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Institutional knowledge

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Transportation Committee chairs

WINDFALL WOES

MaineDOT's latest
3-year work plan



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MAINE TRAILS

IN THIS ISSUE:



13

MAINE NEWS

- 21 **Institutional knowledge.** Maine Trails interviews Senator Diamond and Representative Martin.
- 28 **Air travel rebounds.** Passenger traffic is up at Maine's two largest airports.
- 29 **UMaine honors Taylor.** University recognizes MaineDOT's chief engineer.

MEMBER NEWS

- 33 **Looking back, looking forward.** McFarland Johnson at 75. By Kathryn Buxton



BC

- 41 **'One of a kind.'** Remembering Tommy Shaw.
- 43 **'Always learning things.'** Greg Savona, 1972-2022.

MAINEDOT VIEW

- 49 **Moving beyond 'McGyver' mode.** MaineDOT shifts focus. By Bruce Van Note

EXIT RAMP

- BC **Rainbow's end.** Replacing an iconic Maine "rainbow" bridge.

On the cover: Veranda Street Bridge in Portland. **MaineDOT**



33

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- 7 **Managing expectations.** The latest MaineDOT work plan tackles a lot, but we still have work ahead. By Irvin Smith

CALENDAR

- 9 **Upcoming MBTA events.**

ON RAMP

- 11 **A digest of recent transportation news.**

COVER STORY

- 13 **Windfall woes.** MaineDOT's new work plan is flush with funding, and that could be a problem. By Betty Adams



Maine Better Transportation Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Irvin Smith, MBTA President



Managing expectations

IN JANUARY, MaineDOT released its updated three-year work plan and as always, it has raised interest among Maine's transportation community.

This work plan is big, as it should be given its span of 36 months. It includes plans for 2,180 individual work items with a total value of \$2.71 billion to be spent during the next three years. A considerable amount of that goes toward Maine's highways and bridges. \$1.4 billion is slated to go to the following:

- 166 bridge projects (estimated cost: \$504 million)
- 100 miles of highway construction and rehabilitation (estimated cost: \$212 million)
- 222 highway safety and spot improvements (estimated cost: \$122 million)
- 893 miles of preservation paving (estimated cost: \$321 million)
- 2,175 miles of light capital paving (estimated cost: \$108 million)

I remember not too long ago, work plans went year to year. Back in the one-plan-a-year days, Maine's towns and cities and contractors did not have as much to go on in terms of planning. Now, it is easier for everyone – MaineDOT included – to set their sights on a more distant horizon.

For towns and cities, it may mean that the rough patch of highway that has been plaguing local drivers will get fixed – not this year – but that help is hopefully on the horizon.

Local media outlets appreciate these plans, too. Just look at the local press that covered this latest one. From The County to the coast to southern Maine, many newspapers and TV stations posted lists of work extending out over the next three years that would soon be underway in their communities – bridges, highways repaired... dangerous intersections made safer... all important information for Mainers who rely on their vehicles to get safely to work, school and shopping every day and a growing community.

And when a project is not on that three-year list, it is a signal that towns and cities may want to get working to find some local funding to be

“Don't expect any plan to be set in stone. This one has unique problems of its own. Recently labor shortages and rising material costs seen throughout the country have played havoc with everyone's planning abilities. More than likely, we will all be scrambling some to rearrange priorities, as Maine and the country continue to recover from the pandemic, the 'great resignation,' and all the other factors that may come into play over the next 36 months.”

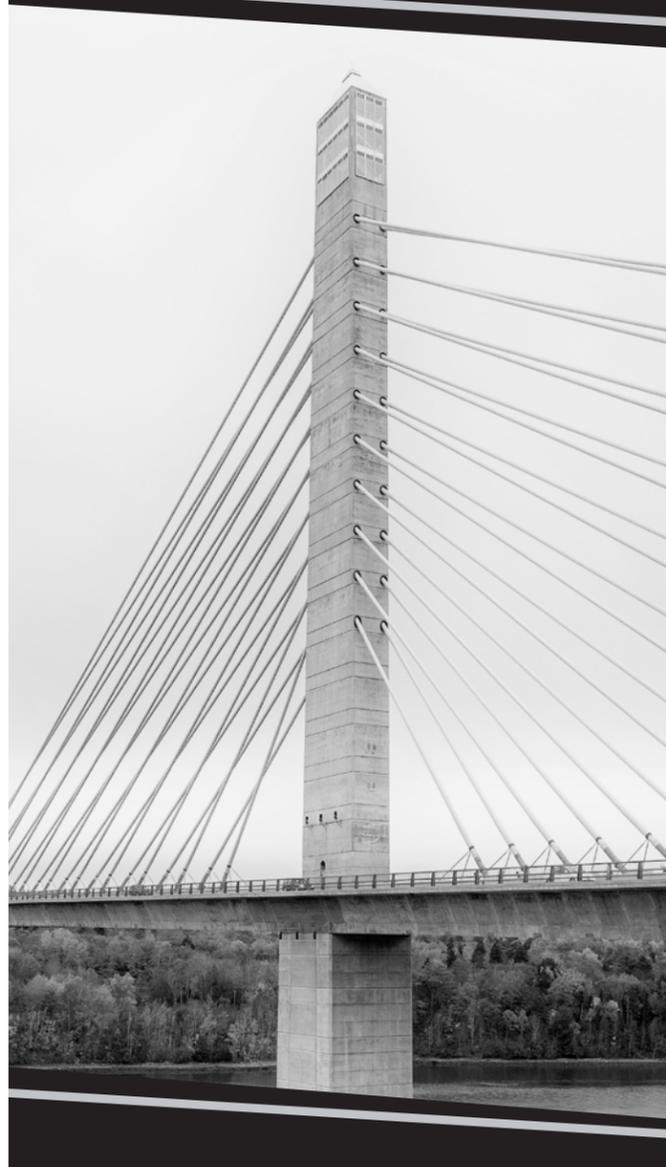
eligible for MaineDOT's Municipal Partnership Initiative (MPI).

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is helpful to look ahead to the next few years and get a sense of how much design, paving or reconstruction the state has in its budget – and how many bridges are likely to go out to bid in the next 36 months. That's a help for anyone planning ahead for hiring or deciding how much other types of construction and design work to take on.

For businesses like the one I work for, we can go online and see what we're getting for our money as taxpayers, and it provides a level of comfort looking at the spreadsheets and maps to see what work is being done in all corners of this state.

Finally, for MaineDOT, the three-year work plan has proven an effective tool to carefully consider the limited funds it has for the vast job it faces keeping Maine's transportation system running. In addition, the three-year plan breaks down into neat 12-month increments so they know just what they want to get done, and how much money they have to tackle those projects within a set timeframe.

Don't expect any plan to be set in stone. This one has unique problems of its own. Recently labor shortages and rising material costs seen throughout the country have played havoc with everyone's planning abilities.

More than likely, we will all be scrambling some to rearrange priorities, as Maine and the country continue to recover from the pandemic, the "great resignation," and all the other factors that may come into play over the next 36 months.

I hope you will take time to read Betty Adams' excellent story about MaineDOT's 2022-2023-2024 Work Plan. With passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Maine will have some additional new federal dollars to help tackle the construction inflation that has plagued every state in the nation, and to complete repairs needed for its transportation system — including new funding for our bridges. We will also be able to compete for new grant programs included in the bill, which could be a new bucket of funding for rural needs.

In closing, I would like to say we are especially grateful to Maine's Senator Susan Collins, a major author and negotiator, and Senator Angus King for helping to get the bipartisan ball rolling on the IIJA early last year and for Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden's support of the bill during the House vote, as well.

As the *Bangor Daily News* noted, "That influx is not expected to completely plug a maintenance backlog estimated at more than \$230 million per year." We agree. And it is important to note that MaineDOT still needs to assume a \$100 million General Fund contribution that historically has been in the form of an annual bond, or else the backlog would increase by \$100 million.

Finally, I want to say how much I am looking forward to the year ahead and hoping that we will get to see a lot of each other in person at MBTA events and meetings. Check your e-mail, Facebook, Instagram and www.mbtaonline.org for the latest. ■

MBTA CALENDAR

Thursday, April 14

TRANSPORTATION ON TAP
Liquid Riot, Portland
5 p.m.

Thursday, May 12

ANNUAL MEETING
Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport
5 p.m.

Thursday, June 9

TRANSPORTATION ON TAP
Orono Brewing Co., Orono

Thursday, July 14

INFRASTRUCTURE GOLF TOURNAMENT
Waterville Country Club, Oakland
9 a.m.

Thursday, August 4

AROOSTOOK COUNTY MEETING
5 p.m.

Friday, September 16

FALL CONVENTION/OUTING
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Saturday, September 17

FALL GOLF
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Friday, October 7

PDH TOUR
Location TBD

Thursday, December 1

MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE
Augusta Civic Center

Thursday, December 8

HOLIDAY-SCHOLARSHIP MEETING
Black Bear Inn, Orono
5 p.m.

For the latest information
about MBTA events, go to the Events tab
at MBTAonline.org

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ONRAMP

Swings and misses

MORE THAN a dozen states since 2015 have been studying whether it's possible to replace fuel taxes with mileage taxes to fund road upkeep, but those alternatives haven't been evaluated on one key question: whether their systems could eventually be used nationwide.

That's the conclusion of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, which audits and evaluates programs in a recently released report.

The finding stings, according to RouteFifty.com, because finding a national replacement for per-gallon fuel taxes was the main reason Congress asked states to participate in the pilot programs in the first place.

Officials are searching for long-term ways to pay for the federal highway program because federal fuel taxes have not brought in enough money to fund it. Congress last raised the per-gallon fuel tax rates in 1993, and the 18.4 cents per gallon has not kept up with inflation. To have



the same buying power as it did in 1993, the federal gas tax would have to increase to 44 cents a gallon.

"Without scalability criteria, [the Federal Highway Administration] will not be able to assess the potential of mileage fee systems beyond the pilot states nor provide information or recommendations, if any, for congressional consideration of these approaches to address the current insolvency of the Highway Trust Fund – an issue GAO has had on its high-risk list for over a

decade," the GAO warned.

FHWA officials told the auditors they didn't have the money to carry out that kind of evaluation, and they didn't have the authority to create a national policy on replacing gas taxes. But that explanation did not sway the GAO.

As a result, the FHWA has agreed to evaluate future mileage fee pilot programs for their ability to be rolled out nationally. ■

Rural communities: Get the buzz

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Transportation has released a new, free resource to help rural communities take full advantage of federal funding for an anticipated 500,000 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, part of a nationwide network soon to be deployed as a result of President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The guide, titled *Charging Forward: A Toolkit for Planning and Funding Rural Electric Mobility Infrastructure*, can help connect community members, towns, businesses, planning agencies, and others with partners needed for these projects. The law includes a total of \$7.5 billion to

build out the half million EV chargers.

"Drivers in rural areas often have the longest commutes and spend the most money on gas, which means big benefits from having access to electric cars and pickup trucks if they are affordable and easy to charge where they live and drive," said Secretary Pete Buttigieg. The Secretary said the network is "an important step toward ensuring that EVs aren't a luxury item and that everyone in America can benefit from clean transportation."

Of these funds, \$4.75 billion will be distributed by formula to states, and an additional \$2.5 billion will be distributed through a competitive grant program that will support innovative approaches

and ensure that charger deployment meets administration priorities such as supporting rural charging, improving local air quality and increasing EV charging access in disadvantaged communities. Together, this is the largest-ever U.S. investment in EV charging and will be a transformative down payment on the transition to a zero-emission future, according to the Biden Administration.

Last month, U.S. DOT announced a historic investment in bridges, including off system bridges that greatly benefit rural communities. ■

FMI: To download the toolkit, go to www.transportation.gov/rural/ev/toolkit/pdf.



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Windfall worries

With the launch of a new MaineDOT work plan temporarily flush with federal funding, local and state leaders worry about sustainability *By Betty Adams*

THE INFLUX of federal money fueling a large portion of the funding for MaineDOT's \$3.2 billion three-year work plan brings a windfall for major projects, including those long overdue.

However, it is accompanied by concerns about ensuring sustainable funding for continued work.

"This new money coming in is a godsend and it's over a five-year period. So we're going to see projects getting done that showed up in the three-year plan that have been sitting on the sidelines waiting until there was extra money to do it, and now that money's here," said state Senator William "Bill" Diamond (D-Windham) in February. He is the Senate chair of the Maine Legislature's Transportation Committee.

He noted that even with the \$100 million transportation bond winning annual approval at the polls, "DOT has been unable to do the jobs that are necessary."

He said he is heartened to know that the Transportation Committee will be involved as the projects progress, but he cautioned against losing focus on infrastructure maintenance. "If that urgency goes away, then

it's going to be hard to get money on a regular basis beyond the federal money. It's a false security in some ways."

Diamond said that one of the more productive achievements over the past few years is bringing more General Fund money into the highway fund. "I'm a little concerned that the only reason we got that is because of the pressure (of) 'We can't do the projects; we can't keep up.' Maine is a big state. We have 8,800 miles of roads the state is responsible for, and that takes a lot of money."

The perpetual shortfall in transportation funding weighs on Senator David Miramant (D-Knox), as well. A former member of the Transportation Committee, he is now chairman of the Marine Resources Committee.

"Nobody's not going to vote for the bond that gets that shortfall covered, but every time we're paying millions and millions of interest for that money - \$5-8 million depending on the year. That's taxpayer dollars wasted that if it was collected ahead and used properly, we wouldn't be borrowing to spend."

Miramant noted that he previously attempted to get the fuel tax raised

What's in the work plan?



Rines Hill Bridge in Augusta is one of 235 bridge projects slated for replacement or rehabilitation in MaineDOT's latest three-year work plan.

MAINEDOT

THE MAINE DOT 2022-2023-2024 WORK PLAN includes more than \$2.2 billion in capital work. This work consists of more than \$1.8 billion in highway and bridge projects and nearly \$424 million in multimodal capital projects.

HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES

The highway and bridge component includes the following:

- 235 bridge projects (\$631 million)
- 115 miles of highway construction and rehabilitation (\$155 million)
- 353 highway safety and spot improvements (\$237 million)
- 1,057 miles of preservation paving (\$462 million)
- 2,162 miles of light capital paving (\$111 million)

PORTS AND HARBORS

There is also more than \$51 million in funding for Maine's marine infrastructure to support Maine's three deep-water seaports in Eastport, Searsport, and Portland, as well as many of Maine's smaller harbors and ports through the Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) and the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program.

FERRY

Almost \$70 million in funding in the work plan calls for ferry infrastructure and service across Maine, including \$30.9 million (capital) for the Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS), the Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD/Casco Bay Lines), and the Frye Island Ferry. It also includes \$37.5 million in operating funds for the MSFS.

FREIGHT RAIL

Nearly \$114 million in funding will go to rail infrastructure

improvements, including operational improvements on state-owned rail lines, upgrades at railroad crossings and critical rail bridges and other rail line capital projects. Included in that total is \$77.5 million for investments in the Pan Am Railways' freight mainline and \$10.5 million for the Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP), which leverages private funding.

PASSENGER RAIL

The plan includes \$39 million (\$13 million annually) in operating funds for Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) Downeaster passenger rail service. That includes funding for two studies: one to explore demand and viability for new or enhanced transit service, including passenger rail, between the communities of Portland and Bangor; and an economic evaluation of potential commuter and passenger train service between Portland and the Lewiston-Auburn area.

AIRPORTS

The plan calls for \$109 million in spending for the state aviation system that supports safety and infrastructure improvements at 26 general aviation airports and six commercial airports. This includes rehabilitation of runways at Bangor International Airport and Portland International Jetport and implementation of the Collaborative Weather Instrumentation Program (CWIP), which includes installation or upgrades to Automated Weather Observation Systems (AWOS) across the state.

TRANSIT

There is nearly \$257 million in transit funding, including capital investments and operating assistance for transit systems across the

See 'What's in the work plan'

Page 17

and linked to inflation, but failed.

"I understand sometimes you have to bond to do things," he said. "With a good plan it's part of the expense, but you don't let it go year after year and don't fix it."

LOCAL RAMIFICATIONS

MaineDOT's 2022-2024 three-year work plan shows a transportation investment of almost \$32 million in the state capital area, with half of that funding on or near I-95 to improve highway safety and operations.

There are two major bridge projects slated in Augusta — \$4.45 million for maintenance to upgrade the Rines Hill Bridge over the old Maine Central Railroad tracks at the southern end of Water Street (set for 2022) and \$8.5 million for raising the Western Avenue bridge over I-95 (set for 2023-2024), and all that work has local ramifications.

For instance, Lesley Jones, public works director for the city of Augusta, noted that work on Rines Hill Bridge will disrupt traffic in that heavily traveled area near the city's Hartford Hill Fire Station. "We have to make sure that the fire equipment can get out," she said. "They'll do alternating traffic, and the fire department will plan alternate routes."

And Jones expects motorists to feel the effects of the later Western Avenue overpass project. "The state is talking of reopening a disused ramp from the Whitten Road," she said. "That will have an impact with detours and traffic flow."

Other projects in the work plan call for maintenance work on smaller bridges in Augusta, and the state plans more work on I-95 connections to exits north of Western Avenue.

"They're going to repave the (Route 3) roundabouts for the interstate, and they're going to reconfigure and do different striping to more fit the actual use," Jones said. "They found that they're being used a little differently than they originally thought."

The estimated \$484,000 job includes reopening a truncated section of Old Belgrade Road, now known as Charest Lane, in an area near MaineGeneral Medical Center and the recently opened Maine Veterans Home. "[Charest Lane] is going to open back up for the duration of the project so that they can detour traffic around the rotaries to help that work go faster," Jones said.

A similar amount of money will be spent on improvements to the other roundabout on Route 3, with an additional \$360,000 for streaming cameras along the interstate in Augusta, Fairfield and Waterville.



"Maine is a big state. We have 8,800 miles of roads the state is responsible for, and that takes a lot of money."

- Senator Bill Diamond

BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Along with work on and around the interstate, the state has budgeted a total of \$255,000 to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety in the city itself. One project slated for this year will be at the high visibility Memorial Circle, which connects Western Avenue and State Street and other roads, as well as bringing traffic to and from Memorial Bridge. Initially the city will contribute some \$11,000 from its capital improvement budget as well as local input about pedestrian travel patterns.

"Our pedestrian network was set up back in the day when people would walk to the mills and to the downtown for food and stuff," Jones said. "Now you've got a lot of people who receive social services and they're walking to the Walgreens, they're walking to the CVS, to the local quick marts because they don't have transportation. So pedestrian patterns have changed and we're trying to adjust to those also."

Another project slated for 2023-2024 is aimed at making motorists more aware of pedestrians. City Engineer Tyler Pease is currently working on a pedestrian safety project downtown. "We're trying to get motorists to be more aware of pedestrians and keep pedestrians safer," Jones said. "One of the things our pedestrian downtown [project] will do is build bump-outs so people can't illegally park close to the crosswalk." The city will have to provide a funding match for that as well.

Data from the MaineDOT Public Crash Query Tool indicates that the state had three pedestrian fatalities reported as of February 9 this year and 17 in 2021. Last year, 193 crashes involved major injuries to pedestrians.

Jones, a licensed professional engineer, heads a department of 40

The *Everett Libby*, part of the Maine State Ferry Service. The work plan allocates \$30.9 million in capital funding for the Maine State Ferry Service and Casco Bay Island Transit District, including funding to replace the ferry that serves Matinicus Isle.



MAINE DOT

The work plan includes \$7.5 million for construction of a cold storage facility for the port of Portland.



AMBER INFRASTRUCTURE

employees, including Central Garage, Hatch Hill Landfill and rubbish collection. She is a supporter of the “Be Seen” campaign and has reflective stripes on her black jacket. Augusta Public Works has a budget for fiscal 2022 of just over \$5 million,

Other money in the state’s work plan will provide paving and safety improvements to state and local roads in and around the capital. A \$5.2 million project set for 2023-2024 aims to reconstruct more than a mile and a half of Route 202 just east of Granite Hill Road and into Augusta.

Local roads will see culvert and paving work, some of it through MaineDOT’s Municipal Partnership Initiative, with the state and the municipalities themselves sharing the costs, the local share determined by the municipal property valuation. In Augusta’s case, the city pays half.

LOCAL CONCERNS

While state officials worry about funding for road maintenance and reconstruction, Jones does as well.

“We just did a study and our road network is worth \$90-95 million in value when it’s at 100 percent because it’s an asset to the city,” Jones said. “But with that, I think 40 percent of our roads have less than four years of useful life in them. We should probably be funding 10 percent a year, maybe \$10 million a year, and we’re getting maybe \$2 million. We’re competing with fire, police, community services, the Civic Center for [City Capital Improvement Program] money, and the state’s in the same boat.” She noted that while the state funding has been increased, the challenge will be finding contractors available to do the work.

The announcement of the state’s work plan lists “nearly \$70 million in funding for ferry infrastructure and service across Maine, including \$30.9 million in capital funding for the Maine State Ferry Service, the Casco Bay Island Transit District, and the Frye Island Ferry” as well as \$37.5 million in operating funds for the state ferry service. Some \$12.5 million of that funding is to support construction of a new Casco Bay Lines ferry and \$10 million for a new Maine State Ferry Service ferry to serve Matinicus.

Miramant talked of the importance of that particular ferry: “They’re very reliant on it and they don’t get much service,” he said. Miramant said he and the islanders – the latest census report indicates 53 people live on the island – would like more runs made possible. A state law sets the ferry service at a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 36 trips



“Everything in Matinicus goes by ferry . . . and with so little service, it needs to be reliable when it is going, and they need to have that opportunity for extra trips when they’re necessary.”

- Senator David Miramant

per year to Matinicus Isle, and says it can be provided by state-owned or private vessels. He co-sponsored a bill last year that sought to remove the upper limit, but that was unsuccessful.

Eva Murray, the island’s representative to the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board, submitted testimony supporting that bill, saying a few more trips were needed largely to accommodate delivery trucks carrying propane, heating oil and firewood. She noted that she is “the town clerk, emergency medical technician, emergency management director, baker, properly-licensed propane delivery driver, treasurer of a local nonprofit, and coordinator of and truck driver for the municipal solid waste operation. Years ago, I was the one-room schoolteacher.” The island lies 20 miles and a five-hour round-trip ferry ride from Rockland.

“Everything in Matinicus goes by ferry,” Miramant said. “They have to haul it in and they have to haul it out, and with so little service, it needs to be reliable when it is going, and they need to have that opportunity for extra trips when they’re necessary. Nobody’s going to call for one on a whim.”

While Penobscot Island Air flies to the island, Miramant said it is a supplemental service carrying passengers and some groceries. “The ferry carries everything else: heat, food, taking recyclables back, garbage that can’t be composted.”

The Maine State Ferry Service 2022 schedule shows 36 roundtrips between Matinicus and Rockland, traveling four times a month between April and October, and slowing to one or two trips a month the rest of the year.

Farther up U.S. Route 1 in Searsport Harbor, the MaineDOT

work plan has \$5.5 million for dredging to maintain the navigation channel. “That material dredged is going to be placed upland,” said Matthew Burns, director of Ports and Marine Transportation for the MaineDOT as well as interim director for the Maine Port Authority. Previously that material would be disposed of at sea. Burns said an engineering study will be performed to determine the best place for the material. An additional \$2 million is budgeted for an off-shore wind study there.

On the Portland waterfront at the West Commercial Street Intermodal Facility, the department has \$7.5 million in the work plan going toward construction of a cold storage building, Burns said, noting that the project will have visual impact. Some \$2 million more is budgeted for a “heavy haul road and track improvements,” he added. Both are listed as 2022 projects.

WISH LISTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Elsewhere in the state, \$3.6 million is budgeted for runway extension at the Eastern Slope Regional Airport in Fryeburg, \$2.58 million for runway rehabilitation at Sugarloaf Regional Airport in Carrabassett Valley, and \$1.3 million for runway reconstruction at Dewitt Field, Old Town Municipal Airport.

In Houlton almost 4.5 miles of Foxcroft Road is slated for reconstruction with a cost of \$16.3 million, and \$10.8 million is budgeted for replacement of the Old Toll Bridge over the Piscataquis River on Route 6 in Milo. Diamond also cautioned that while the MaineDOT puts out a three-year plan, “The further out you go, it becomes more of a wish list.”

Diamond is a particular fan of the state’s partnership with



“We’re trying to get motorists to be more aware of pedestrians and keep pedestrians safer.”

- Augusta Public Works Director Lesley Jones

municipalities. “DOT’s coming in with money for planning, but locals are participating with financing, as well,” he said. “In fact, in Windham, my hometown, they’re doing just that. They’re doing some changes in the structure and the layout of major routes going through the major part of town and making sure it’s much more friendly for the businesses and for people traveling through. So they’re working on these villages . . . that’s a good sign. In the past, it might not have been as easy to get the department to sit down with the locals. Also, the locals anticipated and always expected the state would pay for everything. Well, that’s not reality. So I’m seeing that partnership, and I really applaud that and I think it’s a great step forward.” ■

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

What’s in the work plan?

Continued from page 14

state. This total includes federal, state, and local funds. Additionally, more than \$16.6 million in American Rescue Plan and Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds remain programmed for use in 2022.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The plan also calls for \$38 million for active transportation including

\$11.3 million for 25 stand-alone active transportation projects in 18 different communities across Maine to improve the walkability, bikeability, livability, and social vibrancy of communities. ■

FMI: To view MaineDOT 2022-2023-2024 Work Plan, go to www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/.



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What's ahead for the MTA?

Like MaineDOT's work plan, Maine Turnpike Authority's four-year capital investment plan offers insight into the agency's construction plans for 2022 and beyond

LIKE MAINEDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) has some big plans for 2022: demolition of the old York toll plaza at Mile 7, replacement of the Litchfield maintenance facility that was destroyed by fire last December, a seven-mile pavement rehabilitation project at the highway's northern end, and ongoing work to ease congestion on the Piscataqua River Bridge, a project the agency has undertaken with MaineDOT and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

The MTA plans to spend \$22.5 million in 2022 on those construction projects and others, with additional spending on planning and design for work in the coming four years. Still, construction spending this year will, in fact, be the lightest of the four years outlined in the MTA's Draft Four-Year Capital Investment Plan, which details the agency's anticipated construction spending at nearly \$152 million over the four years ending in 2025.

This year's plan marks a slight pullback from a gung ho 2020 and 2021, when the MTA's board made the decision to continue with its strong construction schedule despite a major decline in toll revenue caused by the spread of the coronavirus and subsequent travel restrictions. The decision was a major boost to the state's construction industry and local economies at a time when it was desperately needed. The decision



The Maine Turnpike Authority's four-year capital plan includes continued work on the Portland area widening project.

MAINE TURNPIKE AUTHORITY



MTA CFO and Treasurer Doug Davidson

to keep moving forward on the MTA's capital plan also proved advantageous because it meant that contractors could complete work more safely and faster without having to deal with typical high traffic numbers.

"The MTA continued its program through the pandemic," said MTA Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer Doug Davidson. "This decision has been proven to be the right choice."

This year, the agency has pursued a more measured program, Davidson noted: "We have a smaller program in 2022 than we had in either 2020 or 2021. We have already received our bids on the largest capital items we have to bid until fall of 2022 so we are in good shape. The bids were very competitive and were very close to engineers' estimates."

For the most part, Davidson said, the MTA has benefited from good timing with

most of the bids going out before the wave of high inflation that hit the country in late 2021, particularly the price of heavy equipment which has seen double-digit price increases.

"We do still have a mainline paving project [West Gardiner-to-Augusta] that has yet to bid," said Davidson. "This is the one that might be very sensitive to the inflation being reported in the press."

MTA's construction spending is expected to pick up pace again in 2023, when the agency undertakes \$46.8 million in construction, including several high-profile and high-ticket projects, including the construction of a new Saco interchange at Mile 35, continued reconstruction of Exit 45 in South Portland and construction of a new travel lane, part of the Portland-area widening project. The agency anticipates construction spending to remain at or near that level through 2025, with \$39.4 million slated for 2024 and \$42.9 million in 2025.

Meanwhile, the MTA remains focused on the task at hand and is keeping its eye out to see the impact rising construction material and labor costs will have on the remaining projects set to go to bid this year. ■

- Kathryn Buxton

FMI: To download a copy of the MTA's Draft Four-Year Capital Investment Plan, go to bit.ly/MTA22-25.



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Institutional knowledge

AT THE END OF THE CURRENT SESSION, the Maine Legislature will lose two storied public servants: Senator Bill Diamond and Representative Roland ‘Danny’ Martin – both currently serving as chairs of the Maine Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. In addition to their legislative work, Senator Diamond was a constitutional officer, as a past Secretary of State, and Representative Martin was a member of the Cabinet, having served as Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Combined, the two leaders have 40 years of legislative experience and leadership. *Maine Trails* asked them about transportation in Maine, their long and distinguished careers in public service, their plans for retirement, and advice for future legislators.



Senator Diamond first ran for public office in 1976, and has served three terms in the Maine

House of Representatives, including one as whip, and 10 terms in Maine’s Senate. He currently serves Senate District 26, which comprises the towns of Windham, Raymond, Standish, Casco, Baldwin and Frye Island. Senator Diamond also served as Maine’s secretary of state from 1989 to 1997, and is an educator, an author and a business owner. He lives in Windham with his wife, Jane.



Representative Martin is serving his fourth consecutive term in the Maine House representing District 150, which includes

Frenchville, Grand Isle, Madawaska, St. Agatha and Van Buren, plus the unorganized territory of Square Lake. He was first elected to the House in 1975 and has served two terms in the Maine Senate, as well. He is a veteran of the Maine National Guard, and served as commissioner of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife from 2003 to 2011. He lives in Sinclair with his wife, Diane.



“This has been an intense job every day. But that’s what makes change. If you can stay on top of it and corral it, you can make a difference.”

- Senator William “Bill” Diamond

MAINE TRAILS: You have chaired other legislative committees including Criminal Justice and the Appropriations Committee of the Maine Legislature. Why did you choose Transportation as your last chairmanship?

Senator William “Bill” Diamond: Our Transportation system serves a unique need – and is critically important to our economy. Other legislative committees all serve their specific areas of expertise, but only the Transportation and Appropriations and Financial Affairs (AFA) committees impact all areas of the state with such overall significance. This last time out, I thought it would be a chance to make significant steps to improve our funding system. Little did I know we would be dealing with an ongoing pandemic and at the same time receiving this big influx of federal funding [from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act -IIJA].

MAINE TRAILS: What is your most important role as committee chair of Transportation?

Senator Diamond: The most important responsibility of chair is to institute a nonpartisan environment within the committee as much as possible. I was fortunate to have a co-chair, Rep. Danny Martin, who has extensive experience in local and state government and is highly respected by both sides of the aisle. I see that as my role to make sure everyone contributes and shows respect for each other and to diminish partisan politics as much as possible. I’ve served on the Transportation Committee for 10 or 12 years and these current members are some of the most competent I’ve ever served with.

MAINE TRAILS: What was the most satisfying piece of transportation legislation passed during your time on the committee?

Senator Diamond: I think it was having some success in helping to bring the General Fund budget into the mix. There were days when

most legislators would resist using General Fund money for transportation. In any manner, a good case was made that all of Maine depends on a reliable road system and without proper funding our transportation system fails along with our economy. Now the General Fund picks the costs and payments of the transportation bonds that are passed by the voters and that’s a really important change, but more creative General Fund involvement is definitely needed. Proper funding for our infrastructure is a state need not just a transportation need.

MAINE TRAILS: You were the lead on passing legislation to combat distracted driving in Maine – and quite persistent about it. In light of all the bike and pedestrian accidents, do you think more should be done?

Senator Diamond: In 2009 I wrote a law to define distracted driving in an effort to improve the existing statute, however we soon learned that reducing texting while driving would require a more direct effort. I then sponsored a bill to specifically prohibit texting while driving, but that didn’t prevent it because punching in numbers while driving was still legal.

So, we passed a “hands free” bill. That has shown signs of working and making a difference.

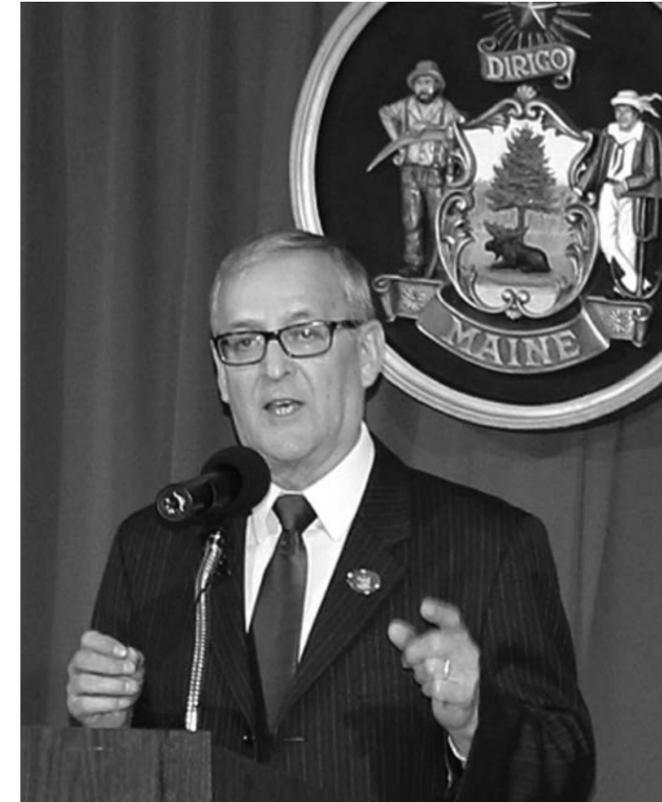
MAINE TRAILS: You have had a remarkable public service career, including eight years as secretary of state. You’ve served several terms on the Committee of Oversight for the Secretary of State, including as chair. What are the biggest changes within that office since you served as Secretary?

Senator Diamond: Technology. During the early 90s, in the Secretary of State’s Office we were just figuring out what role technology would be playing including discussing how we should incorporate the new system of e-mails! – that’s what we were talking about in the early 90s. Now, everything depends on technology and changes are continually in motion. For my colleagues on Transportation Committee, no, I wasn’t around when Edison turned on the first switch!

MAINE TRAILS: Among other areas of expertise, you are known for your long history of advocating – both inside and outside the legislature - for children who are victims of sexual abuse, even having written a book about it. Has the state made progress in terms of protecting children? What more needs to be done?

Senator Diamond: Well, I think if progress has been made, it’s not at the level it should be. Maine broke a record on child deaths in 2021. We had more than 30 children die last year, and I don’t think the system is getting better. The problem, in all candor, is we need more transparency

See ‘Senator Diamond’
Page 26



“I am quite certain that [my constituents] would be surprised by the sheer volume of legislative work that is accomplished between Maine’s departments, the legislative committees and ultimately by the legislative bodies on behalf of Maine’s citizens.”

- Representative Roland “Danny” Martin

MAINE TRAILS: You have served on and chaired other legislative committees including Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, State and Local, and Agriculture/Conservation. Why did you choose Transportation as your last chairmanship?

Representative Roland “Danny” Martin: I truly enjoyed serving on the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) and state and local government committees. My years as commissioner of IF&W as well as my terms as town manager [for Madawaska] and county administrator [for Aroostook County] enabled me to bring valuable insight from “the other side of the table” to the work on those committees. As I am now serving my last term in the Maine Legislature, I wanted to take

this last opportunity to bring what influence I could to transportation for the benefit of the constituents.

MAINE TRAILS: What is your most important role as committee chair of Transportation?

Representative Martin: As committee chair, I am in a position to “read the room” and weigh the options on discussions the committee takes regarding proposed legislation. I am able to guide committee members through the often-complicated process of creating coherent and meaningful laws and regulations. I will say that conducting business by way of Zoom has created some challenges.

MAINE TRAILS: You have had a remarkable public service career, encompassing all levels of government. You were Commissioner of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife for eight years; you’ve represented your region in both the House and Senate; and you are retired as an officer in the Maine National Guard. You have served in county and local government, even being a town manager. Which level of government has been the most challenging? The most fun? Why?

Representative Martin: Yes, I have been extremely fortunate. Every level of government in which I have served has presented unique circumstances. I don’t think I could single out any one as having been more “fun” than the others. Each position I held provided me with challenges, opportunities, and rewards. As you can imagine, because of my service in local, county and state government, I have had the opportunity to meet and collaborate with many folks.

MAINE TRAILS: Your first term in the Maine Legislature was in the 108th – more than 40 years ago when you were a kid. How has the legislature changed since then, outside of Covid? Did you see more or less working across the aisle? Was the workload heavier, lighter? What are some other changes you have seen?

Representative Martin: The Maine Legislature has changed quite dramatically since I first served as a young senator. Although maybe that is just my perspective over such an extended period of time. Certainly, term limits greatly altered the make-up of our legislative body. I find there is less emphasis these days on the importance of “institutional knowledge” which can only be gained by many years of service. That knowledge includes the skills of debate and compromise as well as the ability to move legislation through the parliamentary process effectively. I remember a time when the two parties were less divided and worked together across the aisle and it certainly is to Maine’s detriment that it is no longer the case in many situations. We don’t serve our constituents very well when communication and compromise no longer rule the process.

MAINE TRAILS: What transportation question is most asked by your constituents?

Representative Martin: It is all about our roads and highways. Seriously, though my constituents with good reason want the assurance that the roads in northern Aroostook County are getting a fair share of attention and funding for upkeep, and I am always vigilant on that subject.

MAINE TRAILS: Should Maine address how electric and hybrid vehicles pay for their usage of Maine’s highways?

See ‘Representative Martin’
Page 25



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'Representative Martin'

Continued from page 23

Representative Martin: Yes, it is important for us to have a game plan as these electric and hybrid vehicles become more prevalent on Maine's highways. How to fairly apply something akin to a gas tax for these vehicles should be debated and addressed as a proactive measure now, rather than seeming to arbitrarily impose fees down the road.

MAINE TRAILS: It is serendipitous that your last term coincides with the federal government stepping up and allocating more transportation funding to states. With that done, do you think it will make it easier or harder for Maine to fill the remaining gap in transportation funding? Are people thinking we have taken care of the funding issue?

Representative Martin: We are clearly pleased with this allocation of federal funding for Maine transportation. That is true also of money from the state's General Fund. Yes, we will be able to address a substantial amount of deferred work due to this influx of funding which is great for the state. It does not, however, cover the total funding gap and the reality is that it probably never could. The thing with roads, bridges, airports, rail, and seaports is that we are always starting from behind as conditions in these infrastructures are always, by their nature, deteriorating. It is always a matter of determining where work and funds will accomplish the greatest good.

MAINE TRAILS: What might surprise your constituents, or Maine people in general, about the Legislature or about State Government?

Representative Martin: I think that in the current divisive political climate that Mainers, like many Americans, feel that nothing is being accomplished by the people they elected. I am quite certain that they would be surprised by the sheer volume of legislative work that is accomplished between Maine's departments, the legislative committees and ultimately by the legislative bodies on behalf of Maine's citizens. This work is not done in a vacuum or by a single party, but through thoughtful analysis, discussions, and decision making.

MAINE TRAILS: What was the first vehicle that you owned/drove? Your favorite?

Representative Martin: My first new vehicle was a 1969 Road Runner. And yes, I enjoyed it and yes, it was my favorite.

MAINE TRAILS: Do you have a favorite scenic drive? Favorite bike

ride? Favorite ferry ride?

Representative Martin: "The Big Loop" - Route 161 from Caribou to Fort Kent, then Route 1 through Frenchville, Madawaska, Van Buren and back to Caribou. Some of the prettiest country you will see anywhere in the U.S.!

MAINE TRAILS: Do you prefer taking the train or bus when traveling to Boston?

Representative Martin: Taking the train from Portland to Boston is special. For many years I have traveled approximately 600 miles per week from my home in Sinclair to Augusta. So, yes, any other means is great.

MAINE TRAILS: What advice do you have for future chairs/committee members?

Representative Martin: Every legislator is assigned to a committee; therefore, this advice would be to all new members. We have all been the 'newbie' at one time and just getting your bearings around the Capitol can be daunting at first! There are some things that are self-evident: 1) It is a given that you are proud to have been elected to serve your constituents. 2) You care greatly about the State of Maine and its citizens. 3) You have deeply held beliefs that inspired you to run for office. 4) You are well-intentioned and want to have a positive impact while in office.

My advice: *Learn* at the very least the basics of parliamentary order - there are reasons for the rules adhered to in committees and on the house floor - you cannot side-step them. *Listen* more than you speak - you will learn more about how to be an effective legislator that way and your constituents will appreciate that you're hearing their voices, not yours. *Show up* - that means in Augusta, on Zoom and out and about in your district. This is a full-time job - make no mistake - and you do not get to be a legislator only when it's convenient. *Enjoy*. You have been given a unique opportunity for public service. It is an honor and a privilege to savor. The rewards will be equal to what you bring to your duties.

MAINE TRAILS: What will you miss most about serving in the Legislature? Least?

Representative Martin: Serving in the legislature has been so rewarding for me personally that it feels to some extent like I'm leaving my home base. I will miss the great relationships that I've developed with other legislators, department employees, capitol staff and our governor. I will miss the excitement of being in the capitol and "in the know" on the state's business. I will not miss the 300-mile drive from my district in northern Aroostook County to Augusta! ■

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‘Senator Diamond’

Continued from page 22

in the Office of Child and Family to ensure children are being placed in safe environments. The Child Welfare Ombudsman has reported for the past few years that OCFS is still not making good decisions on placing children in safe households.

The good news is the public is speaking out and saying ‘Enough is enough.’ Legislators are also insisting on changes resulting in a higher than usual number of bills being submitted to correct the broken system. The fact is too many children are dying and too often their deaths could have been prevented.

MAINE TRAILS: What transportation question is most asked by your constituents?

Senator Diamond: I think the question I get most is ‘When can the roads get fixed?’ We have a lot of need out there, and people feel that things aren’t getting better. The fact is the department [MaineDOT] is doing the best they can, with the funds they have, but the gas tax just isn’t producing enough funding to get the job done. That’s why Governor LePage started borrowing \$100 million annually, continued by Governor Mills, just to do the highest priority maintenance and construction projects.

People want safe roads they can drive on without large potholes and dangerous conditions. The question is often asked, “When are they going to fix our roads?”

Now, with the new federal funding many projects that have, until now, been on the wish list will reach fruition. This funding will be short lived and shouldn’t be seen as ending our future funding problems.

MAINE TRAILS: What is your personal greatest concern about Maine’s transportation system?

Senator Diamond: The lack of a solid long-term highway funding solution, The federal government is in debt over \$30 trillion currently, so their assistance is going to be limited in the future. We have to find a way to maintain and care for the 8,800 miles of roads that the state is responsible for. We started looking at that with the Blue Ribbon Com-

mission on Transportation Funding [in 2019]. That went away with Covid. The next Transportation Committee is going to have to find a way to create a new ongoing funding model that does not rely on billions of dollars from the feds because it won’t be coming. Those legislators who want to serve on the Transportation Committee next session need to be ready to think and act boldly, and then fight for a solution. This will require a blind eye to pressure politics from both political parties.

MAINE TRAILS: Do you think Maine needs to address how electric and hybrid vehicles pay for their usage of Maine’s highways?

Senator Diamond: We do. We just can’t look the other way because they’re good for the environment and help reduce our carbon output. Electric vehicles (EVs) need to pay for the roads just as all other fossil fuel vehicles. There has been this pressure in the past to avoid assessing EVs as a reward for changing to their use. But we have to create a way that is fair and accountable so that their use of our roads and highways depends on some type of EV contributions to fixing and maintaining our road system.

MAINE TRAILS: It is serendipitous that your last term coincides with the federal government stepping up and allocating more transportation funding to states. With that done, do you think it will make it easier or harder for Maine to fill the remaining gap in transportation funding? Are people thinking we have taken care of the funding issue?

Senator Diamond: Well, this federal money is a huge amount, and it comes with an upside and a downside. The upside is that there are projects that have been waiting in the wings that can now get done. The downside is that those projects are getting done and that can lull us into thinking the funding problem is over because of the easing of the funding urgency.

Ironically, this new money could have a negative result if we step back from the high priority of creating a new funding source for our highway system. We need to look the problem in the eye and decide to construct a long-term funding solution if we are going to maintain our transportation system the way it should be maintained. Borrowing \$100 million a year is not a sound solution, albeit quick and easy.

MAINE TRAILS: What do you think Mainers need to know about

transportation in state that they may not be aware of?

Senator Diamond: Mainers need to know that our Highway Fund depends primarily on the gas tax which is providing reduced funds each year resulting in fewer projects and maintenance miles to be completed. There should be an all-out effort to build awareness and educate the public on the difference between the General Fund and the Highway Fund and the primary sources of each. This will be another expectation of the incoming members of the next session’s Transportation Committee. Like no other time in my memory will the new committee be so critical to our state. I’m confident they will meet their responsibilities, but it won’t be easy.

MAINE TRAILS: What was the first vehicle that you owned/drove? Your favorite?

Senator Diamond: A 1952 Chevrolet. That was a pretty big deal. It was old at the time, but it was my first, and the first one you always remember. I was 15. Now, it’s my GMC Denali – I’ve had five of them – drives my carbon conscience friends crazy. I like the Denalis for the security and the protection for my family. I like it even more than my 2009 BMW hardtop convertible and more than my 2001 Corvette of the past.

MAINE TRAILS: Do you have a favorite scenic drive? Favorite bike ride? Favorite ferry ride?

Senator Diamond: I think the one that sticks with me in the state of Maine is driving up by Katahdin. That reminds us how little we are and how great the world is. Outside of Maine, it’s driving through Montana, Wyoming, and through Yellowstone – then stopping at Deadwood for a game of poker with Wild Bill.

My bike ride in the winter time is on an exercise bike in my home office about six days a week. I never hit any potholes and no one tries to run me over. During the other three seasons I enjoy the views from a variety of roads while jogging in Windham.

Ferry rides? The only ones I take are in Portland and Casco Bay, of course, to Little Diamond and Great Diamond islands.

MAINE TRAILS: What is the worst road in Maine?

Senator Diamond: Funny you ask that. Recently a woman driving through South Windham hit a pothole so big that it blew her tire, bent her wheel rim and only the top of her car could be seen while sitting in the pothole. . . according to the local rumor that was passed on to me, Senate Chair of the Transportation Committee. More seriously, Route 302 is a highly traveled road in southern Maine and has stretches that are in bad need of maintenance.

MAINE TRAILS: Do you prefer taking the train or bus when traveling to Boston?

Senator Diamond: I hate driving through Boston, those now paved cow paths make no sense. Any other time I take the train and sometimes the bus if I’m going to the airport. The train is a lot of fun. I’ve taken my grandson, Luke, on the Downeaster. It’s a great deal, and he liked that a lot.

MAINE TRAILS: What advice do you have for future chairs/committee members?

Senator Diamond: Get involved in the selection of the new committee members – don’t leave it solely to the discretion of the presiding officers. They ultimately have the final decision, however the chairs can be a huge influence. Fortunately, there are current members who are highly skilled and hopefully will be returning, but new members should be those who are ready to be unabashed leaders fighting for change. To do that the committee must remain as nonpartisan as possible – a key responsibility of the chairs.

MAINE TRAILS: What will you miss most about serving in the legislature? Least?

Senator Diamond: What I’ll miss the most is fighting to make a difference on the issues. Reforming our child protection policies by bringing transparency to DHHS. If we give up, the bureaucracy wins and that applies to all bureaucracies. I’ve caused consternation for some and I’m sure some agencies will be glad when I leave. I will miss pushing hard for the issues I believe in, but I’m not going out with a whimper, I’ll guarantee that, and I probably won’t be getting a “wish you were here” card from DHHS.

I’ll also miss working with the people at MaineDOT – they have been professional, dedicated and never stop looking for solutions as they respect all views.

MAINE TRAILS: Is there something you look forward to doing more of once you retire from the legislature?

Senator Diamond: I own a business with a couple hundred employees so I can focus on that a little more. I’ll also be heading out west probably to some dude ranch in Arizona and do some riding. That always ends up with stories. . . some that can even be told.

Also living with a little less intensity. This has been an intense job every day. But that’s what makes change. If you’re willing fight the fight you can make a difference. I’m looking forward to having some breaks from that intensity . . . for a while. ■



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Air travel rebounds in 2021

Bangor, Portland passenger figures show strong trend despite late viral surge

SCHEDULED AIRLINE passenger enplanements in the United States increased 83 percent in 2021 over 2020, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Maine's two busiest airports also saw a marked gain over 2020 when tourist and business flights came to a halt after the coronavirus was first detected in the United States. Both Bangor International Airport and Portland International Jetport reported significant gains over 2020, as well as progress returning to pre-pandemic passenger counts.

Bangor International Airport's enplanements grew to 585,030 for the 12 months ending December 31, 2021, a gain of 342,944 or 42 percent over the same period in 2020. Bangor International's, which goes by the call letters BGR, gains came strongest during the last seven months of 2020, thanks to the broad availability of vaccines and the relaxation of travel restrictions, according to Airport Director Tony Caruso.

"June through December of 2021 were record months for BGR," said Caruso. "The low passenger counts we saw prior to the vaccine being readily available, combined with travel restrictions still being in place in many areas early in the year, kept us from reaching a record annual number of passengers, but we finished the calendar year strong."

In Portland, the Jetport's passenger counts showed the challenges of the pandemic, with big gains over the summer and a drop in



"We had a great summer and were at or near 2019 levels from July through October 2021."

- PWM Director Paul Bradbury

activity late in the year when the Omicron variant spread quickly across the country.

Memorial Day 2021 "seems like forever ago, but we were off to the races," said Portland International Jetport Director Paul Bradbury. "We had a vaccine and there was pent-up



"June through December of 2021 were record months for BGR."

- BGR Director Tony Caruso

leisure demand. . . We had a great summer and were at or near 2019 levels from July through October 2021. The Omicron variant and the end of our tourist season caused this to change in November when we saw volumes drop 16.6 percent below 2019 levels."

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PURUS

Bradbury noted that the passenger counts continued to be affected during January 2022, which is an historically slow time of year. He said that travel was down by almost 36 percent in January but was optimistic for the remainder of the year.

"Omicron was huge," said Bradbury, adding that he sees the variant's impact as subsiding as families geared up for school vacation week. He also noted that airlines are adding significant capacity as they head into the summer vacation season.

Said Bradbury: "Our summer 2022 season is looking robust with nonstop service to 22 destinations and outbound seat capacity up 16,112 seats or 5.9 percent in July and 5,900 seats or 2.1 percent in August over the same month's pre-pandemic in 2019."

Nationally, domestic air travel trends reflected those in Maine, with 2021 gains over 2020 in all but January and February. Passenger enplanements decreased by 60 percent at airports throughout the United States in 2019 and, in 2020, remained 27

percent lower than 2019.

Bangor International's Caruso concurs that the outlook is bright for the summer travel season as travelers fulfill a pent-up need for vacations and family visits that had been curtailed during the height of the pandemic.

"That [growth] trend has continued into 2022, and we're gearing up for another busy summer season as long as there are no major shifts in the pandemic," said Caruso.

"It's great to see the airport busy again," said Caruso. ■

UMaine Engineering honors MaineDOT's Taylor

THE CHIEF engineer of the Maine Department of Transportation is among the recipients of the University of Maine College of Engineering's top annual awards to alumni, faculty, staff and students.

Joyce Taylor, chief engineer for MaineDOT and a 1986 graduate, received the Edward T. Bryand Distinguished Engineering Award.

This year's Bryand Awards Ceremony was a hybrid event held on January 20 that included a small group of award recipients, and their friends and family, all gathered in the Wells Conference Center on campus, and dozens of people attending virtually.

MaineDOT Chief Engineer Joyce Taylor graduated from UMaine in 1986 with a degree in chemical engineering and began her career at the Maine Department of Environmental Protection as an environmental engineer.

Taylor then moved to the Maine Department of Transportation. There, she rose through the ranks and became the chief engineer in 2013.

Since then, she has worked on many high-profile projects, including the recently completed Sarah Mildred Long Bridge that spans the Piscataqua River.

Taylor was the first president of Maine's Women Transportation Seminar Chapter (WTS), an organization



Joyce Taylor

dedicated to advancing women in the profession of transportation. She continues to dedicate her time and resources to WTS, and works to mentor women and other young engineers at MaineDOT.

The annual awards event was established in 1979 by UMaine Engineering Dean Jim Clapp. The first College Recognition Banquet was held in 1980. Criteria were established for two awards: the Ashley S. Campbell Award and the Edward T. Bryand Distinguished Engineering Award. Other awards for individuals and students have been added throughout the years, including the Leila C. Lowell Award for staff members that began in 1983.

Others honored at the 42nd Annual Edward Bryand Awards Ceremony were: William Desisto, professor of chemical engineering who received the Ashley S. Campbell Award; Lauren Ross, assistant professor of hydraulics and water resources engineering

and Meredith Kirkmann, assistant professor of construction engineering technology, also both received Early Career Teaching Awards; Kimberly Goff, large center development associate and vice president for the research office, who received the Leila C. Lowell Award; Saman Zare, mechanical engineering, was recognized with the Graduate Assistant Research Award; Brandon Dixon, chemical and biomedical engineering, received the Graduate Assistant Teaching Award. ■

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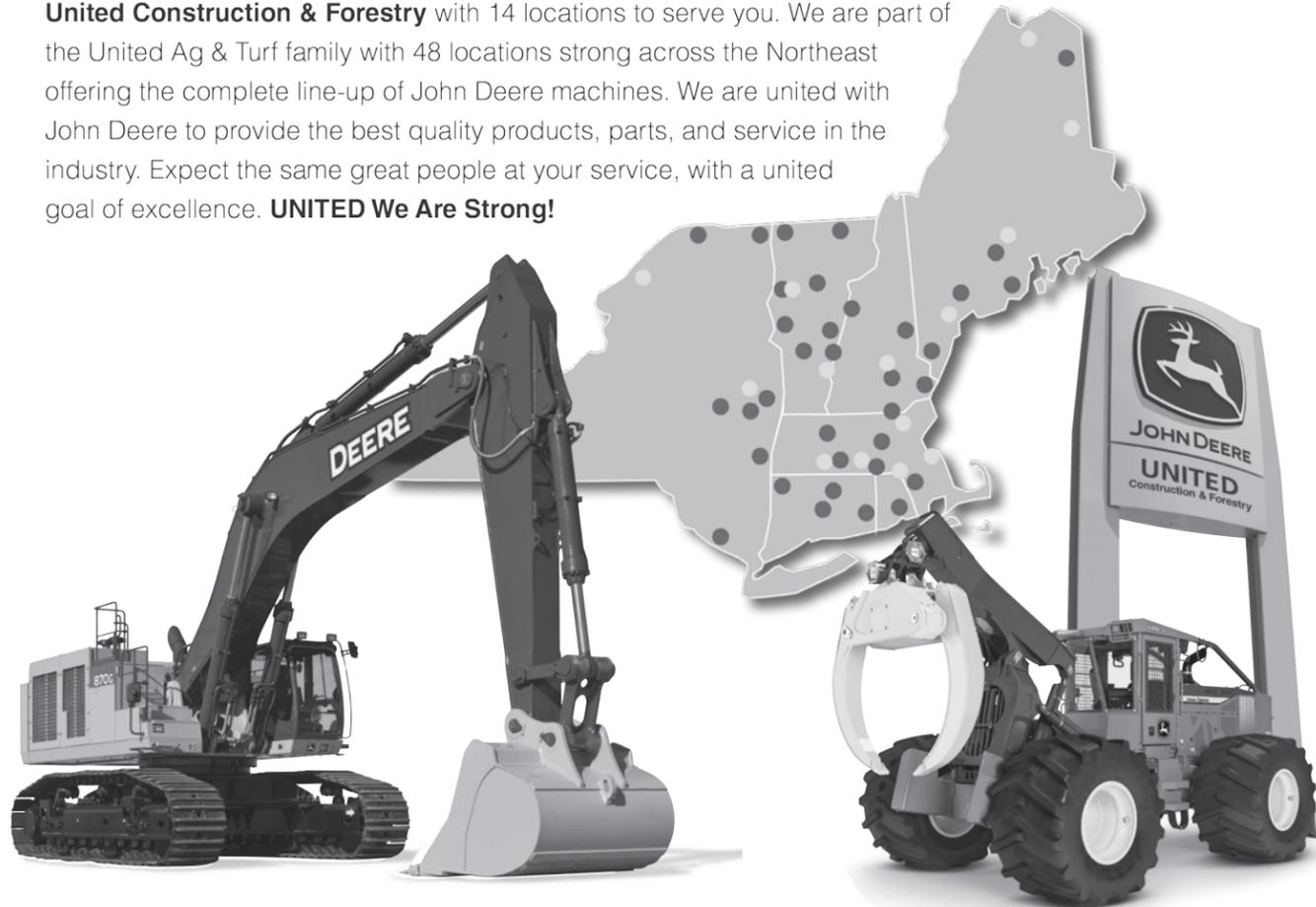
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Looking back, forward looking

McFarland Johnson celebrated its 75th year in business in 2021 by looking to the future of transportation planning and design

FOR THE staff at McFarland Johnson (MJ), 2021 was a year of reflection. The company celebrated its 75th anniversary in business, and it was a chance to look back at the path that has brought them to the present.

That path began on William H. McFarland's drafting table in his Binghamton, New York, home in 1946. That was when McFarland decided to test the waters of self-employment while he was still working as an engineer for Broome County, New York, by taking on projects that he completed in his spare hours. Pretty soon, he had moved his drafting table to an office over a hardware store in town and hired three engineers to work with him.

By 1949, he had resigned from his position with the county and was busy overseeing a growing staff and a client list that included rail, airport, highway, and bridge projects. In 1959, McFarland took on a partner, John W. Johnson, the former Superintendent of the Department of Public Works for the State of New York (now known as the Department of Transportation), and the name McFarland Johnson first appeared on the door.

PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP

The company has changed and grown since those first days. The firm was purchased by the British contracting firm Balfour Beatty, Inc. for a brief period during the 1980s. Balfour Beatty was one of the first firms to introduce design-build in the United States. In 1987, McFarland Johnson suffered a blow when three members of its executive team died unexpectedly. Founder William McFarland stepped back into the firm to steer it through the difficult time. As the company website noted, McFarland had long since been retired and had no financial interest in the company, "but his name was still on the door."

Today, McFarland Johnson is a 100 percent employee-owned consulting firm with 18 offices in 11 states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, South Carolina, Florida, and Nevada), and that pride of ownership is very much evident among the midsize firm's employees.

Vice President and Director of Transportation Services Tom Kendrick, who joined the firm in 2007, said founder McFarland's entrepreneurial spirit is very much alive in the company he helped build. That spirit has fueled the company's growth including the firm's expansion



Construction wrapped up in 2021 on the new swing bridge over the Back River in Boothbay. McFarland Johnson designed the new automated bridge that replaced a manually operated swing bridge dating back to the 1930s.

McFARLAND JOHNSON

into Maine in 2015.

Kendrick, who earned his civil engineering degree at UMaine, was working for the company in its Concord, New Hampshire office when he put together a proposal to open an office in Maine. He said the firm had completed several transportation projects in the state and saw the potential to do more business here. After approval of the business plan by the leadership team, he selected an office space on Depot Street in Freeport for the company's new Maine office. The space was within easy driving distance to the firm's Maine clients and had good amenities, including a vibrant downtown and free covered parking for all employees – something that was harder to come by in Portland. As the firm has added staff at its Maine office, it has expanded and renovated its offices at that same location.



Tom Kendrick



Theresa McAuliffe



Brian Smith

State University where she discovered she had a “passion for bridges.” She worked on several bridge projects in the Pacific Northwest, later joining a national engineering firm in Portland when her family moved east, before joining McFarland Johnson in 2016.

“What I like about MJ is that we work with clients on their challenging projects, both small and large, but we still have a small firm feel without the layers of internal management to get through. There's more of a direct line to upper management, you can pick up the phone or jump on a video chat and get an immediate answer.”

The engineers and planners in the Maine office have worked on an impressive roster of bridge projects during recent years. The firm designed the replacement for the Hamlin Bridge in Farmington that carries Route 133 over Wilson Stream with a single span crossing to alleviate scour from the stream's currents. A challenge for the design team was detailing it in such a way to make it possible for the contractor to construct it within a 100-day closure. The bridge closed to traffic in July 2021, and the new bridge, constructed by T Buck Construction,

reopened to traffic last fall.

'A BRIDGE TO RELY ON'

Construction also recently wrapped up on the new Barbers Island swing span bridge spanning the Back River in Boothbay. The new bridge replaces a manually operated swing span pony truss bridge built in 1931. Early in the process there was some public interest in restoring the old bridge, but eventually support grew for a more modern and fully automated bridge.

McFarland Johnson was selected by the MaineDOT to begin preliminary design work on the bridge in 2015, and Kendrick called the project “challenging and very rewarding.”

“Seasonal residents particularly loved seeing the bridge tender come out and operate the hand crank to open the passage for boats,” said Kendrick. “We had a lot of healthy discussions with the community and the one thing the residents wanted was reliability – having a bridge they could rely on since the bridge provides the only land-based access to the island.”

“The new bridge embraces the future while respecting the past,” said Kendrick. It uses a steel pony truss design reminiscent of the old bridge, and while the new bridge is now automated, “there is the potential to open the bridge manually if needed in an emergency or for a ceremonial occasion,” said Kendrick.

Once construction got underway, there were more challenges as the pandemic brought material delays, but the new bridge constructed by Reed & Reed was completed and christened by a large local crowd in August 2021.

UP TO THE CHALLENGE

The Freeport office has several other bridge projects in the works, and each one comes with its challenges. The firm is in the final design phase for Exit 185 in Bangor to replace the interstate bridge over Broadway. Like the spans they are replacing, Broadway is a high traffic location and will carry a whole host of utilities - phone, natural gas, fiber optics, sewer, and water.



McFarland Johnson is designing the Everett Turnpike widening project (Nashua to Bedford) in New Hampshire.

The firm is also designing the north and southbound interstate bridges over Webb Road in Waterville. The challenge there is designing the project without deploying a temporary bridge. That will save more than one million dollars by eliminating the need for temporary infrastructure – including the “enormous amount of fill” that would need to be trucked to the site on local roads, according to McAuliffe. Both the Bangor and Waterville projects are part of a \$38 million INFRA (Infrastructure for Rebuilding America) grant for seven area bridges awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2020.

The firm is also providing engineering services for another INFRA grant project – bridge deck replacements on several interstate

bridges in central and northern Maine. Beyond Maine, the firm is completing the design of the F.E. Everett Turnpike widening project in New Hampshire, which will complete more than eight miles of “gap sections” resulting in three travel lanes in each direction along the turnpike from Nashua to Bedford. McFarland Johnson is providing highway design, bridge design, and environmental services on all the above noted projects.

FLIGHT PATH

McFarland Johnson has developed a specialty in aviation planning and engineering, and currently has projects underway at airports throughout New England. Brian Smith, who heads the firm's New England aviation team from the company's Concord, New Hampshire office admits he was surprised when he collected data last year and discovered that his team had ongoing work at 83 percent of the commercial airports in New England and 43 percent of the publicly owned airports in the region.

“Last year I was putting together stats for a project and it amazed me,” said Smith, who joined the firm in 2012. The firm is currently working with the Eastern Slope Regional Airport in Fryeburg, Bangor International Airport, and municipal airports in Augusta, Belfast,

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and Waterville. In New Hampshire, Smith's team just completed the \$19.5 million terminal expansion at Portsmouth International Airport at the former Pease Air Force Base. That includes design of an expansion to the passenger terminal, which Smith said speeds the passenger security clearance process and provides a larger and much "more welcoming" holding area.

McFarland Johnson also offers InfraSolutions to its clients, a separate division of the company that provides cutting edge technology solutions and applications to solve complex infrastructure challenges, including its proprietary dynamic analysis tool originally developed to help airports analyze costs-and-benefits quickly and efficiently.

InfraSolutions, said Smith, answers questions airports and other clients frequently have, including "how do we manage and respond to constant change in a cost-effective and timely manner?"

"If an airport is considering adding, say, five flights, we can plug that into the software and see the impacts that will have, both financially and on facility demand and needs," said Smith. "It tells us how much additional fuel they will be able to sell, how many more parking spaces they will need, and more. It's all about quickly understanding the impacts of change."

COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY

The company culture also promotes employee involvement in the communities where they live and work. To that end, the Maine office in recent years has raised money for Portland's Preble Street Resource Center, a service agency that supports the region's population that struggles with hunger, homelessness, and mental health issues.

The firm has been a regular supporter of MBTA and industry events, including the Maine Transportation Conference. Individually, McAuliffe, Smith, and Kendrick have been active in the professional community, as well. McAuliffe volunteers with and has served as president of the WTS Maine Chapter, an organization that promotes the advancement of women in transportation-related careers.

Smith is a mentor and volunteer with FIRST, a global robotics community that prepares young people for careers in science and technology. Kendrick has volunteered with the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) in their Maine and New Hampshire



Theresa McAuliffe and Dave Kull perform a fracture critical inspection of the Max L. Wilder bridge between Woolwich and Arrowsic.

chapters.

Smith said he wholeheartedly believes that McFarland Johnson's success in the transportation industry is completely related to the company's culture as an employee-owned firm that supports its employees' growth and the communities where it does business.

"It's the culture of the company," said Smith. "Our staff turnover is one of the lowest in the industry. There's a strong focus on work-life balance that comes from being 100-percent employee owned. Some may say, 'yah yah, whatever,' but at the end of the day, it makes a difference. You can see it every day that, if the company does well, you do well, too." ■

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MCFARLAND JOHNSON

Northeast, Glidden honored at MAPA awards

THE MAINE Asphalt Pavement Association (MAPA) held its 9th Annual Membership meeting on November 30, 2021. MAPA recognized their 2021 Pave Maine Awards winners. Brian Raymond, president of MAPA, presented the awards.

Winners were chosen from entries in four categories based on tonnage; 0-500, 500-2,500, 2,500-10,000 and 10,000+. Each project was judged on the following characteristics: construction techniques or materials; execution of a difficult or challenging job; partnership with client; and positive impacts to the community and safety. The MAPA board selected three independent judges, with more than 100 years of combined experience in the industry, to review all applications and select this year's winners. This year there were 11 applicants spread out over all four categories.

The award for excellence in the 0-to-500-ton category was given to Northeast Paving for its work on the Howland Veteran's Memorial parking lot. The project included re-grading the existing gravel parking lot, and utilizing recycled asphalt pavement to smooth it. One lift of 12.5mm HMA was placed using approximately 250 tons. The gravel lot that was there before made it difficult for visitors to safely move around the parking lot due to the potholes and loose gravel. Now that it is paved, visitors are able to safely view the Memorial and take in the views of the Penobscot River. Northeast Paving was able to coordinate with David Lloyd, Howland town manager, to set aside two days to grade and pave the parking lot, with minimal impact on visitors. The improvements not only enhance the beauty of this park along the Penobscot



Top: MAPA President Brian Raymond and Earl Allan of Glidden Paving (I-295 project). Bottom: Raymond with Chip Sheldon of Northeast Paving (Route 1 project).

River but also enhance mobility for the veterans who are visiting this area and paying respect to all those who have served.

The honor in the 500-to-2,500-ton category was awarded to Glidden Excavating & Paving for its work on I-295 in Portland and South Portland. During the course of this project, Glidden Excavating & Paving, Inc. completed paving at 24 bridge joints, which included both the travel and passing lanes as well as the adjacent on and off ramps. This paving work required 20 separate mobilizations and the movement of paving equipment on and off the highway daily and nightly due to closure

restraints. The biggest challenge was meeting the schedule. This project started in April 2020, ended in December 2020, and was high-paced from the onset. The new approach paving not only made it safer for drivers, it helped to shorten the project duration during the summer paving season.

Northeast Paving also took honors in the 2,500-to-10,000-ton and 10,000+-ton categories. The award for the 2,500-to-10,000-ton category was for the company's work in Acadia National Park. The project included removing pavement surface at the entrance of Acadia in Hulls Cove to the Park Loop Road, including the information center and Cadillac Mountain entrance off Rte. 233; completing pavement removal of Duck Brook Bridge and repair of its deck and walkways, placing new membrane and base pavement; and rehabilitation of the Frenchman's Bay Overlook by removing existing walkways, removal and replacement of the concrete curb and replacement of existing sidewalks with concrete. The project also included replacing concrete curb islands at the West Street Extension

entrance and at the beginning of the Park Loop Road and other incidental items. Challenges impacting this project were dealing with traffic and safety in a high-traffic tourist area.

For the 10,000+ category, Northeast Paving won for its work on Route 1 from Presque Isle to Caribou. This project required an aggressive work schedule spanning two construction seasons. The company rehabilitated the 10-mile corridor connecting the cities of Presque Isle and Caribou in northern Maine. An especially challenging aspect of the project was the removal of 12 inches of underlying gravel/asphalt material (placed in the 1950s)

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Left: Northeast Paving's Matt Carey and Adam Laird (Veteran's Memorial Bridge project) Right: Raymond and Joe Rollins of Northeast Paving (Acadia National Park project).

within the mainline only, while leaving the shoulders intact for a six-mile portion of the project. This underlying material was causing severe wheel-rutting and the deterioration of the existing pavement and needed to

be rehabilitated for safety concerns and preservation. Route 1 remained open to two-way traffic throughout most of the project.

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Global Partner's Breen honored

THE CITY of South Portland's Economic Development Committee (EDC) recognized Global Partners' Orion Breen as the city's 2021 Business Leader of the Year at a virtual ceremony on February 10. Global Partners stores asphalt and liquid fuels in bulk storage tanks in South Portland.

In the announcement, EDC Chairperson Donna Larson Kane recognized Breen's tireless efforts on behalf of the city's businesses and community organizations.

"Orion is Global's public affairs liaison," the statement said. He "is a connector and collaborator. His efforts to collaborate are wide and varied and include work with the South Portland/Cape Elizabeth Community Chamber of Commerce, the Maine Better Transportation Association, the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of Southern Maine and the Maine Real Estate and Development Association (MEREDA). These offer only a glimpse into all of Orion's community activities."

Breen grew up in central Maine, graduating from Nokomis

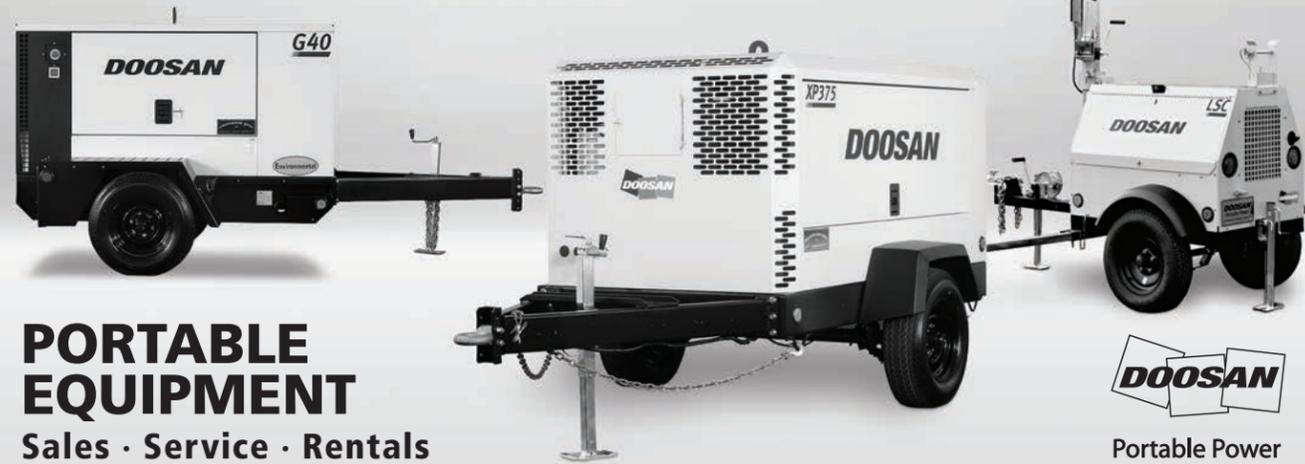


Orion Breen at South Portland EDC's awards ceremony.

Regional High in Newport, Maine, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Breen has a background working with nonprofits and prior to Global Partners he did public relations for Maine's premier workers' comp insurer, MEMIC. As South Portland officials noted in the awards presentation, Breen is an avid community volunteer offering his time and expertise to a number of organizations. He is chair of Maine Better Transportation Association's Communications Committee and created and launched MaineBetter – a podcast he co-hosts with Patrick Brady of Bernstein Shur, interviewing transportation leaders and candidates on a variety of transportation issues. He is also active with the Maine Volunteer Foundation, United Way of Greater Portland, Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce, South Portland Food

Cupboard, and more.

Congratulations from your friends at MBTA, Orion, on this well-deserved honor! ■



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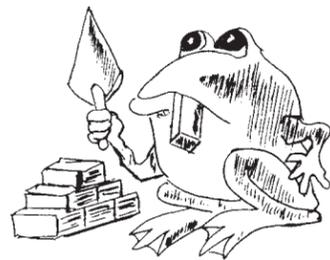
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‘One of a kind’

Thomas P. Shaw, age 55

THOMAS P. Shaw of Standish, co-founder of Gorham Sand & Gravel in Buxton, died on January 13, 2022. He was born on November 13, 1966 to Sally Davis Shaw and Dewayn Shaw and grew up working on the family’s dairy farm in Gorham. He graduated from Gorham High School in 1985 and went to work for his brothers Jon and Dan Shaw who had founded Shaw Brothers Construction.

Tommy started his own business in 1986 with one dump truck and a used excavator. His brother Jim left Shaw Brothers to join him and the two incorporated Gorham Sand & Gravel in January 1987. The business relocated to Buxton in 2000. Today the company employs 90 during the construction season.

Jim Shaw told the *American Journal* newspaper that his brother “was one of a kind” who showed signs of entrepreneurship early on. Jim recalled that when they were kids, he and Tommy would buy chickens, pigs, ponies or cattle at a livestock auction and then “we’d ride them home or herd them home.”

He was known as an astute businessman who did not let family feelings get in the way of getting a job. “[Tommy and Jimmy] wanted every job and so did we. We used to say we’re brothers after 5 p.m.,” said his brother Jon Shaw of Shaw Brothers Construction.

Mark Curtis, operations manager for Gorham Sand & Gravel, said: “Sure, he and Jim started and built one of Maine’s most successful construction companies beginning when he was just out of high school, but that is not why he is an icon. If you ever spent time with him, you



Tommy Shaw (top) was known as a sharp businessman.



Shaw during the early days of Gorham Sand & Gravel, the company he founded in 1986.

knew he was different. Even as a young man he seemed older and wiser. Maybe it was the way he grew up, maybe he was just an old soul. He never had time for nonsense. There was always something to achieve. He always had a way to push others to do more, do better.”

Tommy was not known for leaving things to chance and often would surprise people with the amount of preparation he put into every aspect of the business.

Said Curtis: “He was one of the smartest people I have ever known. There are plenty of engineers, architects, inspectors, and co-workers that have learned very hard lessons from a farm kid that barely

graduated high school. Underestimating him was always a mistake. No one was ever more prepared for a contract dispute or change order meeting than Tommy. His ability to be prepared for every possible scenario in any given situation was uncanny.”

“He had a huge sense of responsibility,” remembered Curtis. “That was the driving factor in his life – responsibility to his family, to his brother and partner Jimmy, to his co-workers. In 30 years of knowing him I never ever saw him disappoint someone by not doing what he said he would do. If he made a promise, it got done.”

Tommy was also known as a family man and dedicated father to his four children and two stepchildren.

“Tommy was a strict but fair, loving, fun dad,” said his sister Lisa Allen. “He loved spending time with his kids and got so excited when they were coming to the lake or to Florida for visits. He was so proud of each of them. I have to say they are all amazing young adults.”

He loved his siblings, too, was always ready to help and rarely missed a family gathering, said Lisa. She recounted having a good laugh with Tommy on a phone call just this past Christmas.

"I was maybe in my mid 20s, recently divorced and living in an apartment in Gorham. I came home from work one day and my cat was dead and lying on the floor in front of my couch. . . I freaked out and called my mother who said 'I'll send Tommy down.' A few minutes later, I opened my door to find Tommy, my 16-year-old baby brother, standing there with a shovel in one hand and a paper bag in the other. Tommy came prepared!"

He loved to snowmobile and relax at Sebago Lake. He and his wife Sue attended services at West Gorham Union Church and one in Marco Island, Florida, where they had a winter home.

Tommy was also generous, often stepping in to help out those in need anonymously, like the time

he sent a crew to pave a driveway for an ailing veteran in Standish.

"He was generous, and when he helped someone, he didn't want it known," said Jon Shaw. Mia Dodge, chairperson of the Buxton Toy Box, which donates toys and other items to children in need, told the *American*



Tommy Shaw (center back) with his siblings at Sebago Lake. He was one of nine children born to Sally and Dewayn Shaw of Gorham.



With his family in Marco Island, Florida. Front row: wife Sue and daughters Caitlin, Cori, and Dayna. Back row: Eric (Caitlin's partner), Tommy, and Jesse (Cori's partner).

Journal that Gorham Sand & Gravel was a "huge supporter" for many years.

Tommy was predeceased by his parents, Sally Davis Shaw and Dewayn Shaw; and his siblings, Sara and Timmy. He is survived by his wife Sue; his children, Darin, Cori, Caitlin and Dayna; his stepsons, Mike and Scott McKinley; and his siblings, Jon Shaw, Lisa Allen, Dan Shaw, Kitty Faulkner, Susan Duchaine and Jim Shaw. He is also survived by 19 nieces and nephews.

His brother's death leaves a "big hole," Jon Shaw told the newspaper, but Gorham Sand & Gravel will "keep right on going on," Jimmy Shaw said.

For her part, his sister Lisa will miss his sense of humor and his storytelling.

"Tommy was an amazing story teller," said Allen. "He could tell the same story 100 times, and it never got old. I laughed just as hard at some of his funny stories after hearing them 10 times as I did the first time. I will miss his stories."

An outdoor celebration of Shaw's life will be held in the spring. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked friends to "please consider shopping at your local farm stands and supporting small businesses, as Tommy always did." ■

'Always learning things'

Greg Savona, 1972-2022

GREG ROBERT SAVONA, 49, of Freeport, died on Wednesday January 19, 2022. He was born in Augusta on March 4, 1972, the son of Jack and Anne (Ashenfelter) Savona.

Greg graduated from Kennebunk High School, class of 1990 and University of Maine, class of 1994, with a bachelor of science degree in engineering.

Greg was proud of being part of the construction industry. When he was working on his civil engineering degree at UMaine, his aunt, Deb Hart, introduced him to David Boston, president of Tilcon. Dave and Carol Boston were personal friends of Deb's. Greg ended up working at Tilcon that summer, and took a permanent job there after graduation, staying after the company was acquired by Pike Industries.

MBTA Board member Jason Griffiths crossed paths with Greg when they were both at Pike, though Greg was in the southern division while Jason was part of the northern division. When Pike got the contract to re-do I-295 between Brunswick and Gardiner, southern crews were sent up to the project, where they worked together. Jason got to know him better after Greg left for Pratt & Sons, since the two firms collaborated on many projects.

"Greg was a really hard worker, very dedicated and was always learning things. He was a good communicator, understood relationships and was respectful with others. At Pike, he was on projects, but in his next job was more of a controller. Greg had a core understanding of the industry, and could relate to different aspects of construction because of the many different capacities he had worked in."

He added that family was especially important to Greg and he and his wife Erika liked to take their two boys on adventures, including trips



Greg Savona (above) loved spending time fishing on Casco Bay and skiing at Sugarloaf with family and friends.



to Florida and the Caribbean.

Greg's older sister, Andrea Brown, agreed that he loved construction. "He was someone who wanted to know all aspects of construction. After learning project management, he wanted to learn about the backside of the industry, which he did at Pratt & Sons."

Andrea recalled he was the same way growing up, building things, and wanting to know how things worked. A friend reminisced that Greg showed him when they were in school how to make a potato cannon out of PVC pipe and hairspray, saying it was "hysterical watching him launch Aroostook County's finest spuds into Mill Cove."

Greg loved being out on the water, fishing, or taking family and friends out on Casco Bay, according to his sister. He also loved to ski. "Our aunt and uncle taught us to ski at Sugarloaf when we were kids, and they also helped

us build a small and very rustic camp there." Andrea said the camp was built before the age of internet and computer games and provided cherished family memories. Greg and Erika recently bought a condo at Sugarloaf, where Greg taught both of his sons how to ski. His boys also share his love of being on the water. Jason Griffiths recalled that Greg had taken a boating class so that he could be ready, should there ever be any problem on the water. "He definitely always wanted to be well-prepared."

Greg had previously served on the Maine Better Transportation Association's Membership and Legislative committees. He also served on the Town of Freeport Planning Board, and on the board of directors of AGC Maine.

"The passing of Greg Savona profoundly saddens us," said Matt Marks, CEO of AGC Maine. "He was instrumental in helping our team design our leadership training program and served most recently as

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our Site Work Committee Chair and member of the Board of Directors. During my 14 years with AGC Maine, I don't recall when he wasn't involved. I enjoyed many conversations with Greg about the antics in Washington, D.C., or stopping on my travels to have coffee with him at Bow Street Market and phone calls as we both crisscrossed the state on the road. AGC Maine will fondly remember Greg."

Greg was a dedicated father and loving husband. He cherished time with his family, extended family, and network of friends. He loved playing with his kids and supported them in sports as well as their education. He was a coach for little league. "What I will most remember about Greg is how much he loved his family; he and Erika were so proud of their sons," noted Andrea. "Greg was the best dad, and he

adored Ryan and Ethan."

He was also long known for his smile and his witty sense of humor. He enjoyed having a house full of friends and family and was the ultimate host. He will be missed immensely by family and friends.

Greg was predeceased by his mother, Anne. He is survived by his wife, Erika; children Ryan and Ethan; his father, Jack Savona; and sister, Andrea Brown. He also is survived by loving in-laws; aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews; and a host of long-time friends. There will be a celebration of Greg's life held this spring.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Center for Grieving Children, 555 Forest Avenue, Portland, Maine 04104 or at www.cgmaine.org.

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Darlings, Machias Savings skate on at Eddington rink

THE TOWN of Eddington christened its new ice skating rink at a grand opening event on January 22. Even so, the ice had already been well used for at least a month before that as local residents had been gliding, spinning and playing hockey thanks to a group of donors including "lifetime sponsors" Darling's Chevrolet and Machias Savings Bank. The rink, located at 906 Main Road in Eddington, sits next door to the town office and fire department and is open 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weather permitting. Saturdays are dedicated open skate days, and other days have dedicated times for local hockey practice and games.

"This was definitely a community project and everyone's super excited about it," Craig Russell, Eddington's deputy fire chief, told the *Bangor Daily News*. In addition to support from city crews, local residents and



Scooby helped celebrate the opening of Eddington's new ice rink.

businesses have come together to help maintain the ice, shoveling snow and operating the donated Zamboni when needed.

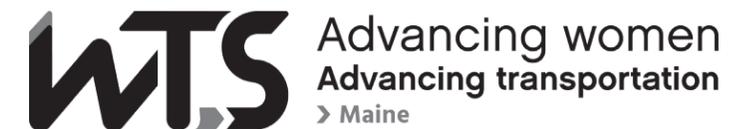
Russell told the newspaper the town previously had an ice rink in the early 2000s, but maintenance challenges and construction of a new addition to the town office building forced its closure. The town expects the new rink will be open every winter for the foreseeable future. Local residents and businesses donated equipment including picnic tables and the Zamboni, and also volunteered labor to make the necessary groundwork repairs to transform the rink from a hole in the ground to a working skating arena. Volunteers maintain the rink. ■

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Baker Design joins GEI Consultants

BAKER DESIGN Consultants (BDC), a Freeport, Maine based civil, marine, and structural engineering consulting firm, has joined GEI, a consulting engineering firm with more than 900 staff and 43 offices in North America.

Under the direction of Barney Baker, BDC has served public and private sector clients since 1996 on waterfront projects that include pier facilities, boat launches, marinas, seawalls, beach nourishment, slope stabilization, living shorelines, and coastal resilience studies. The addition of BDC further strengthens GEI's New England coastal and waterfront engineering

practice. Baker Design Consultant staff will be based out of the GEI Portland office.

"Barney Baker founded Baker Design Consulting in 1996 and has delivered exceptional value to waterfront and coastal clients in Maine for many years," says Ron Palmieri, GEI's president and CEO. "As a waterfront engineer, and an avid boater and sailor, Barney has a deep appreciation for the commercial, environmental, and recreational importance of the Maine coastline. Barney's commitment to his clients, and the broader waterfront and coastal community of Maine, aligns with GEI's and we are excited that he and his team are now part of Team

GEI."

"Joining GEI is a terrific opportunity for both our clients and our employees," says Barney Baker. "Together, our combined teams provide the range of site assessment, planning, and engineering expertise that is necessary to address an increasingly challenging coastal environment that must consider climate change and sea level rise."

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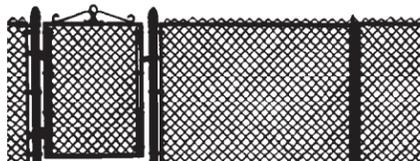
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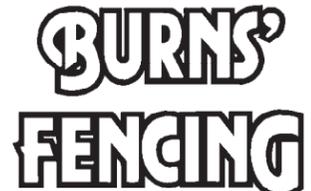
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Every January, we release the latest edition of our three-year work plan. Our 2022 edition includes all capital projects and programs, maintenance and operations activities, planning initiatives, and administrative functions for calendar years 2022, 2023, and 2024. It contains 2,316 individual work items with a total value of \$3.17 billion. While every one of these work items is important, the big policy themes in this year's plan are related to federal funding, state funding, and expanding partnerships. We are cautiously optimistic that these developments will help put us on a steadier footing – allowing MaineDOT to move beyond "MacGyver" mode and shift our focus from reactive patching to proactive planning.

First, the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) became law in November. Once the federal funding from the BIL begins to flow, it will provide an increase in reliable formula funding that will help address construction cost inflation fueled by tight labor and material markets. Further, the BIL provides a dramatic increase in competitive discretionary grant programs. These discretionary funds are not guaranteed and will be subject to federal eligibility and policy guidance that will not be clear for months. However, they may provide the opportunity to make meaningful investments including improvements to our iconic New England villages, connecting corridors, modal options to support the people who need them, active transportation, and initiatives that support jobs and the environment including electric vehicle charging stations and port investments to support floating offshore wind.

Second, Maine policymakers and voters continue to demonstrate that they understand and support the tangible, foundational value that transportation has on the safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life of all Maine people. In 2021, Governor Mills proposed, and the legislature approved, two General Fund initiatives that provided nearly \$106 million for MaineDOT. This unprecedented level of General Fund support saved MaineDOT's capital transportation program by offsetting state Highway Fund revenue reductions driven by the pandemic and high construction cost inflation. In addition, in November, voters again overwhelmingly approved a \$100 million transportation bond, providing much-needed state match for federal and other funds to support MaineDOT's capital production for this year. Additionally, the governor has proposed another \$100 million in her General Fund Supplemental Budget for use in 2023,

“While every one of these work items is important, the big policy themes in this year’s plan are related to federal funding, state funding, and expanding partnerships. We are cautiously optimistic that these developments will help put us on a steadier footing – allowing MaineDOT to move beyond ‘MacGyver’ mode and shift our focus from reactive patching to proactive planning.”

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thus eliminating the need for bonding this year. We currently estimate that this additional General Fund support will leverage up to \$284 million in federal, local, and other funds. Looking forward, sustainable state funding will be needed in the years ahead.

Third, MaineDOT continues to expand its partnerships with stakeholders, including municipalities. Better collaboration means better recognition of the value of transportation and tangible results for the people of Maine. This year, MaineDOT is leading a comprehensive look at what current trends and funding could mean for Maine's transportation system and customer needs. These endeavors include a revision of our state's comprehensive Long-Range Transportation Plan and several modally specific plans. Further, this year, MaineDOT is adding a Village Partnership Initiative to its suite of community-based initiatives. This Village Partnership Initiative will be focused on improving lower-speed areas where people meet, walk, shop, and do business.

These projects can vary from small, safety improvements to larger, once-in-a-lifetime, placemaking investments. A trip through the centers of Belgrade, Hallowell, Naples, and Ogunquit will demonstrate how good partnerships and targeted investments can help revitalize a village or downtown area.

Whether these three policy developments allow us to move beyond "MacGyver" mode toward a more sustainable, proactive future for transportation in Maine depends upon the clarification regarding goals, costs, and funding – all of which are in a state of flux now and which should become clearer by the end of 2022.

For those interested in project-level details in the latest edition of MaineDOT's Work plan, visit www.mainedot.gov. You can search by city or town to see what projects are being planned near you. This year's work plan also features an interactive, media-rich story map to help tell our story. ■



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August 11 - Waterville area

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Watch for details on Facebook, Instagram and mbtaonline.org/events.

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MAINEDOT PHOTOS

Rainbow's end

THE MAINE Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) on January 4, 2022 awarded a bid to Pittsfield-based Cianbro Corp. for the Falls Bridge Replacement Project, according to MaineDOT Bridge Manager Andrew Lathe. The new bridge will replace one of only two rainbow arch bridges currently standing in Maine.

The scenic and historic bridge, built in 1926 to span the reversing falls off Maine Rt. 175 in South Blue Hill, will soon be taken down and replaced with a modern structure.

Whether to repair or replace the Falls Bridge has been a topic of discussion on the Blue Hill peninsula and with MaineDOT for two decades. During that time, the bridge's deterioration has advanced. Lathe has said previously that a rehabilitation would



Rendering of the new Blue Hills Falls Bridge that begins construction this year.

provide the current bridge a life-span of 50 years, but a new bridge would last about 100 years.

The new bridge, as Lathe described it, will consist of five pre-cast concrete girders with exterior girders supporting an aesthetic fascia panel. It also will feature major safety improvements, including two 11-foot-wide traffic lanes and a pair of four-foot-wide shoulders for walkers and bikers – a feature called for by residents during listening sessions with MaineDOT. The department has planned an accelerated construction schedule to minimize inconvenience from bridge closures to the public.

Meanwhile, bridge aficionados were urged to take their selfies at the 96-year-old rainbow arch bridge this winter – a 100-foot span noted for its arch ribs and decorative finials - before it came to end. ■

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