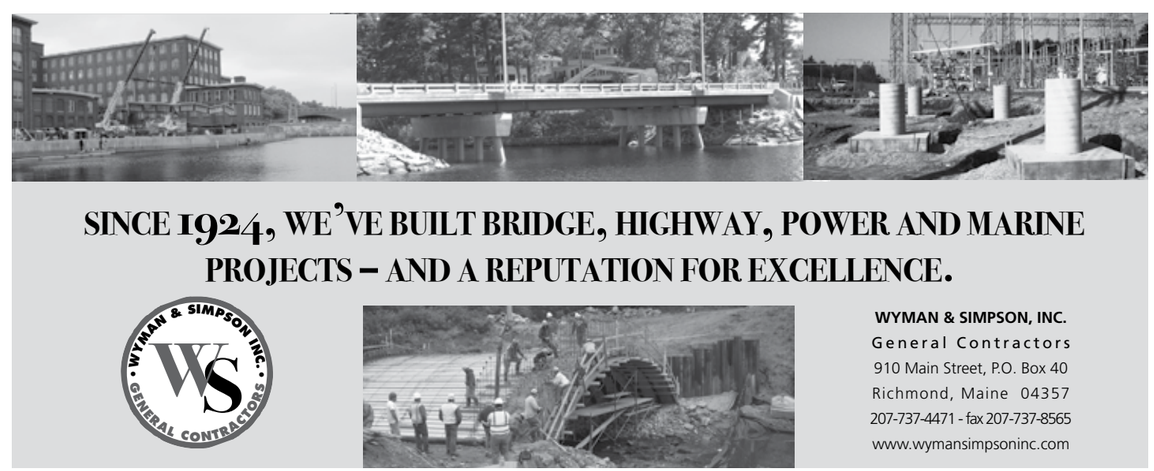
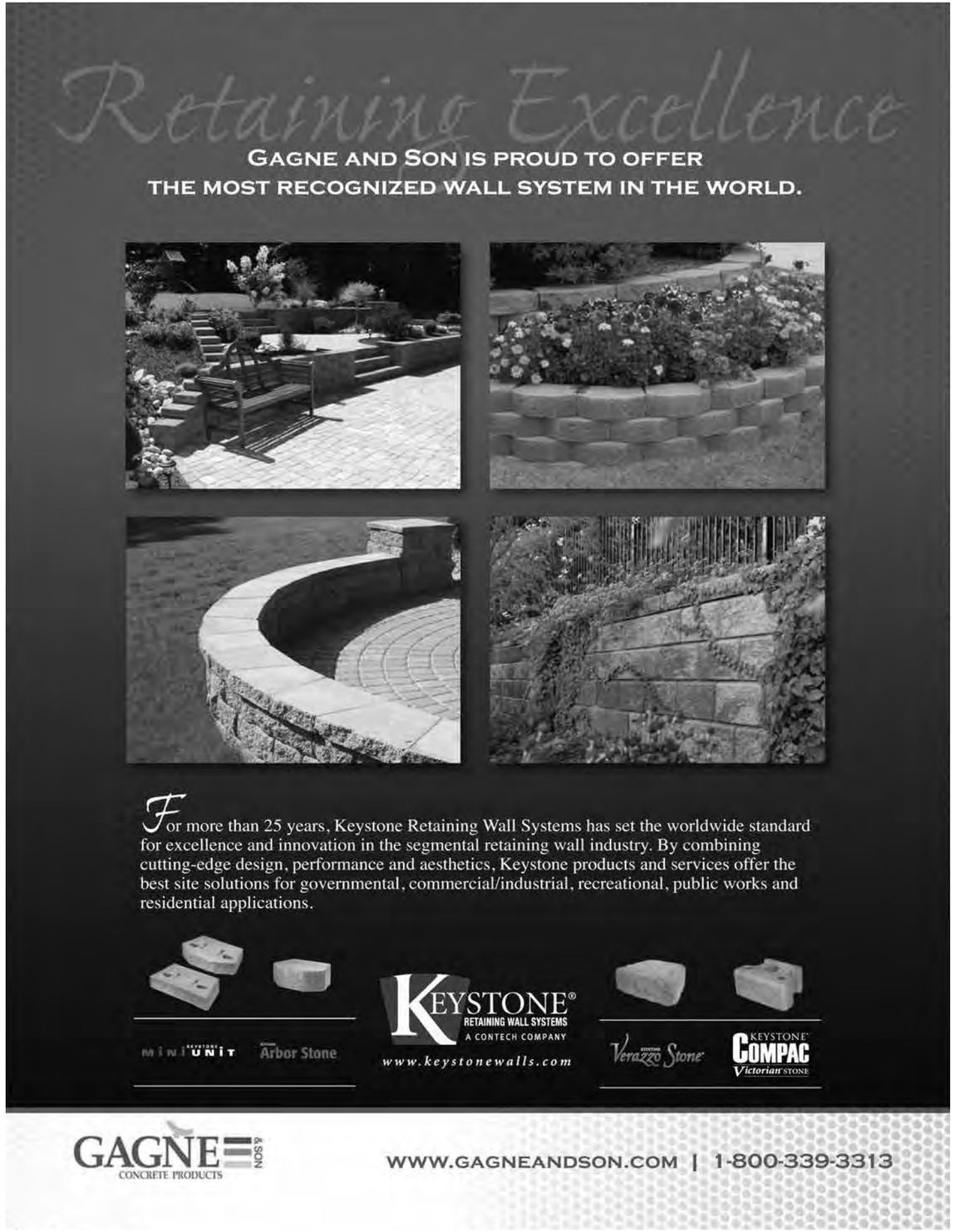




Bonding experience

Skillings Shaw & Associates grows its business by knowing its customers and being there when needed

Bob Shaw is busy. He and the Skillings Shaw & Associates' staff of a dozen bonding professionals based in Lewiston and Bangor saw barely a hiccup in the flow of construction projects coming across their desks since the pandemic first hit Maine.

Still, there were a lot of questions that ran through his head when Governor Janet Mills announced the state of emergency in March of 2020: How would this crisis affect the highway and bridge contractors he had worked with and come to know well over the past 28 years? Would the state and federal governments halt work on government-funded projects? Would crews be able to continue working?

"Things settled down pretty quickly. A few of our customers hit 'pause' while they sorted things out, but most of them kept working," remembered Shaw. Still, even the most cautious clients didn't pause for long once it became clear that the Mills administration and MaineDOT were keen to keep crews working and to take advantage of the dramatic drop in traffic on Maine roads.

At Skillings Shaw, the team of surety professionals watched the market closely. "We've never been in a pandemic situation before, and we weren't sure how it was going to affect our companies' balance sheets," said Shaw. "We had some sectors show signs of slowing down. There was a lull of about four weeks, but it really wasn't until the middle of the year in our world that we saw things pick back up."

One year later, says Shaw, he can see the "fortunate" result of the quick action taken by state and federal leaders. While the governor classified construction crews as "essential workers" and MaineDOT kept crews working on projects throughout the state, Congress approved stimulus funding that helped construction businesses cope with the costs of operating through the pandemic.

"Companies had to adapt quickly," says Shaw. They had to purchase personal protective equipment for crews and make allowances for social distancing. "You couldn't put three guys into a truck anymore, and you couldn't have guys sharing a hotel room."

Shaw has followed his clients as they have sorted out those issues and have come out of the pandemic in a strong position. "They all have had their PPP loans forgiven, and that has been extremely beneficial and allowed them to keep everyone working and employed," said Shaw.

"The construction economy is doing well in Maine, fueled by the low cost of borrowing and a lot of pent-up demand," says Shaw without an

The Skillings Shaw & Associates' staff now numbers 12 at offices in Lewiston and Bangor: (back row left to right) Sam Goulet, Ben Shaw, Bob Shaw, (front row, left to right) Joline Binette, Heidi Rodzen, Jessica Hughes, Melanie Bonnevie, Trina Elsman, Stacey Anderson, Nancy Castonguay and (not pictured) Judy Mills.

ounce of hesitancy. "We've picked up a lot of work well into 2021, and we're picking up work into 2022. So for us, the construction market has mostly continued unabated."

BONDS, JUST BONDS

Shaw began his career in surety bonding at Maine Bonding & Casualty in 1979 when he was still a student at the University of Southern Maine. Over the years, he worked for firms in Maine, Boston and in California. Shaw founded Skillings Shaw & Associates with Dave Skillings in 1994. The two had worked for other insurance agencies in Maine and elsewhere, and they saw the opportunity to fill a niche by specializing solely in bonds. They also saw how a surety bond-only agency could provide distinct benefits to the marketplace.

Dave Skillings and Bob Shaw. The two bonding professionals founded Skillings Shaw in 1994.

As the company lore tells it, they founded the company out of a sense of necessity. "It was the only thing we knew, and we felt that there was enough of a specialty market to make it work," Shaw told *Maine Trails* in 2013, shortly after the firm was acquired by Cross Insurance.

Since that time, Skillings Shaw has continued to operate under its original name and with relative autonomy.

"We are part of the Cross 'family,'" said Shaw. "Royce Cross [president and CEO of Cross Insurance] is pretty savvy and recognizes that there's an advantage to having us continue to operate the way we historically have operated as a surety-only company. That has continued to work out well for us, for Cross and for our clients."

Over the past decade, the Skillings Shaw staff has increased to meet the growing demands of its customers in Maine and beyond. The company has hired several younger bonding professionals, including Bob's son, Ben Shaw, and Sam Goulet. It also has many of its longstanding and experienced staff: senior account executive Melanie Bonnevie; senior account executive and office manager Heidi Rodzen; with the heavy lifting performed by Nancy Castonguay, Trina Elsman, Joline Binette, Jessica Hughes, Stacey Anderson and Judy Mills. Together the team has several decades of experience among them. Last year, the firm merged with Cross Insurance's Bangor office bond staff, and now numbers a dozen at two offices in Lewiston and Bangor. The firm is hoping to hire at least one new staffer in the coming year.

Meanwhile, the second office located in eastern Maine has proven to be a convenience for several customers. "Opportunities can pop up quickly," said Shaw, who added that clients need bonds when those opportunities arise. "We do have customers that say, 'Holy smokes, can we swing by and pick one up?'"

BONDS WHEN YOU NEED THEM

There are a variety of surety bonds used in the construction industry: bid, payment, performance and ancillary bonds. Because of the high dollar contracts and inherent risks involved in construction, state and federal agencies require contractors to carry a bond for projects with a value of $100,000 or more. If the contractor defaults, the surety company is obligated to find another contractor to complete the contract or compensate the project owner for the financial loss incurred.

While the firm issues commercial, fiduciary and court bonds, contractor and construction bonds make up the majority share of Skillings Shaw's business. Unlike most insurance policies, bonds are more of a credit tool that provide contractors and their clients with fiscal certainty in an industry that is known for sometimes high stakes risks, from technical and logistical challenges to the vagaries of the weather.

Shaw said that the best way for contractors to cope with those risks and to be able to procure the most favorable bonds is to pay attention to the details and work with professionals – lawyers to help with contract reviews, accountants to help present a clear picture of the finances, and bankers who understand the construction business.

Working with a specialty firm like Skillings Shaw also helps, because the firm maintains relationships with more than 20 of the industry's top surety firms. Contractors benefit because they can team up with a surety company that understands their firm and their goals and objectives.

AN 'OLD SCHOOL' ART

Skillings Shaw & Associates has had a long and strong connection to the region's construction industry. Before they set up shop on their own, Bob Shaw and Dave Skillings had been working in the bond department of the former Dunlap Corporation, and both were well known in the surety world. Skillings had been a president and director of the National Association of Surety Bond Producers (NASBP), a trade association for the surety industry. He also was very active with MBTA, serving for many years a board member and stepping in as president from 1983-1984.

In fact, Skillings served as MBTA president at a financially challenging time for the association. He and the board were faced with the difficult decision of whether or not to keep the association operating. Skillings and MBTA past President Don Raye led the board, along with then-Executive Director Jeff Nevins, in a fundraising effort to restore the financial stability of the organization. This included organizing the first MBTA Transportation Achievement Awards, a gala event, in 1983. MBTA continues to host the awards which have recognized the contributions of transportation greats, including H.E. Sargent, Carlton Reed, Phil Grondin, Dana Connors, John Melrose and U.S. Senator Susan Collins.

Skillings retired in 2002 after 35 years in the business. Shaw, who has been an instructor at the NASBP William J. Angell Surety School for almost 30 years, served as NASBP president for 2018-2019.

Despite the automation that has transformed the insurance industry in the years since they founded the agency, the bonding business remains somewhat "old school."

"Surety is a small niche in the insurance business," said Shaw. The staff still write original paper bonds that are required in the bid process. "Some bond forms still have to be done on a typewriter," he added.

SHIFTING HOURS, NOT FOCUS

"Surety is more like banking than insurance," said Shaw, who said that both disciplines require an established relationship and trust between the bonding agent and the client, with the bonding agent having a thorough financial understanding of the business.

When the pandemic hit, the firm had to figure out how to maintain the high level of service its staff provides to its clients, even as the construction companies it serves worked through the early days of the crisis.

"Almost everything we do is still original paper," said Shaw. So working from home wasn't really an option. That meant Shaw and his staff had to work out a split shift system to accommodate the highly detailed process that goes into issuing a bond. The work requires coordination among staff members as they review the paperwork before a bond can be issued.

"When this all came about, we continued to work the way we've always worked," said Shaw. "One group would show up for the morning and, when they cleared out, the second group would come in," said Shaw. When they weren't in the office, staff was also set up to work from home, so they could communicate by phone and video conference with clients and their fellow staff members.

With the majority of the staff now vaccinated, things are now mostly back to normal, but Shaw admits staying open through the pandemic was challenging.

"It took a huge amount of teamwork to make it seem seamless to our customers," said Shaw who is audibly relieved that the uncertainty of the early days of the pandemic are behind him. "It's not so much that we are getting back to work now. We were never not working. But things have changed forever to some degree." ■

FMI: To learn more, visit ssasurety.com.

Maine Drilling celebrates 55

Maine Drilling & Blasting, headquartered in Gardiner, Maine, celebrated its 55th anniversary on March 3, after what the company called "a very atypical and challenging 2020." To celebrate, the company has updated its logo and branding.

"The pandemic certainly tested us, but the collective efforts of our people, who re-dedicated themselves to maintaining our very high operational and safety standards, enabled us to persevere," stated Dan Werner, company president and CEO.

"Our pride and our confidence that we can pull together to succeed in the face of extreme challenges has never been stronger. We're building upon that," said Werner.

The company was founded on March 3, 1966, when Ted Purington, Sr., and wife, Judy Purington, borrowed $2,000 with three co-signers.

Maine Drilling & Blasting has updated its brand in time for its 55th Anniversary in business.

At first, the Puringtons operated the business from their kitchen. As the business grew, they relocated to the barn, then to a secondary tin building at the family homestead in Gardiner. Today, Maine Drilling & Blasting is a leading provider of drilling, rock blasting and related specialty services in the northeast, mid-Atlantic, and southeast United States and is one of the largest companies of its kind in the country.

Maine Drilling & Blasting offers drilling and blasting services to both the construction and quarry markets, as well as specialty services including foundation services, hoe ramming, engineering, public relations, pre-blast surveys, and packaged and bulk distribution.

In addition to the corporate office in Gardiner, the company has offices in New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit www.mdandb.com.

Pike wins national recognition

Four Pike Industries projects in Maine received Quality in Construction awards at the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) 66th Annual Meeting in February. The conference was held virtually due to the pandemic.

The NAPA awards celebrate pavement industry members who achieve excellence by: demonstrating a commitment to quality; strengthening their partnership with project owners; recognizing employees for innovations and skilled paving; improving community relationships and increasing trust among partners; and spurring innovation and collaboration within their companies.

The awards were for Pike paving projects, all of them completed for MaineDOT in 2020: Maine Mall Road in South Portland; Washington Avenue in Portland; Route 201, Jackman-Moose River-Dennistown Plantation-Sandy Bay; and Route 7, Dexter-Garland-Dover-Foxcroft. The company also won recognition for projects in New Hampshire and Vermont.

Pike Industries Inc. was established in 1872 and developed through five generations of family leadership. It is now one of the largest asphalt and aggregate materials producers in New England and operates more than 40 asphalt plants and 20 crushing facilities throughout New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit pikeindustries.com.

Pike's winning projects (clockwise from top left): Route 201 in Jackman; Route 2 in Dexter; Maine Mall Road in Portland; and Washington Avenue in Portland.

PIKE INDUSTRIES

Cole fishes for a cure

Stephen Cole has done a lot of fishing throughout his life. This summer, the Greenville native is looking for help reeling in his biggest catch yet: a cure for cancer.

An avid fisherman, Stephen organized a virtual fishing tournament benefiting Northern Light's Champion the Cure Challenge to honor his late wife. Stephen and his wife, Wendy, co-founded the engineering firm S.W. Cole in the late 1970s. In February 2020, Wendy died of the disease Stephen is hoping to help cure.

Last year, the hospital was forced to run the event virtually, according to Brenda Farnham, associate vice president of oncology services at Lafayette Family Cancer Institute, which cared for Wendy. "But that wasn't all bad, because it really spurred creativity," said Farnham. Out of that came Cole's "Reel for a Cure."

Stephen and Wendy Cole

"Well, if it's virtual, why don't we do a fishing tournament?" said Cole. " So I started one pretty much for myself last year. I pledged $3 a fish and had a good summer, so it turned out to be a pretty good donation."

With the help of friends, Cole raised about $2,500. This year, he's inviting the public in the hopes of raising about 10 times that amount. According to Northern Light, "every dollar raised will fund Northern Light Cancer Care research and patient care in Brewer."

It's a cause that Cole believes his wife, who spent years as a hospice volunteer, would be supporting herself. ■

FMI: The fishing fundraiser is underway now through Labor Day. To register, go to ctcchallenge.org, click on "Paddle," choose "Register." You can register your own team, or you can select "Reel Affair-Fishing Team" to join or donate to Cole's team.

Shaw Brothers, All States win 2020 Pave Maine awards

The Maine Asphalt Pavement Association (MAPA) announced the winners of the 2020 Pave Maine Awards on April 27. The awards were originally slated to be unveiled at the Spring Paving Seminar in April 2020. That event was cancelled last year due to the pandemic.

Shaw Brothers Construction from Gorham won the 2,500-10,000 tons category. The project was located at Maine Medical Center parking garage in Portland. Consigli Construction was the prime contractor for the largest new parking garage north of Boston located on St. John Street.

Shaw Brothers constructed the garage largely out of concrete with two lifts of hot mix asphalt (HMA) on the bottom level.

Due to the configuration and height of the parking garage, Shaw Brothers purchased two front-end loaders for the project that would allow for mobility and quantity, without losing focus on quality. In addition, the testing criteria required a uniform process to aid in achieving density. The size restrictions limited them to only using 3- to 5-ton rollers.

The garage could only be built in sections, which made it so they could only pave certain areas at a time. Much like a puzzle, Shaw Brothers had to plan equipment movements carefully to avoid freshly paved HMA. Even though the project was completed under cover, weather still proved challenging as rainwater would run to the bottom of the garage.

All States Construction, Inc. from Richmond won the 2020 Pave Maine Award in the 10,000+ tons category. That project was located on I-95 from Herseytown to Houlton. All States was the prime contractor and used many subcontractors to complete the project.

All States' project utilized the ultra-thin bonded wearing course technology as the surface course. This was a lengthy project with an aggressive single season timeframe, including milling, paving, guardrail updates, drainage work, interchange milling and other safety improvements covering 48.89 miles. The project included 13 on-off ramps. The contract amount of ultrathin was 881,650 square yards (roughly 35,330 tons).

All States was the prime contractor and used many subcontractors to complete the project, including Emery Lee & Sons, C.A. Newcomb and Coastal Road Repair. The project was completed in October of 2019.

In most years members have four categories to choose from based on tonnage; 0-500, 500-2,500, 2,500-10,000 and 10,000+. Projects are judged on construction techniques or materials, executing a difficult or challenging job, partnering with client, positive impacts to the community and safety. The board elected a group of distinguished judges with more than 100 years of combined experience in the industry to review all applications and select the winners. For the 2020 awards, MAPA received eight entries in only two categories, making the stakes high. ■

Shaw Brothers won in the 2,500-10,000 ton category for the company's work at the Maine Medical Center parking garage in Portland, the largest new parking structure north of Boston.

All States Construction won in the 10,000+ ton category for its work paving I-95 from Herseytown to Houlton.

FMI: To learn more about the awards and MAPA, visit maine-apa.org.

Sebago Technics acquires Titcomb Associates

Sebago Technics, a civil engineering, survey, transportation, landscape architecture, and environmental services consulting firm based in South Portland, has announced the acquisition of Titcomb Associates of Falmouth and Bath.

The firm was founded by Robert P. Titcomb in 1969 and has been owned and operated by David Titcomb since 1985. David Titcomb will continue with the business, serving clients for the next few years. Titcomb Associates has provided boundary, topographic, ALTA, roadway/highway, and construction-related survey services to a wide array of private and public sector clients for more than 50 years.

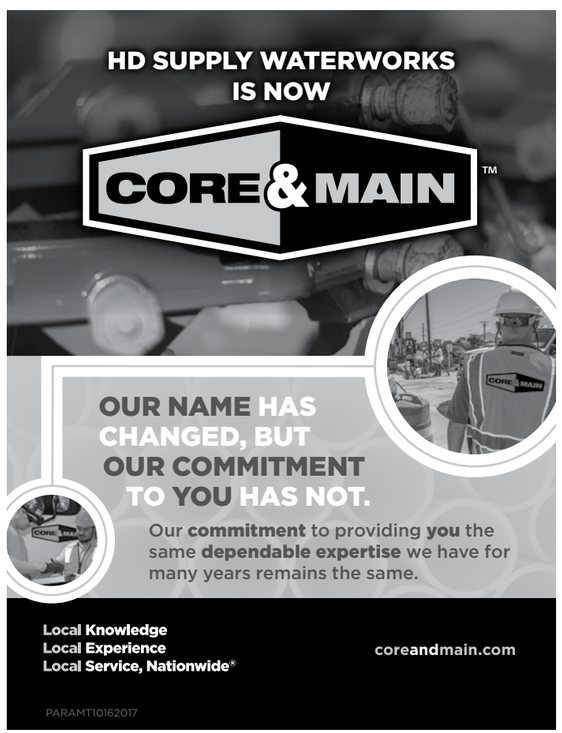
"Sebago Technics and its employee-owners are excited to have David Titcomb and his experienced staff join the Sebago team," Mark Adams, president and CEO of Sebago Technics said in a statement, noting that the acquisition supported Sebago Technics' "continued growth and future opportunities."

Said Adams: "Titcomb Associates' great history, reputation and loyal client base are a wonderful addition. With the combined acquisitions of Titcomb Associates and Sawyer Engineering and Surveying [in December 2020], Sebago now has the largest surveying-geomatics staff in Maine and perhaps Northern New England."

David Titcomb noted that the acquisition "provides a stable succession for both my business and employees." The company will operate as Titcomb Associates – a division of Sebago Technics, keeping the Titcomb name and reputation alive.

Sebago Technics, a 100 percent employee-owned company, offers businesses, developers, landowners, and public agencies services in engineering, surveying-geomatics, land planning, permitting, development and construction of projects throughout Maine and Northern New England. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit www.sebagotechnics.com.



Quinn honored

Patricia Quinn, executive director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) has been awarded the Vincent R. Terrill Lifetime Achievement Award by the New England Railroad Club Executive Committee.

Patricia Quinn

The Vincent R. Terrill Lifetime Achievement Award was established to recognize individuals who have provided exemplary service to the New England Railroad community through leadership and by advancing railroad services and operations, as exemplified by Terrill. Terrill had a 58-year career in railroading and served on Transportation Research Board and as director of the New England Railroad Club.

The award was given because of Quinn's "outstanding work, dedication to the industry, and her leadership presence in the regional and national transportation environment," according to Clary Coutu, president of the NERRC.

Her 20 years with NNEPRA have been recognized as challenging by the committee. At the same time, according to the committee, she has risen to the needs of the service with grace and dignity, and has been engaged in all aspects of initiating and maintaining the Downeaster service, has cooperated with freight carriers in the region, and has successfully engaged with public officials along the rail corridor between Boston and Maine.

Along with her day-to-day responsibilities, Quinn has been active regionally and nationally, serving on AASHTO's Standing Committee on Rail Transportation and the States for Passenger Rail Coalition.

In her role as the executive director of NNEPRA since 2005, Quinn has led development of the Amtrak Downeaster passenger rail service between Brunswick, Maine and Boston, Massachusetts. Under her leadership, the Downeaster has experienced steady growth in both ridership and revenue and has realized a number of improvements including additional frequency, expansion to new communities, reduced travel time and construction of new facilities, all while retaining high levels of customer satisfaction. Quinn has remained committed to developing strong partnerships, ensuring that Amtrak Downeaster service contributes to the economic sustainability of the region, and that NNEPRA-sponsored investments in railroad infrastructure support the movement of both passengers and freight.

"Patricia is laser focused on improving the Amtrak Downeaster service and the national stature of this service reveals the success of her efforts. Her enthusiasm, dedication and hard work leave no doubt that she gives the Downeaster her all. She is a transportation leader in Maine and on the national scene and is a pleasure to work with and a leader to believe in," said John Melrose, NNEPRA chair. ■

VHB acquires Survey Engineering Resources

VHB, a multi-disciplinary environmental and energy services leader throughout the east coast, is acquiring Survey Engineering Resources, LLC (SER), a 20-person surveying firm with an office in Westbrook. The merger of SER practice areas with VHB means a significant expansion of the company's surveying capabilities throughout New England and a more vigorous integration of innovation and technology.

"VHB's current technical abilities in survey and data management, coupled with the greater technical capabilities of SER, will offer a pioneering approach to the survey services we offer our clients," said Gil Paquette, managing director for Maine, VHB. "Additionally, the incorporation of top talent from SER enhances VHB's market potential, while creating more opportunity within the energy sector."

SER President Tim Patch will join VHB as regional service leader for survey, Eric Williams joins as the director of survey for Maine, and Gary Volta joins as a GIS lead.

SER will join VHB's Maine team at the company's Westbrook office. The team will service survey clients throughout the east coast.

With more than 30 offices in the eastern United States, VHB's in-house team of more than 85 surveyors and professional land surveyors offers state-of-the-art and cost-effective solutions to public and private clients. VHB's team of engineers, scientists, planners, and surveyors partner with clients to deliver complex projects across six markets – transportation, real estate, institution, energy, federal, and state and local government – and has been providing survey services throughout New England for decades. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit www.vhb.com.

TFIC announces northeast focus, advisory board

Following the successful conclusion of its first half-decade in business, Treadwell Franklin Infrastructure Capital LLC ("TFIC") recently announced it has finalized and initiated the execution of its second five-year strategy and business plan for FY 2021-2025. Kick-off of the plan was punctuated by the inaugural meeting of the newly constituted TFIC Advisory Board on March 31, 2021.

TFIC's 2021-2025 strategy underscores its commitment to communities in 11 states in New England and the northeast, and the renaissance of critical infrastructure in the municipal and institutional markets. The strategy also calls for targeted substantive acquisitions adding to the technical capabilities of TFIC subsidiary, James W. Sewall Company ("Sewall") and continued development of key strategic relationships, including those with Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Academic Innovators Inc., and Amber Infrastructure Group.

"TFIC's core value lies in the service of common community aspirations. To a person, our board not only shares our company's values, but brings an extraordinary range of lifelong accomplishments and wisdom to our mission" says George Campbell, TFIC partner and advisory board chairman. "This exceptional board will fuel our initiatives and strategic alliances significantly, leaving an indelible imprint on essential infrastructure projects throughout the northeast and mid-Atlantic."

TFIC's Advisory Board is comprised of six members:

George N. Campbell Jr. (chair): Campbell is a founding partner of TFIC, with long experience as a blended professional in government, industry and higher education. Most recently he served as president of Sewall, and previously served as the head of the USM Foundation and as DOT commissioner in New Hampshire and Maine. Campbell is a member of the Maine Better Transportation Association board of directors.

Kathryn (Kay) Rand: Rand serves on the Sewall board of directors after managing Angus King's successful campaign for U.S. Senate in 2012 and then serving as King's chief of staff in Washington, D.C., until 2019. She also brings with her years of involvement in a number of statewide public policy projects on behalf of a diverse range of public, non-profit, and business clients as managing director of Bernstein Shur Government Solutions, the consulting arm of the law firm, Bernstein Shur.

Sarah Wu: Wu previously served as head of investment for CCA Construction, spearheading business development for a fiduciary infrastructure investment unit, including strategy, JV and LP partnerships, deal sourcing in the Americas, and team development. She is a senior executive experienced in investing, financing and asset-managing private infrastructure business with a background in global infrastructure investments and private public partnership strategies.

Joseph Aiello: Aiello is an internationally recognized leader in infrastructure development and finance with a track record of driving innovation, business growth and leading industry into forward thinking positioning. He currently serves several transformational entities and also is a senior fellow at the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Christopher Clement: Clement is chief operating officer and vice president for administration at the University of New Hampshire. He has an extensive leadership background in both the private and public sectors. Prior to UNH, he was transportation commissioner for New Hampshire, and previously served as the director of the Governor's Office of Economic Stimulus, deputy commissioner and chief operating officer of the NHDOT.

Dr. David Howes: Howes serves as the president and CEO of Martin's Point Healthcare. He has dedicated his career to creating a healthier community and is involved with numerous health care and business organizations including the Alliance of Community Health Plans, the U.S. Family Health Plan Alliance, and the Maine Guaranteed Access Reinsurance Association.

Founded in 2015, TFIC is an integrated infrastructure business focused on municipal and institutional infrastructure and services in New England and the northeastern United States. TFIC seeks to return financial and economic value to states and communities by mobilizing private capital and resources in appropriate contexts, focusing on accessible commercial opportunities that create value and revenues sharable with the public sector. TFIC is privately wholly owned and managed by its partner-members and is a Delaware limited liability company with headquarters in Yarmouth, Maine. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit tficapital.com.

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Terry Buck, 1956-2021

Terry Dean Buck, founder of T Buck Construction in Turner, passed away suddenly in Deland, Florida, in late February. He was 65.

He was born February 18, 1956 in Bethlehem, New Hampshire to Carroll (Squeak) and Pat Buck. Terry was larger than life, loved life and was generous to a fault. He was well-respected and loved by many friends, business associates and family.

Terry was a hard worker beginning as a small boy working with his dad in the woods logging. As he grew, he juggled school with work in construction. Graduating from Fryeburg Academy, he began his construction career with Cianbro and later worked for other firms, including Nalews, R.C. Foss, Wincon, Northern Constructors, and Beaver Corp. He then established T Buck Construction in Conway, New Hampshire.

As the company grew, he moved the company, first to Bridgton, then to Lewiston-Auburn, and finally to Turner where the construction company thrived and which he loved and was very proud of. During the first 30 years of being in business, T Buck saw steady, sustainable growth as the services provided grew from being a treatment plant contractor to a full range infrastructure contractor and more.

Terry also purchased a welding company in Lewiston, which he moved to Auburn and renamed Global Metal & Fab.

His favorite hobby in early years was skiing at his beloved Shawnee Peak in Bridgton. He had a racing ski team meeting every week. He enjoyed snowmobiling, traveling, and spending time at his home on the lake with all his kids and grandkids. His top favorite in life was his cars. He loved going to the car shows and auctions, and he collected many of his favorites. He was able to spend some time in his beautiful home in Florida. His dream and goal had been to finally retire there.

Terry is survived by his wife Jane of 27 years. He is also survived by his children, Sarah McGuinness and husband Shawn of Rutland, Massachusetts; Melissa Ferland of Poland; Tim Hiltz and wife Georgia of Buxton; sisters, Cindy Fox and husband Peter of Stoneham, Vicki Pike and husband Steve of Waterford; brother, Carroll Buck and partner Dawn Kidder; many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles; and five grandchildren: Maggie Ferland and partner Nathan St. Laurent; Allison Ferland; Brayden, Dillon and Logan Hiltz. He is predeceased by his mother, father and his brother, Chet Buck. ■

Terry Buck (top and second from right) founded T Buck Construction and was a long-time MBTA member, and a golfer who regularly participated in the MBTA Infrastructure Golf Classic.

ABC honors Cianbro

Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) has awarded Cianbro a national Eagle Award for excellence in construction. The award was for Cianbro's work converting a vacant manufacturing building into a medical swab manufacturing plant in Pittsfield for Puritan Medical Products.

Puritan is one of two major manufacturers of COVID-19 testing swabs in the country. The company reached out to Cianbro last year to expand its manufacturing capability amid high demand for testing swabs.

The project included construction of a 35,000-square-foot, ISO-8 clean room production space with positive air pressure; demolition of an existing facility down to its structural core frame; removal of the existing roof and rooftop units and replacement with new roof and 17 rooftop air handling units; renovation of 24,000 square feet of warehouse space; construction of 12 offices, five bathrooms, breakroom space, and training space with capacity for more than 100 team members. All of it needed to be done on an accelerated schedule

As a result, Puritan was able to produce 90 million COVID testing swabs per month, which contributed to identifying hot spots for the virus and saving lives. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit cianbro.com.

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Jennifer Brickett, Director, MaineDOT Bureau of Planning

Outreach, partnerships and navigating transportation topics

Imagine finding yourself on a rural Maine road you don't recognize. There is no signage in sight, you don't have a map, and your phone battery has died. The challenge of finding your way back home may feel overwhelming. Transportation is a large and varied subject, and trying to find the right person to discuss the specific infrastructure needs of a community can be a daunting task. That's why the Maine Department of Transportation's Bureau of Planning is putting a renewed emphasis on helping municipalities navigate these complicated roads.

A CENTRAL PLACE

The Bureau of Planning's vision is to serve as a central place where both MaineDOT staff and customers, partners, and stakeholders can go to provide input and ideas on the desired future of our transportation system. Our mission is to turn input, ideas, and future trends into reasoned action. Our regional planners and other staffers are skilled at helping communities connect with the right individuals and resources within MaineDOT, work through challenges and identify possible solutions, and initiate planning partnership opportunities. We view transportation as a vast, integrated system while still understanding that the needs of Portland are very different from the needs of New Portland. MaineDOT's core values of "competence, integrity, and service" epitomize the kind of resource we aim to be for municipal officials statewide.

Our planning experts have begun more comprehensive outreach efforts to strengthen relationships and partnerships with municipalities, metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning and economic development organizations, and other community leaders and stakeholder groups. Our goal is to make sure local officials know that an email, phone call, or text message to someone in MaineDOT's Bureau of Planning can help provide a quick answer to the most complex or seemingly mundane question. Additionally, we are often the first stop to discuss potential partnership ideas and opportunities. Our planners work closely with our regional offices and the department's Local Roads Center, which provides municipalities with funding and training.

REACHING OUT

Recently, planning team members have been reaching out to municipalities to provide updates on the dynamic situation involving transportation funding at the federal level. This includes updates on the proposed American Jobs Plan, the return of earmarks for members of Congress, and the expiration of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act at the end of September. Our regional planners have fielded questions from municipal officials regarding these initiatives, particularly around the eligibility of projects for earmarks. Renewed discussions about infrastructure in Washington have certainly made it an interesting time to work in the transportation field, but the landscape we all have to navigate changes daily. This is when strong

"Our renewed focus on supporting partnership efforts will also help us move ahead with our vision to support the revitalization of villages and downtown areas across Maine through a complete streets approach. Future work in this realm will emphasize community at a pedestrian scale. These villages and downtowns are what make Maine unique. They are part of what is helping attract new people to our state in a post-pandemic world, where teleworking is more prevalent."

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partnerships matter. Good relationships and open communication channels between state and local transportation officials contribute to the success of infrastructure projects in our state.

Our renewed focus on supporting partnership efforts will also help us move ahead with our vision to support the revitalization of villages and downtown areas across Maine through a complete streets approach. Future work in this realm will emphasize community at a pedestrian scale. These villages and downtowns are what make Maine unique. They are part of what is helping attract new people to our state in a post-pandemic world, where teleworking is more prevalent. We think this work will support economic opportunities and quality of life for all Maine people. Strong partnerships can help make this vision a reality.

MaineDOT's Bureau of Planning will continue to work to build and strengthen partnerships with municipal officials from Kittery to Fort Kent. Successful communication and coordination will benefit our state's entire transportation system, improving connectivity, mobility, and safety. ■

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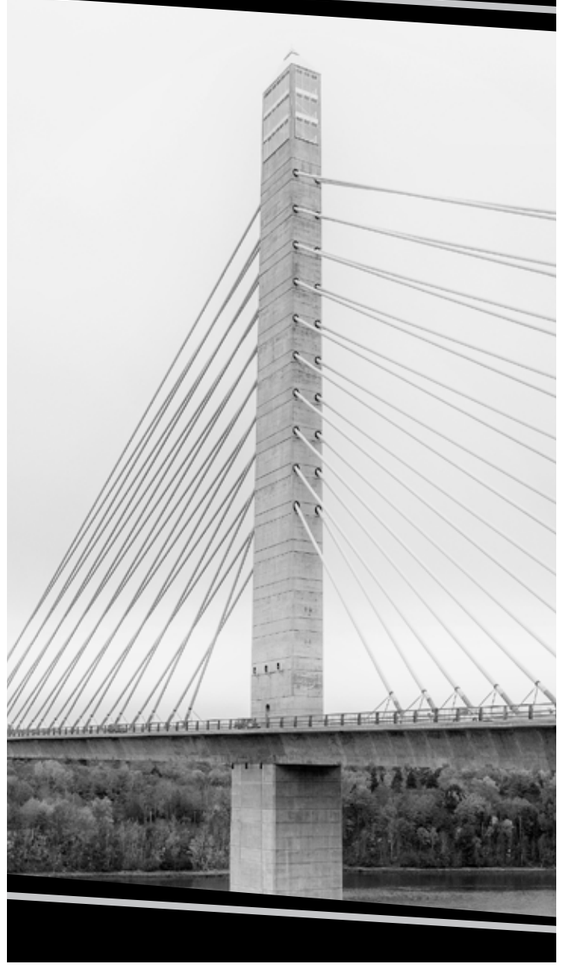

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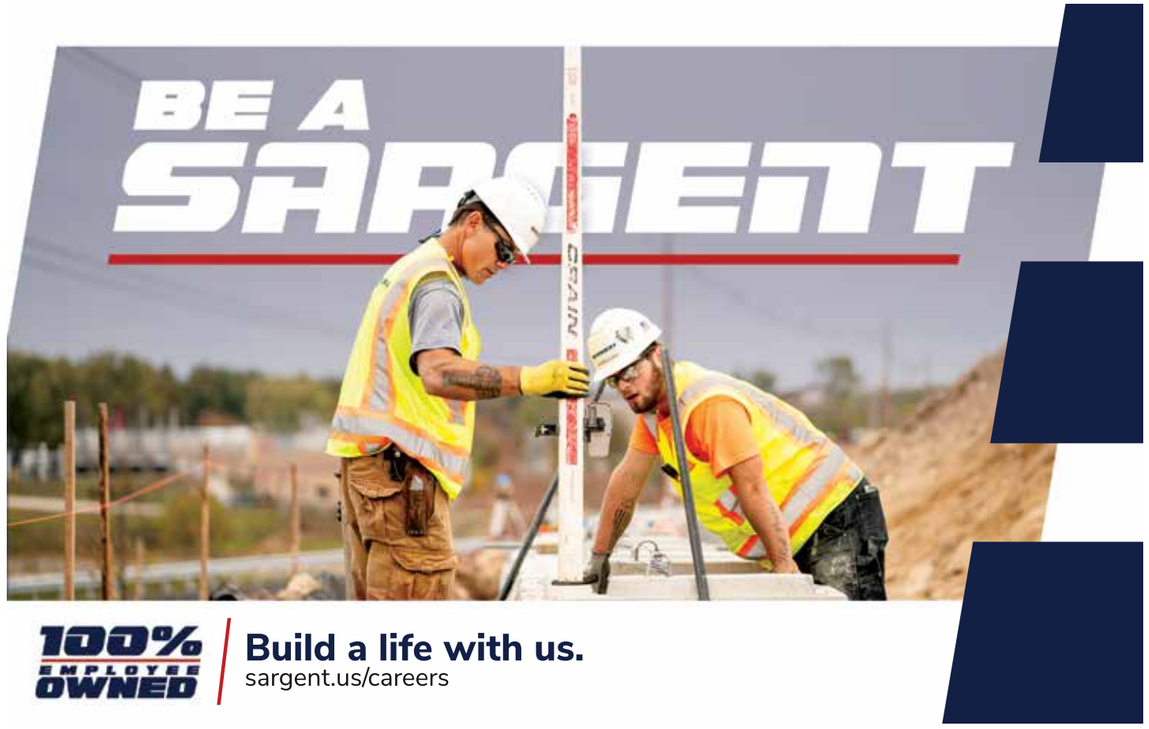

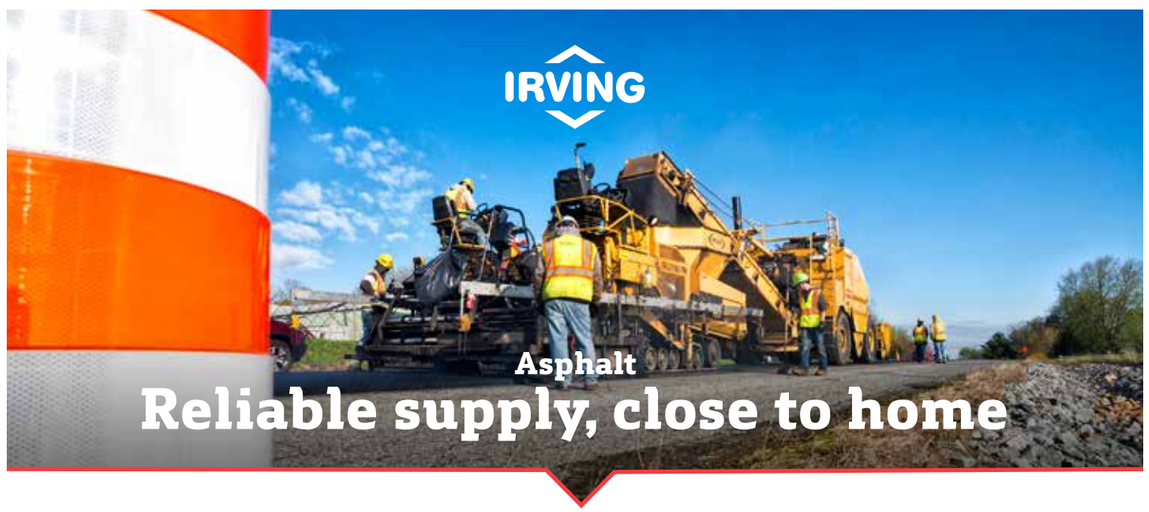

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High stakes investments

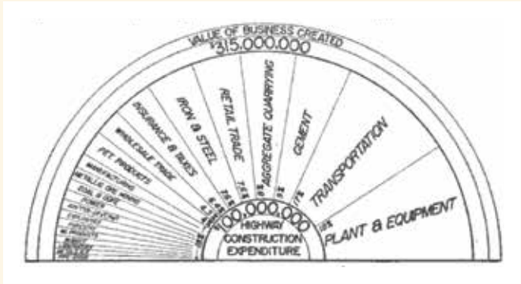
President Joe Biden recently introduced The American Jobs Plan, a $2 trillion proposed plan to overhaul and upgrade the nation's infrastructure. While his definition of infrastructure expands on the traditional concept, a significant part of it is very familiar. His proposal calls for spending and tax credits that would translate into 20,000 miles of rebuilt roads and repairs to the 10 most important bridges in the country and, it is claimed, would be a big jobs creator. These sorts of investments have always received strong bipartisan support.

In the June 1945 issue of *The Trail*, the forerunner of today's *Maine Trails* magazine, we ran a piece written by Charles Upham of the American Road Builders Association. In it, Upham claimed the stakes were just as high as they are today. America was looking ahead at how to rebuild the economy following World War II.

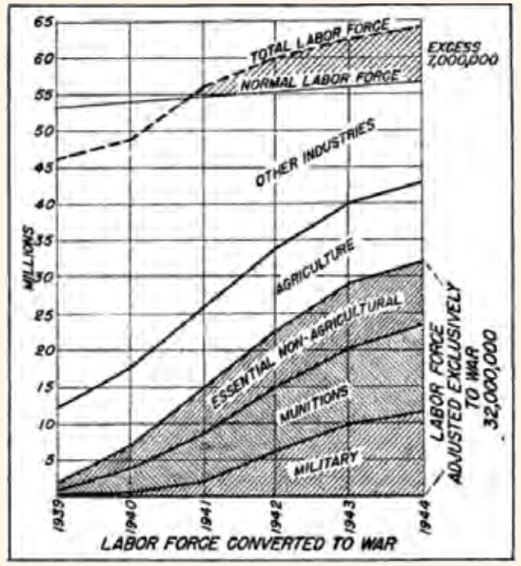
Upham was passionate about the cause. A professional engineer and former member of the Transportation Research Board, Upham one year earlier had prepared a report for the U.S. Congress, *A Sound Plan for Post-War Roads and Jobs*, that called for post-war infrastructure investments to inject power into the economy. For his *Trails* column, he wrote: "The future of American highways and the solution of our unemployment problem squarely rests upon the amount of road projects we have ready to put into operation when the war ends. During the first postwar years, we propose to build more than a billion dollars-worth [cq] of roads – primary, secondary and municipal. This is the program under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 which authorized $500,000,000 for the purpose to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the states, counties and cities."

Like the current administration's plan, this was an investment envisioned to turn the nation's economy around and Upham felt great urgency to get on with it. He complained that only eight of the 50 states had sufficient plans in place and ready to make an adequate start, possibly jeopardizing the whole postwar recovery effort. The writer blamed lethargy and delay.

He ends: "Every citizen, every taxpayer, every motorist in the land should concern himself seriously with the highways of the future. The postwar highway system is vital for everyone. . . . Ask your highway officials if there is any way you can help." ■



In his report to Congress, Upham noted the positive effect post-war investment would have on businesses (above) and jobs (below).



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