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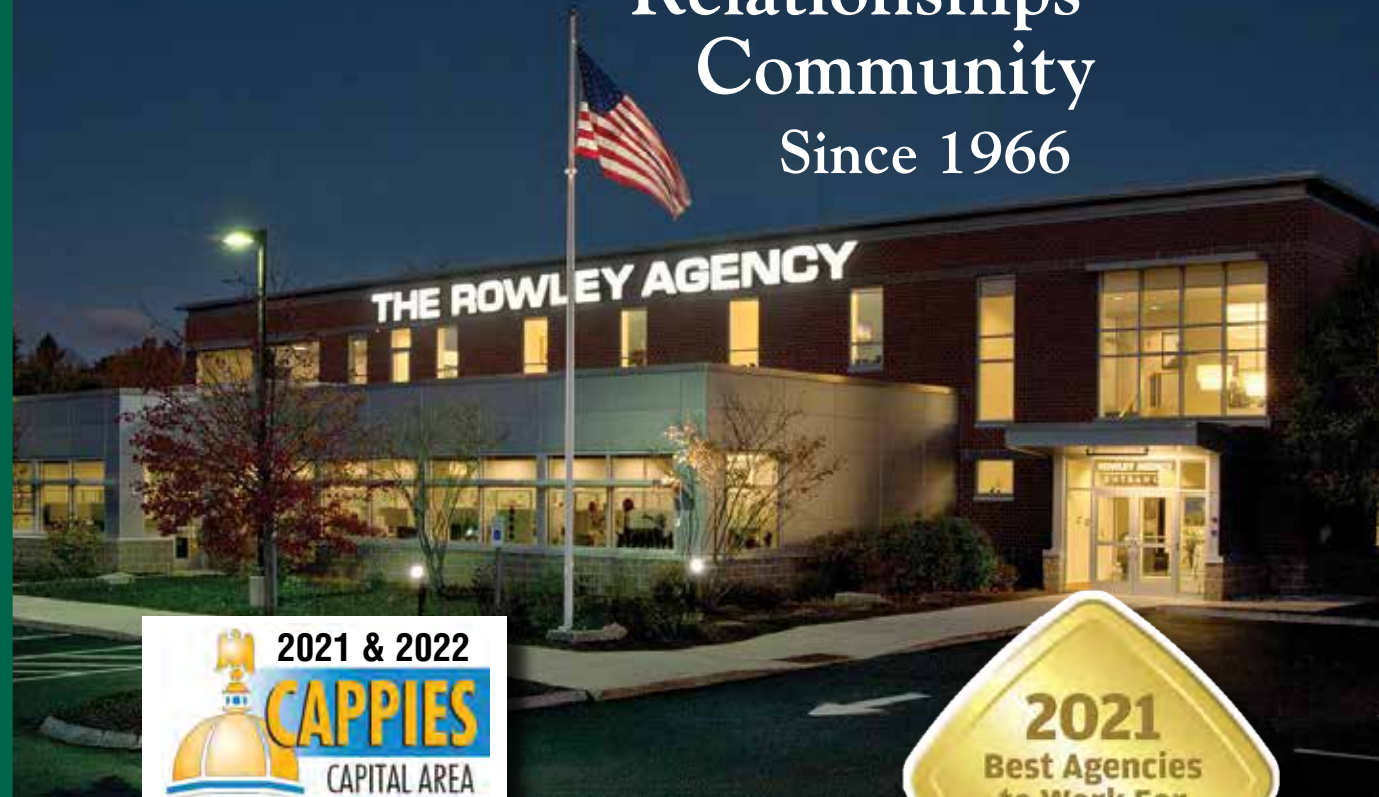
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MAINE TRAILS

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Maine Better Transportation Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Tony Grande, MBTA President



History lessons

A recent story in the *Bangor Daily News* offered some food for thought on Maine's interstate system – a vast network of roads connecting Maine to the rest of the country – and what the numbers mean and how they came to be.

THE STORY is also a reminder of how quickly we come to take for granted the lifelines that Maine's transportation system provides for our communities and our economy.

The truth is transportation in Maine is essential. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, more than 13,000 jobs in Maine are in the transportation sector, an increase of 8.1 percent over the past decade, and Mainers travel 14.8 billion miles a year (an increase of 1.5 percent). Ninety billion dollars in freight moves over our interstate highways in Maine.

It's also a good reminder of the importance of the work we do and why we must keep reminding the public just how important it is to have a safe, reliable and efficient transportation system.

Even before the creation of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 – going back to the days of the King's Highway (today known as U.S. Route 1), Maine can trace a straight connection between investment in transportation and the well-being of its citizens and growth of its communities.

In 1970, the Maine State Highway Commission published *A History of Maine Roads*, 1600-1970, and it begins with a nod to the earliest days when European settlers first came to the state. It tells a classic chicken-and-egg story that links the early days of Maine's forest products industry with construction of the region's first road networks.

Among the earliest roads were "mastways," according to the document: "Maine's tall firs and spruce were a much-prized item as masts for the Royal Navy. Crews of men would cut the big trees and 'swamp out' a road to the nearest waterway. In the Portland area modern streets follow early mastways to Fore River; and the village square at Freeport is so shaped because of the room needed to swing the big sticks as they were dragged to Mast Landing at the

"More than 13,000 jobs in Maine are in the transportation sector, an increase of 8.1 percent over the past decade, and Mainers travel 14.8 billion miles a year (an increase of 1.5 percent). Ninety billion dollars in freight moves over our interstate highways in Maine."

Harraseeket River."

John Fremont Hill, a businessman who served as Maine's governor from 1901 to 1905, was the first to call for a formal, public highway system in the state in his inaugural address





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along with the funding for that highway system. The legislature agreed and passed a law that called on towns to designate the roads that would become the backbone of Maine's transportation system. So even from the start, our public highways were the roads that were most important to our towns.

Many of today's BDN readers grew up after the 50s, 60s and 70s and would not be familiar with the debate about building a vast network of modern highways stretching coast-to-coast, that we now know as the interstate system. Much of the debate had to do with cost, of course. For Maine, the idea was both radical and innovative. The interstate was seen as a

way to connect Maine with Boston and New York, and a way to expand our connections to markets and suppliers south of us.

It was sold to the nation as a great civil defense network, as well, and we should not forget how, after World War II, we'd become a nation with a heightened awareness of the need to safeguard a way of life that worked for us. Today roads are as much about protecting our way of life as ever.

As more and more Mainers switch to electric vehicles, we will need to step up our messaging and make sure we work with our state leaders to find a way to keep our vast network of roads, bridges, ferries, ports, and rail healthy – and Maine's communities and economy thriving.

Speaking about driving, it has been great traveling around the state to meet with members – at the Infrastructure Golf Classic, the Aroostook County Meeting, and Transportation on Tap – over the past few months.

I look forward to the events we have coming up this fall – the Convention and Fall Golf Tournament, our last Transportation on Tap event in Freeport, and the PDH tour.

So, as you're driving on Maine's highways this Fall to attend one of our events, please think back on the historic "mastways" that started it all. And let's continue to advocate for maintaining and enhancing our transportation system for future generations to look back on. ■

MBTA CALENDAR

Friday, October 7, 2022

PDH TOUR
Portland - Biddeford

Thursday, October 20

TRANSPORTATION ON TAP
Maine Beer Company, Freeport

Thursday, December 1

MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE
Augusta Civic Center

Thursday, December 8

HOLIDAY-SCHOLARSHIP MEETING
Black Bear Inn, Orono
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A DIGEST OF RECENT TRANSPORTATION NEWS

ONRAMP

A podcast only a transportation nerd could love

THIS AUGUST, the podcast *AASHTO re:source Q + A* celebrated its second anniversary. If that sounds esoteric, you are definitely not a transportation engineer or planner.

The podcast, which was launched on August 3, 2020 with a snappy, under-2-minute broadcast in which Kim Swanson, communications manager at AASHTO Resource and Brian Johnson, AASHTO accreditation program manager, shared banter and the podcast's goals. "The whole point of this podcast is to share more information with our customers and other interested people in the transportation field about construction materials, testing, inspection, quality management issues, continual improvement issues," said Johnson, adding "things that are not necessarily top of mind for people, but we get these questions all the time."

Recent episodes have included topics such as: "Common Concrete Non-conformities" (July 12, 2022); "Digging into Soil Classification and Compaction Samples 185/186" (June 14, 2022); and "Ignition Oven Correction Factors with Dr. Carolina Rodezno" (December 21, 2021). Two episodes this summer have delved into the bible of materials standards which released a new edition this year. The first episode was titled "Updates to the 42nd Edition of AASHTO Materials Standards" (July 19, 2022) and featured guest Casey Soneira, AASHTO program manager for engineering. The second, titled "From the Cutting Room Floor - Standards Development" (July 16, 2022), took a deeper dive into the process of standards development.

All of the episodes since the podcast launched are available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts. They are also at: www.buzzsprout.com/1246739. ■



We've seen the future

AND THE future is in golf carts. Just ask the folks of Peachtree City in Georgia.

The suburb of Atlanta has developed a 100-mile network of trails that welcome golf carts, e-bikes and, of course, pedestrians for whom the trails were originally built going back to the late 1950s. As the city has evolved, so have the trails – they've been widened to 10 feet and paved – and the golf cart has become an accepted form of transportation.

Peachtree City Mayor Kim Learnard told *Slate* magazine that her city (population 38,000) has more than 10,000 registered golf carts among its



commute to their jobs in cars, but the carts are immensely popular within the city limits. High schoolers drive them to school, families use them to go to the store (with milk crates bungeed on the back), for ice cream or to cocktails with friends.

Peachtree City even has a golf cart featured in its city seal. The *Slate* story also notes that in 2015, Harvard Business School saw a bright future for the small, somewhat slow, but

roughly 13,000 households. City regulations don't require cart drivers to have a state-issued driver's license, but operators do have to be 16 years or older without an adult present. *Slate* reported that insurance is optional, but encouraged. People still

nimble vehicles when it was studying whether Tesla would disrupt the transportation market. As *Slate* noted in its article, "Their conclusion: A 'souped-up golf cart' – not a Tesla – offered the most transformative potential." ■

The new international bridge under construction, viewed from the U.S. side of the border. The old bridge can be seen on the right.



The new international bridge under construction, viewed from the Canadian side of the border.



International bridge.

DESCAMPE DIGITAL

The new Madawaska-Edmundston International Bridge is a boon for local economies on both sides of the border – and for relations between regional governments

By Betty Adams

CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY buzzes, beeps and hums in the heart of this mill town as a new international bridge takes shape above the Saint John River.

The Madawaska-Edmundston International Bridge Project has been underway since last year, with workers placing concrete even in the coldest days of winter, and continuing through the high 80s and even warmer days of midsummer.

Reed & Reed of Woolwich won the \$86.5 million contract to construct the new bridge which will replace a century-old, 928-foot, four-span truss bridge that has been weight-limited to 5 tons – essentially the weight of a passenger vehicle – since October 2017. Prior to that, the maximum allowable vehicle weight was 43.5 tons, an environmental impact assessment notes.

The total project cost will be \$97.5 million, according to the MaineDOT website, which notes: “In 2019, this project received a \$36-million Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration. The remaining costs are being shared by MaineDOT and NBDTI (the New Brunswick Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.)”

Reed & Reed has erected a low, temporary trestle bridge over the river that follows the alignment of the new bridge, that crosses the

International relations.

DESCAMPE DIGITAL

Saint John River at about a 45-degree angle some 1,400 feet upstream from the current bridge. The temporary bridge provides access for workers to build the river piers and erect the bridge superstructure. Because of the new angled alignment, the new structure will be nearly twice the length of the existing bridge.

MEET IN THE MIDDLE

While Reed & Reed is building the three piers and one abutment on the U.S. side of the river, a Canadian subcontractor, Greenfield Construction of Miramichi, New Brunswick, is building the two piers and the abutment on the Canadian side of the Saint John River. The waterway itself forms the boundary between the United States and Canada for about 80 miles. The new bridge also crosses over the Maine Northern Railway and Canadian National Railway lines that run along the banks of the river.

“It’s going well,” said Reed & Reed Chairman and CEO Jackson Parker in mid-August. “We’re pretty much right on schedule.” The steel



MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note

girders were due to be erected next, which Parker termed “an important milestone in the project.”

Parker said the company has prior experience with international bridges, having won the contract in July 2014 to demolish the old bridge between Fort Kent, Maine, and Clair, New Brunswick, after a new one was erected. “We were able to take some of the ‘lessons-learned’ from that project and apply them to this project,” he said.

With regard to the Madawaska-Edmundston bridge, he added, “MaineDOT has been a tremendous partner. Everybody’s committed to getting this project built in the fastest amount of time so those communities can be reconnected.” He also noted, “People in the local communities have been helpful and supportive throughout construction.”

Greg Letourneau, Reed & Reed senior superintendent at the Madawaska site, said the temporary span is considered neutral territory. “The folks at the border have been a really big help to



Heavy equipment on the temporary bridge that is serving as a work platform for crews from Maine and New Brunswick.



The Reed & Reed crew removes a concrete form from a recently poured bridge pier.

REED & REED TOP, JESSICA LOWEL BELOW

facilitate us getting things through our trestle,” he said, adding that part of the arrangement requires that “You have to exit through the same border from which you come.”

And the trestle bridge has three gates, all of which must be secured at the end of the workday.

Letourneau said communication between the crews has been seamless.

“Fortunately everybody’s bilingual that we work with over there.” During the summer bridge workers were putting in 10.5-11 hour days, with a smaller crew working half-days on Saturdays.

About 60 people were working on the bridge project in mid-August as the haunch girders were being readied to go on the concrete piers. The seven-foot-tall straight girders (also known as closure girders) link them.

“There’s 350 feet between each set of piers and four girders that make up that connection to get there,” Letourneau said while viewing the work from the U.S. side of the river.

Below the second pier, rocks poke up from the riverbed, and Letourneau noted that the river can be shallow enough to walk across – except for a four-foot deep channel near the Canadian side.

WILD AND DEEP

However, Letourneau noted the Saint John River can be wild and deep as well, particularly during the freshet with water flowing in from the Allagash Wilderness Waterway plus rain and melting snow from Canada, as the Saint John River rushes to empty into the Bay of Fundy.

“There’s almost as much of a bridge below ground as there is



Reed & Reed CEO Jack Parker

above the ground,” said Letourneau. “We spent a lot of time working in cofferdams last year.” Each bridge pier is on six-foot diameter caissons drilled into bedrock.

The new bridge itself will be about 1,800 feet long and 45 feet wide, Letourneau said, with two 12-foot-wide travel lanes, two six-foot-wide shoulders, one six-foot-wide sidewalk, plus curbs. Records show the existing bridge has a roadway width of 20 feet, 8 inches.

The new bridge will have a concrete sidewalk and the oversized shoulders will be paved, as will the deck. Letourneau said the shoulders will have more room to accommodate snowmobiles and ATVs.

Twin Rivers Paper Company structures dominate on both sides of the river. The specialty paper firm has a pulp and energy complex in Edmundston with the paper mill itself in

Madawaska. The company also has a utility bridge carrying a pipeline across the Saint John River downstream from the existing bridge.

PORT OF ENTRY

And towering atop the Reed & Reed bridge construction site is another project underway: a new border crossing station or Land Port of Entry in Madawaska on 10.7-acres near Mill and Main streets. J&J Contractors Inc., of North Billerica, Massachusetts won a \$44.5 million contract and broke ground on the project last fall.

In announcing that project, which has a total cost of \$65 million, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) noted that the new building will house offices for these agencies: the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection, the Department

of Health and Human Services’ Food and Drug Administration and the GSA. The new Land Port of Entry is scheduled to open in late 2023 in conjunction with the new bridge. (The Canadian Border Services Agency facility was built in 1992 and was determined to be adequate.)

‘VITAL CONNECTION POINTS’

The GSA also noted that the border crossing is a major permit port in Maine, and listed annual usage: 16,258 southbound trucks processed; 1,251 southbound pedestrians crossed; 52 southbound buses processed; 431,903 southbound POVs (privately owned vehicles) processed.

An Environmental Impact Assessment Registration prepared for the Province of New Brunswick Department of Transportation and Infrastructure in February 2018 by Stantec Consulting Ltd., of Fredericton, New Brunswick, says, “According to available data from Transport Canada, the Madawaska-Edmundston border crossing processed approximately 1,484,000 vehicles in 2016 (3,993 passenger cars per day and 73 commercial trucks per day on average). While the proportion of passenger vehicle traffic to commercial vehicle traffic is expected to remain roughly the same to the year 2030, traffic volumes in general are predicted to increase by up to 10 percent by 2030. The capacity of the bridge will be designed to accommodate the anticipated increase in traffic.”

Despite all the construction and the ongoing papermaking and train movements, border crossings continue on the weight-limited bridge. However, volumes were significantly lower during the pandemic when



Code Enforcement Officer Denise Duperré

cross-border travel was restricted.

When the construction contract award for the bridge was announced in early April 2021, MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note said, “The year-long challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have laid bare the importance of the connections between Maine and Canada. We are eager to move forward with this project to greatly improve one of these vital connection points. This new bridge will improve safety and support economic activities on both sides of the international border.”

Maine Governor Janet Mills visited the bridge construction site this year in mid-August, and was quoted in a media release saying, “Replacing the international bridge supports the safe travel of American and Canadian residents and visitors alike, as well as the strength of small businesses who rely on the bridge to transport their products

across our borders.”

The new bridge is rated to carry over 70 tons, according to the New Brunswick study, and is projected to last a century.

ECONOMIC BOOM

The two construction projects – and the people working on them – have provided a welcome economic boom to Madawaska, a town of approximately 4,000 people.

“It’s the most popular international border crossing next to Houlton to capture the maritime and Quebec traffic because Edmundston is a city hub and the (Trans-Canada Highway) passes through it,” said Denise Duperré, code enforcement officer, administrative assistant and addressing officer for the Town of Madawaska.

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Maine Governor Janet Mills (second from left) toured the job site in August of this year with Madawaska Town Manager Gary Picard, Maine House Transportation Committee Chair Representative Danny Martin, Maine Representative John Martin, and Maine Senate President Troy Jackson.

“That old bridge was not conducive to the industrial traffic that it was seeing, let alone the tourism, etc.,” said Duperré.

She said the townspeople helped transportation officials see the value of having the recreational lanes – essentially the wider shoulders – on the new bridge.

“People are getting green, so they’re biking and they’re walking, and if you’re going to walk across this bridge every day, and the tourists are going to come and cross it every day, why not make it a focal point as well? This is where the Acadians first landed, and Edmundston is a city, so their tourism dollars are huge. So it was in their interest as well to have something worth taking the traffic off the Trans Canada and making them come to the border.”

She noted that Reed & Reed worked with the local chamber of commerce to have job fairs when the project started.

“Hotels are full, what little houses are for sale are sold. It brought that economic impact into the area, as well as restaurants. These people have to eat and (have) services. They’re buying things, gas, so it’s good for the economy. It’s a good injection, especially right after COVID.”

The new configuration for traffic from across the border – which will leave the customs area and either head to Main Street or to the entrance of the Two Rivers mill – will be an improvement as well, particularly when the heavier tankers, trucks and B-trains come through.

‘BACK TO NORMAL’

Currently the five-ton weight limit on the existing bridge in Madawaska forces tankers and other trucks to cross in Van Buren or Fort Kent. The new bridge will allow those heavy vehicles to access the Trans-Canada Highway in Edmundston for a much speedier and less circuitous route west.

She says the area – with the city of Edmundston (population 16,500), New Brunswick, just across the river – has all the conveniences.



Senior Superintendent Greg Letourneau

With the new bridge open, Duperré said, things will be “back to normal.”

In particular, she is looking forward to a smooth crossing over the new Madawaska-Edmundston bridge on her snowmobile.

“I’m an avid snowmobiler,” she said. “I had to bring my sled over a four-and-one-half-inch metal lip with carbide skis, which is hard because that’s metal on metal and then I had to ride the grated cement. It was torture. It was literally torture on your sled and on us.”

Currently she goes upstream to Fort Kent or downstream to Van Buren to cross on concrete-surfaced bridges in the regular traffic lanes.

On the new bridge in Madawaska, the snowmobiles, ATVs and UTVs will have their own recreational lanes in those wider shoulders.

“Now, you’re not stopping traffic by crossing on your sled or your UTV and you’re keeping the flow going, the pedestrians, the recreational vehicles and all the other traffic,” she said.

Gary Dufour, one of the directors of the Madawaska Four Corners Park – a destination for bikers seeking to complete one of the Southern California Motorcycle Association’s USA Four Corners Tours – and a motorcycle rider for more than 45 years, is looking forward to a wider and better bridge surface to replace the grating on the existing bridge.

“The old bridge is not friendly to motorcycles,” he said. “If you get narrow tires on there you ride side to side.”

New Brunswick’s Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Jill Green noted in a news release in April 2021, “This international bridge is more than just a piece of infrastructure: it is an important link that brings communities and countries together. This project will contribute to our priority of energizing the private sector by facilitating the movement of people and goods. This will allow our businesses to remain competitive while fostering economic growth in the region.” ■

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

Sanford on the rise

MaineDOT, Sanford awarded \$25m in USDOT RAISE Grant Funds for the Downtown Sanford Village Partnership Initiative

Submitted by the City of Sanford

IN 2014, former University of New Hampshire classmates and city engineers Matt Hill and Mike Casserly were talking about the level of effort that would be needed to rebuild downtown Sanford: “We need a TIGER Grant and Concord, New Hampshire just got one. We should see how they did it.” Thus began Sanford Engineering Division’s effort to find the support and funding necessary to revitalize the urban core of the city of Sanford.

Former MaineDOT Region 1 Engineer Kyle Hall, while on a tour of Sanford Public Works shortly thereafter, noted that capital investments are most successful when supported by a firm local commitment to maintain the infrastructure.

City Engineer Hill (Casserly has since retired from the department) was new to the public works director position in Sanford and took that comment to heart and began to formalize Sanford’s routine maintenance programs, DPW Standard Operating Procedures, closely budget and track capital investment costs, and had a pavement conditions study performed by the BETA Group at the direction of City Manager Steve Buck.

The pavement conditions study made dynamic recommendations on infrastructure investment budgets that were presented to the Sanford City Council and supported on a grass-roots level in Sanford through the annual capital improvement program (CIP) and a notable voter-approved construction bond passed in 2019 and built in 2020. By continuing to fully-fund the Roadway CIP, Sanford has been able to plan ahead and find matching opportunities for its capital dollars through MaineDOT’s Planning Partnership Initiative (PPI) and Municipal Partnership Initiative (MPI) programs,

MaineDOT’s Safe Routes to School Program, MaineDEP’s 319 Grant Program, and other state-municipal cooperative agreements.

Sanford also has cultivated strong relationships with local quasi-municipal underground utilities such as the Sanford Sewerage District and Sanford Water District by frequently discussing the Five-Year Roadway CIP plan and finding mutual areas of maintenance and capital investment.

MaineDOT Project Manager Ernie Martin, partnering with Sanford on several of these projects, was part of the team that ultimately approached Sanford with the idea to bundle them into a RAISE Grant application in 2022.

Hill believed that this would be a game-changer, “By that time,” he recalled, “there was a good density of projects including downtown proper already in design and following Federal guidelines in Sanford. When we received the USDOT Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and saw the respective merit criteria, we knew we’d be a great candidate.”

The merit criteria of the NOFO closely mirrored Sanford’s practices of revitalizing the community through partnerships and collaboration, innovation, economic competitiveness, bettering quality of life, environmental sustainability, safety improvement, and maintaining a state of good repair. Many of those practices had been featured in Sanford’s Downtown PPI application to MaineDOT in 2019.

Chris Mann, public service coordinator in MaineDOT’s Results & Information Office, Dale Doughty, director of the MaineDOT’s Planning Office, and Andrew Bickmore, director of Results & Information, led the RAISE Grant application process and contracted Bluejay Advisors



The RAISE grant projects cover a large area of Sanford’s city center and have been designed to “rebuild” the downtown by improving safety, attracting business and improving the quality of life for local residents.



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to write the proposal.

Matt Hill gathered and organized local supporting materials including municipal initiatives from Sanford’s municipal department heads, progress plans and studies from consultants including VHB, Gorrill Palmer Consulting Engineers, Aceto Landscape Architects, and Titcomb Associates.

Hill also solicited about three dozen letters of support including, but not limited to, those from: Maine’s congressional and legislative delegations; Governor Janet Mills; municipal leaders; state and

a continuous 10-foot wide multi-modal path. The Promenade will embrace a highly walkable downtown and act as a key connector for Sanford’s extensive bicycle and pedestrian trails network.

COTTAGE STREET / ROUTE 202: A principal arterial into Sanford and its downtown, Cottage Street (Route 202) will have improvements of 0.7 miles. The project will preserve the unique architecture along the street and provide improved access to Sanford’s Historic Mill District.

WASHINGTON STREET: Washington Street also acts as a key downtown connector into the Historic Mill District and will see



Sanford Department of Public Works front office staff and division supervisors. From left to right: Juliana Paulette, Peter Smith, Matt Provencher, Deneiker Smith-McLeod, Matt Hill, Scott Robitaille, and Don Cabana (not pictured Nancy LeBrun).

local chambers of commerce; Maine Department of Environmental Protection; Maine Department of Health and Human Services; York County Emergency Management Agency; Portsmouth Naval Shipyard; local utilities; York County Community Action Coalition; Bicycle Coalition of Maine, York County Soil & Water Conservation District; Sanford’s Friends of Downtown; private stakeholders; and Maine Better Transportation Association.

The project consists of the following:

MAIN STREET: The complete reconstruction of approximately 0.5 miles of Sanford’s Main Street (Route 109) in the heart of downtown and includes widening sidewalks, installation of energy-efficient streetlights, parking improvements, and communications to include new fiber optic conduits for SanfordNet Fiber. SanfordNet Fiber Optic is a 45-mile municipally-owned network capable of supporting significant innovative growth in the city’s downtown and mill districts.

WILLIAM OSCAR HENRY DRIVE-RIVERSIDE AVENUE-MOUSAM PROMENADE: Improvements to roughly 0.5 miles of William Oscar Emery Drive and Riverside Avenue to encompass the Mousam Promenade. The Mousam Promenade, approximately 2.5 kilometers (or half of a 5K route), is a circumferential street improvement around Sanford’s Number One Pond that will include

approximately 0.2 miles of improvements which will include replacing the traffic signal at Washington, High, and River Streets.

SCHOOL STREET: School Street will see 0.2 miles of connectivity improvements for downtown businesses and Central Park access.

EMERSON STREET PARK-AND-RIDE: A Park-and-Ride facility will be built on Emerson Street to serve the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and other regional employers. The park and ride will be built with sustainability in mind, with an emphasis on rideshare options, vanpools, micro-transit, and EV charging station opportunities.

MULTIMODAL AND SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS: The project will improve safety aspects on all the streets involved for pedestrians, motorists, and all road users; it will modernize infrastructure to attract potential employers, commercial, and residential development; and meet MaineDOT standards.

In looking ahead to the improvements, Hill also wanted to give a nod to city workers who have worked hard for the city to maintain its infrastructure. He said: “I’d especially like to recognize the Sanford Public Works Department, an invaluable team who has maintained this city through thick and thin. They don’t get a lot of recognition, but they are out there every day working hard. It will be up to all of us to see this job through and maintain this investment for Sanford’s future.” ■

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Cold wave

Groundbreaking for new cold storage facility in Portland

AFTER SEVEN years of stops and starts, ground has been broken on a massive, 107,000-square-foot Maine International Cold Storage Facility on the Portland waterfront. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on August 22.

Located on Commercial Street next to Maine’s sole shipping container terminal, the *Portland Press Herald* reported the warehouse has been touted as critical to expanding freight through Portland and giving Maine food and beverage companies a competitive edge and access to world markets.

The Maine Port Authority originally issued a call for proposals to design, build, finance and operate a cold storage facility near the city’s International Marine Terminal in 2014. Americold, in partnership with shipper Eimskip, was selected as the preferred bidder in 2015, but the company pulled out during the permitting process when neighbors objected to the height of the proposed design.

Enter the partnership of the Amber Infrastructure Group, Treadwell Franklin

Infrastructure and Eimskip in 2018, which put together the successful design proposal that is now under construction. The facility is being built on land MaineDOT deeded to the Maine Port Authority and is adjacent to the International Marine Terminal and an active freight rail line and has access to the interstate.

With the new facility, European cargo shippers who would otherwise have to temporarily store food in Boston can deliver their goods to Portland, where there is less port congestion and easy rail access to markets on the east coast. The facility, which will cover 107,000 square feet at the western end of the harbor, will have capacity for about 22,000 pallets. It will have an estimated economic impact of \$500 million to \$900 million each year.

Pandemic disruptions delayed permitting and construction plans, but also demonstrated a continued need for refrigerated storage in Maine, said Matt Burns, executive director of the Maine Port Authority. “We have always known there is significant demand for cold

chain logistics. Cold storage has always been part of the master plan,” Burns told the *Portland Press Herald*. “That demand for food and beverage products and cold storage did not decline and wane during the pandemic, it seemed to get stronger.”

Refrigerated storage next to the International Marine Terminal container port will likely draw new customers, including clients of Eimskip, the Icelandic shipping company that specializes in transporting cold and frozen freight, according to Tom O’Shaughnessy, co-founder of Amber Infrastructure. Since starting trips to Portland in 2013, Eimskip, the sole company landing at the terminal, has increased freight volume by 20 percent on average per year, with almost 38,200 containers being handled at Portland docks last year.

“I think bottom line, we are open for business. Any carrier that wants to move containers and freight through International Marine Terminal, we are open to that,” Burns said.

A cold storage building is the latest in a



Raising a shovel to celebrate the new cold storage facility in Portland (left to right): George Campbell, TFIC chair and advisory board member; Andrew Nelson, TFIC partner and executive VP; MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note; Maine Governor Janet Mills; Tom O’Shaughnessy, Amber Infrastructure principal; Maine Port Authority Executive Director Matthew Burns; and Portland Mayor Kate Snyder.

series of upgrades transforming the container terminal from an abandoned space Portland used for a snow dump to a hive of activity. More investment is planned in coming years to accommodate additional container storage, allow larger ships and lure more shipping companies to port, said Burns.

“The working waterfront is a staple of Portland and an important facet of our economy, supporting commercial fishermen and facilitating international trade that has put Maine on the map,” Governor Janet Mills

said at the groundbreaking ceremony. “With this new and much-needed state-of-the-art cold storage facility, we are expanding Maine’s competitive edge on the international stage by ensuring that businesses are able to keep food production, storage, and distribution local — rather than out of state — and saving them money on transportation costs. This is a win for our fishermen, our local businesses, and our economy – and I am glad to get it done in a climate-friendly way.”

Portland Mayor Kate Snyder shared that

sentiment, saying it would be a boon for Maine’s food and beverage industry, and for commercial fishing.

“With this new facility, food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers will no longer need to rely on out-of-state providers to ship food products originating in Maine,” she said.

Construction on the facility, estimated to cost \$55 million, is expected to ramp up substantially by October and is scheduled to open in February 2024. ■

TRIP REPORT

2-year traffic fatality surge

THE NUMBER of traffic fatalities in the U.S. surged by 19 percent from 2019 to 2021. The report from The Road Information Program (TRIP) was released on June 29 and details the relationship between traffic levels and fatalities for those two years. Titled *Addressing America’s Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increasing U.S. Traffic Fatalities and Identifying Solutions to Improve Road User Safety*, the report examines the counterintuitive and dramatic increase in traffic fatalities that occurred even as vehicle travel rates plummeted by 40 percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

But by October 2020, U.S. vehicle travel rebounded to within nine percent of October 2019 levels. Overall U.S. vehicle travel in

2020 was 11 percent lower than in 2019, dropping from 3.3 trillion vehicle miles of travel to 2.9 trillion. However, despite the significant decrease in vehicle travel from 2019 to 2020, the overall number of traffic fatalities during the same time increased by eight percent (from 36,096 to 38,824) and the traffic fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel increased by 21 percent (from 1.11 to 1.34).

In 2021, as COVID-related restrictions gradually lifted, U.S. vehicle travel increased to approximately 3.2 trillion miles, a 10 percent increase over 2020 levels, but still three percent below 2019’s pre-pandemic levels. From 2020 to 2021 the number of traffic fatalities increased by approximately 11 percent (from 38,824 to 42,915), roughly

on pace with the 10 percent increase in vehicle travel during the same time, and the highest number recorded since 2005. The traffic fatality rate in 2021 rose to 1.35 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

The chart on page 25 shows the percentage change from 2019 to 2020 and 2021 in U.S. vehicle travel, the number of traffic fatalities and the traffic fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel. Data for Maine lists traffic fatalities in 2019 at 157, in 2020 at 164, and in 2021 at 162, an overall change of three percent. Miles travelled during those years was 14,871, 13,086 and 14,299, a decrease of four percent.

Bicycle and pedestrian fatalities also increased significantly over pre-pandemic levels. From 2019 to 2021, the number of

pedestrians killed increased by 18 percent (from 6,205 to 7,342) and the number of bicyclists killed increased by 16 percent (from 846 to 985). Pedestrian and bicycle deaths accounted for 19 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2021.

The TRIP report cites several sources in its examination of the trend, including data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and The AAA

Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS).

The significant increase in traffic fatalities since the onset of the pandemic appears largely related to increased risks being taken by drivers, according to data from NHTSA.

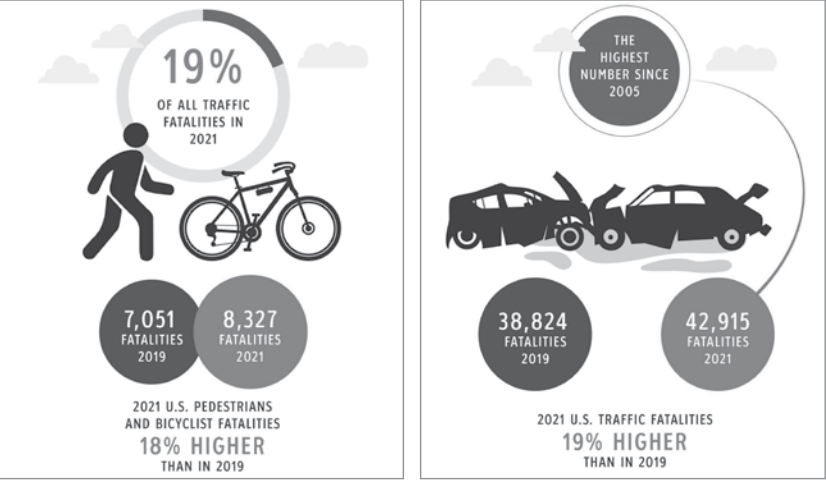
AAAFTS drew similar conclusions about the role of increased risks being taken by drivers during the pandemic, noting that drivers who maintained or increased their pre-COVID travel levels indicated that they were more likely to engage in risky driving behavior, including speeding, not wearing a seat belt, being impaired and driving aggressively.

“It is possible that many of the individuals who were willing to travel – and even increase their travel – despite the health risks associated with the pandemic were already more willing than average to take other risks,” the AAAFTS report found.

Data from NHTSA indicates the number of people killed in police-reported alcohol

involved crashes rose by nine percent from 2019 to 2020, and by five percent from 2020 to 2021. The number of unrestrained occupants of passenger vehicles killed increased fifteen percent from 2019 to 2020, and three percent from 2020 to 2021. The number of people killed in speeding-related traffic crashes climbed eleven percent from 2019 to 2020, and five percent from 2020 to 2021.

The severity of traffic crashes also increased,




according to an analysis of the share of traffic crash patients treated by emergency medical services (EMS) who were evaluated as having severe injuries. In 2020, the share of patients treated by EMS at vehicle crashes who had severe injuries was 21 percent higher than in 2019. Through the first eight months of 2021, the share of patients who had severe injuries was 17 percent higher than in 2019.

Increasing investment in roadway safety improvements is likely to pay off in the form of reduced fatal and serious traffic crashes.



The U.S. has a \$146 billion backlog in needed roadway safety improvements, according to a 2017 report from the AAAFTS. The report found implementing cost-effective and needed roadway safety improvements on U.S. roadways would save approximately 63,700 lives and reduce the number of serious injuries as a result of traffic crashes by approximately 350,000 over a 20-year period.

Additional funding for improved roadway safety has been provided by the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which provides a significant boost in federal investment in roads, bridges and transit and offers an opportunity for the nation to make progress in improving the safety, reliability and condition of America’s transportation system. The IIJA provides \$454 billion over the five-year period from 2022 to 2026 for investment in highways and transit, resulting in a 38 percent increase in federal investment in 2022. The IIJA provides additional resources to address traffic safety, including: \$6 billion for the Safe Streets and Roads for All program; \$17 billion for the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP); \$4 billion for improved crash data and vehicle, behavior, and truck safety programs; \$300 million for rural road safety; and \$120 million for tribal road safety. ■

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Power to the people?

Proposed voter referendum on public owned electric utility topic of Aroostook County meeting

WHAT WOULD happen if Maine voters pass a ballot question to create a state government authority to take over and operate Central Maine Power and Versant Power? That was the question on the table at the MBTA 2022 Aroostook County Meeting at the Northeastland Hotel in Presque Isle on August 4, and according to Jim Cohen, the answer is worrisome. Cohen, a lawyer specializing in energy law, was the guest speaker at the meeting where he spoke on behalf of the Maine Affordable Energy Coalition.

MBTA President Tony Grande welcomed more than 50 MBTA members and their guests and introduced special guests, including Trisha House from U.S. Senator Susan Collins' office and new member Albert Withee of Withee Materials Testing. He also thanked the

meeting sponsors: Innovator sponsors Northeast Paving, Sargent, Team EJP, and VHB; and Pathfinder sponsor The Rowley Agency.

Grande gave a quick summary of the discussion at the MBTA Board of Directors meeting held earlier that day.

Grande then introduced Cohen, who is a partner with the law firm Verrill Dana LLP and is a former mayor of Portland and former chair of the city's Transportation Committee, as well as the current board chair of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority.

Cohen, for his part, introduced the work of the Maine Affordable Energy Coalition, a group that is advocating against a proposed citizens' referendum that may appear on the statewide ballot in 2023. The proposed referendum calls for creation of a Maine government authority to take over



Jim Cohen (left) spoke about a citizen's initiative to establish a public-owned electric utility. MBTA President Tony Grande (right) served as emcee for the evening meeting.



Top left: Glenn Adams and Carl Soderberg. Top right: Will Dacey, Christy Chamberland, Philip Sirois, Drew Blier, and Ryan Pelletier. Bottom left: Cody Jean, Albert Withee, Bruce Rideout, and Steve Wolf. Bottom right: Jan Murchison and Lynn Frazier. Jan was the winner of the 50-50 Raffle and donated her winnings to the MBTA Scholarship Fund. Many thanks, Jan!



Erik Wiberg and Stephen Jones (left). Tony Grande and Jasmine Strout (right).



Chris Putnam and Chip Sheldon (left). Jim Braley, Cody Jean, Glenn Adams, Tim Folster, Tim LePage, and Eric Ritchie (right).



Tim Ring, Eleanora Ring, Paige Lane, and Rodney Lane (left). Paul Bradbury, Alan Gould, and Tony Grande (right).

and operate Central Maine Power and Versant Power, the two major electric energy suppliers in Maine.

The coalition to date has gained support from some political heavy hitters, including the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, the Sportsman Alliance of Maine, and the Maine AFL-CIO.

Cohen presented the coalition's major talking points: that similar efforts in other states and municipalities have proven expensive for taxpayers and, in some cases, led to mismanagement during times of crisis. One case is that of the Long Island Power Authority, a publicly owned power supplier that was first established in 1998. In the intervening years, there have been several legal battles over pension funding and other issues. The original purchase price was \$6.7 billion, but customers

are currently on the hook for \$9 billion in debt and their electric bills remain well above the national average.

Cohen said Nebraska provided another cautionary tale. The state established a network of government-owned and managed power districts more than 100 years ago. The state's electrical grid is ranked 49th for modernization and has been slow to adopt efficiencies and convert to renewable energy sources.

Another case highlighted was Boulder, Colorado, where voters approved a tax to fund the takeover of the local power company in 2011 because they were frustrated with the company's lack of work to convert to renewable energy. In 2020, residents voted to abandon that effort after taxpayers had spent \$29 million in legal fees pursuing a public utility.

Cohen noted that the estimated cost to

purchase Maine's two power companies would be \$13.5 billion, a cost that many believe would only increase the cost per kilowatt of power for Maine power users. Originally, organizers had hoped to collect enough signatures to have the issue on the 2022 ballot, and the effort has been extended with hopes of gathering the required 63,000 signatures in time to qualify for the 2023 statewide ballot.

Jan Murchison was the lucky winner of the 50-50 Raffle, and she generously gave her winnings of \$186 to the Scholarship Fund. Thank you Jan! ■

FMI: Visit MaineAffordableEnergy.org. To learn more about upcoming MBTA events and get involved with the organization, visit www.MBTAonline.org, and Maine Better Transportation Association on Facebook and Instagram.



Stephen Jones, John Theborge, Erik Wiberg, Chris Pyne, and Adam Theriault (left). Chase Dunn and Rudy Bretzke (right).

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Low Gross team (left): Alan Cobb, Peter Merfeld, Gary Levesque, and Andy LaBrecque. Low Net team (right): Josh White, Matt Greenleaf, Scott Cote, and John Gendron.

Going for the green

MBTA Golf Classic raises \$30,000 for Infrastructure Development Fund

THE 2022 MBTA Infrastructure Golf Classic on July 14 began with a cool breeze and ended with a bang. One hundred and fifty MBTA members and friends gathered at the Waterville Country Club in Oakland for the sold-out event that raises funds for the MBTA Infrastructure Development Fund. The event is also a welcome time-out in the busy construction season, where members can relax, enjoy a round of golf and socialize on the green.

This year, as always, the competition was congenial and lively, according to MBTA Golf Committee Chair Joe B. Rollins of Dirigo Materials. “This tournament sells out continually, and that is a testament to this organization and its members,” said Rollins. “Everyone believes in the mission of the tournament – to raise money to support our message about the importance of Maine’s transportation network to our communities and economy.”

Rollins noted that many players look forward to the event as a kind of “circuit breaker” during the busy construction season. “It’s a great chance to get out of the office and off the job site for a day and catch up with friends and colleagues in the industry,” said Rollins.

Winners were announced at an afternoon reception that followed play at the conference hall. Before the winners were announced, Golf Committee Chair Rollins made sure to thank all of the members that made the tournament possible and a success including: Grand sponsors Bitumar USA Inc., Chadwick-BaRoss, Inc., Gendron & Gendron, HNTB Corporation, Ranger Construction Corp., T. Y. Lin International, Whited Equipment, and Wyman & Simpson, Inc.; 19th Hole sponsor Varney Agency; and Clubhouse sponsors All States Construction, Inc. and Sargent.

Then came recognition for the winners of the day. A team led by Ware Butler’s Alan Cobb and included Andy LeBrecque of the Wilson

Lake Country Club, Peter Merfeld of the Maine Turnpike Authority and Gary Levesque of New York Life took Top Gross honors with a score of 54. Second Gross winners, with a score of 57 were the team from Kleinfelder: Matt Steele; Kyle Plossay, Ian Gervais and Tyler Camick.

The Top Net contest was the most competitive battle on the greens, with the team from Gendron & Gendron – Josh White, John Gendron, Scott Cote, and Matt Greenleaf – taking the win with a score of 53. Just one point behind them, the team from Wyman & Simpson took Second Net with a score of 54. Playing for Wyman & Simpson were Josh Marceau, Brian MacFawn, Derek Wing and Jake Kilbreth.

Rounding out the team winners was the foursome from Ranger Construction: Jon Sanborn, Danyl Sanborn, Les Marcue and Jason Millett. Their foursome took Top Mixed honors with a score of 56.

In the individual prize categories, Erin Tome of GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. won Straightest



Second Low Net team (left): Josh Marceau, Jake Kilbreth, Brian MacFawn, and Derek Wing. Second Low Gross team (right): Matt Steele, Tyler Camick, Kyle Plossay, and Ian Gervais.



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Erin Tome (left) and Steve Coward (middle) won Straightest Drive. Paul Koziell (right) was Closest-to-the-Pin winner.



The team from Ranger Construction (left) won Top Mixed: Les Marcue, Jason Millett, Jon Sanborn, and Danyl Sanborn. Les Marcue also won one of the Casino Hole prizes. Playing for Bitumar: Daniel Martin; Brett Plossay; Orion Breen; and Bruce Rideout.



Many thanks to our Golf Classic volunteers (left): Rep. Tom Martin, Casey VanDenBossche, Greg Dore, Shannon Walton, Bruce Hubbard, and Pam Rogers. Middle row: Melanie Whited and Jon Whited, Joel and Michelle Cummings (left) played for the Whited team; Heath Coward, Ernie Martin, Daniel Myers, and Steve Bodge (right) played for T.Y. Lin. Bottom row: Chris Black (left) won the Putting Contest draw; Dave Rowell (center) and Jason Burns (right) were consolation prize winners.



Drive for Women; and Steve Coward of the Varney Agency was awarded Straightest Drive for Men. Paul Koziell of CPM Constructors and a former MBTA president won the Closest-to-the-Pin contest with a ball that landed just over three feet from the 13th hole.

Nine players made it onto the green for the Putting Contest. Chris Black of Dragon Products had his name drawn for the prize; Jason Burns of Wright-Pierce and Dave Rowell of Wyman & Simpson took home consolation prizes.

Three winners were drawn for the Casino Hole. Ken Knauer of Prock Marine, Les Marcue of Ranger Construction and Chase Nelson of Cianbro shared the pot, with each taking home \$240. Members had donated raffle items that were also announced at the reception. Irv Smith of BET Consulting was the winner of a handsome Yeti cooler donated by Dragon Products. Ranger Construction gave two Carhartt jackets that found lucky winners in Rod Lane of Eurovia Northeast and Josh White



MBTA VP Eric Ritchie (left) Joe B. Rollins (right), chair of the Golf Committee

of Gendron & Gendron.

In addition to the tournament raising nearly \$30,000 for the MBTA's Infrastructure Development Fund, members also had the opportunity to donate to the MBTA Scholarship Fund via the 50-50 Raffle – and they did generously. Raffle winner Tim LePage of Sargent took home \$1,200 while an equal amount went to supporting scholarships for Maine students pursuing transportation-related studies.

Rollins also recognized the work of volunteers and MBTA staffers who organized and helped

the fundraiser go off without a hitch. Volunteers for the day included former MBTA president Greg Dore of the Old Mill Pub; Bruce Hubbard who also contributes considerable time to the MBTA Educational Foundation; former MBTA president and state legislator Representative Tom Martin (R-Greene); Pam Rogers of Cross Insurance; Casey VanDenBossche of MaineDOT

and Shannon Walton of Clark Insurance. Rollins was a big help as well, coming early and helping set up before heading out for his day on the links, in addition to his leadership role on the planning committee. Thanks, Joe!

After MBTA VP Eric Ritchie and Rollins announced the winners, the reception began just as a swift moving thunderstorm rolled through the region. Golfers, volunteers and MBTA staff later dashed to their vehicles and headed home. Many thanks to all of the members, golfers and volunteers who made this sold-out event a great success! ■

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Kyle Plossay, Kleinfelder
Ian Gervais, Kleinfelder
Tyler Camick, Kleinfelder

LOW NET

Josh White, Gendron & Gendron
John Gendron, Gendron & Gendron
Matt Greenleaf, Clark Insurance
Scott Cote, Gendron & Gendron

SECOND LOW NET TEAM

Josh Marceau, Wyman & Simpson
Brian MacFawn, Wyman & Simpson
Derek Wing, Wyman & Simpson
Jake Kilbreth, Wyman & Simpson

TOP MIXED TEAM

Jon Sanborn, Ranger Construction Corp.
Danyl Sanborn, Ranger Construction Corp.
Les Marcue, Ranger Construction Corp.
Jason Millett, Ranger Construction Corp.

STRAIGHTEST DRIVE

Steve Coward, Varney Agency
Erin Tome, GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.

CLOSEST TO THE PIN

Paul Koziell, CPM Constructors – 3'7"

CASINO HOLE - HOLE 6

Ken Knauer, Prock Marine; Les Marcue, Ranger Construction; and Chase Nelson, Cianbro

50-50 RAFFLE

Tim LePage, Sargent - \$1,200

PUTTING CONTEST

Chris Black, Dragon Products
Consolation prizes: Jason Burns, Wright-Pierce and Dave Rowell, Wyman & Simpson

DOOR PRIZES

Carhartt jackets (donated by Ranger Construction): Rod Lane of Eurovia Northeast; Josh White of Gendron & Gendron
Yeti cooler (donated by Dragon Products): Irv Smith, BET Consulting

2022 GOLF PLANNING COMMITTEE

CHAIR: Joe B. Rollins, Dirigo Materials
COMMITTEE: Parker Brown, Shaw Brothers Construction; Tony Caruso, Bangor International Airport; Greg Dore, Old Mill Tavern; Zach Fortin, Cross Insurance; Tony Grande, VHB; Larry Hutchins, Bitumar USA; Trevor Kraus, Irving Oil Terminals, Inc.; Rep. Tom Martin, Maine Legislature; Jack Reilly, Richard Brothers Financial; Casey Tuttle, Northeast Paving Company

2022 VOLUNTEERS

Greg Dore, Old Mill Pub
Bruce Hubbard; Hon. Tom Martin, Maine Legislature; Pam Rogers, Cross Insurance; Casey VanDenBossche, MaineDOT; Shannon Walton, Clark Insurance



The Chadwick-BaRoss team: John McGlinn, Don Norris, Adam Lampron, and Todd Pierce. The HNTB team: Dale Mitchell; Ashley Stephens; Tim Cote; and Cory Helmick.



The Varney team: Kelly Mailhot; Mike Cormier; Steve Coward; and Andrew Peabody. The All States team: Jay Swihart; Kayla Knowles; Charlie Emerson; and Ron Simbari.

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Remember this address

MBTA offices have moved to 150 Capitol Street, Suite 5 in Augusta

THE MAINE Better Transportation Association has moved to modern, new offices on Capitol Street in Augusta. The move was effective on August 1, 2022. MBTA last moved 66 years ago – and the organization wasn't even known as Maine Better Transportation back then. It was the Maine Good Roads Association (MGRA). Not surprisingly, MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes and Office Manager Cindy VanDenBossche were tasked for much of this spring with sorting through nearly seven decades of records, old signage and transportation memorabilia in anticipation of the move.

According to minutes from the June 7, 1956 meeting of the MGRA Board of Governors, the last move was prompted by the organization's growing stature and role in state affairs. It was a time of great optimism and growth for the organization. That same month, the MGRA board voted to accept 22 new members into the group, including Governor Edmund S. Muskie. Later that month, President Dwight D. Eisenhower would sign the Federal Highway Act establishing the nation's interstate highway system, an idea which the MGRA had supported since the organization's early days.

At that June 7 meeting, the board voted to hire one of its own as MGRA's first full-time executive director. John C. Burnham was an active board member who had been a frequent contributor to the organization's publication, *The Trail*. It was agreed that Burnham would be paid a salary of \$100 per week: \$88 per week to serve as executive director and \$12 per week for his role as treasurer. As executive director, Burnham also assumed editorship of *The Trail* (now known as *Maine Trails*).

At that same meeting, the board agreed to jointly lease an office with the Maine Turnpike Authority in the Maine State Grange building at 146 State Street for \$110 a month. MGRA and MTA took possession of the space on July 1, 1956. The terms of the lease were "for a period of 10 years or for as long a period as is agreeable to the State Grange."

The rest, of course, is transportation history. ■

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T2 No. 3

Enjoying flavors and friendship at Cushnoc Brewing

More than 30 of MBTA's Young Professionals (and those young at heart) got together Thursday, August 11 at Cushnoc Brewing in Augusta for the third gathering in the 2022 Transportation on Tap (T2) series.

The conversation was lively as MBTAers sampled Cushnoc's aromatic and flavorful brews from Luppolo (an Italian-style pilsner) to Purple Rain (a lavender infused Belgian tripel-style ale that is aged in old gin barrels). MBTA Young Professionals Chair Patrick Brady welcomed the crowd and got the networking started.

The T2 gatherings have become the place-to-be for transportation professionals, according to Brady.

"These gatherings are so important," said Brady. "They have given this hard-working crew a chance to unwind and catch up with colleagues during what has been an extremely busy construction season." Brady was quick to note that there is still one more meeting in the 2022 T2 series: October 20, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Maine Beer Company in Freeport, known for innovative brews such as the much-heralded Peeper Pale Ale, King Titus Porter, and Mean Old Tom Stout.

"We hope to see a great turnout for T2's 2022 season finale," said Brady. ■

FMI: To learn more about Transportation on Tap, visit the Event page at www.MBTAonline.org or watch MBTA's Instagram (@mainebettertransportation) or Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MaineBetterTransportation).

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Minding the bottom line

USI Insurance’s Construction Practice Group looks to help its clients mitigate risks faced in a challenging economy

By Kathryn Buxton

There is no doubt that Maine’s construction industry faces major challenges. The past several months have run counter to textbook interpretations of employment, and inflationary trends. With a tight labor market, supply chain disruptions and upward pressures on material and labor costs, as well as increasing interest rates, market predictions have proven problematic for construction firms looking ahead to the end of this construction season and into the next.

Even with new federal infrastructure spending flowing into the state for highways, bridges, and other transportation projects, it isn’t a time that businesses can afford to sit back and wait it out. So, Chris Abboud, partner, vice president and risk advisor for property and casualty at USI Insurance Services in northern New England, has been busy helping clients understand and mitigate the risks those trends represent.

“Absolutely, the job market is the number one issue for all of our clients,” said Abboud. “Everyone feels busy and there are just not enough bodies to fill the seats.”

‘TRICKLE DOWN’

In the context of insurance coverage, that has had what Abboud calls a “trickle-down effect” with ramifications across the board for engineering and

construction firms in Maine and throughout the country – from payroll and benefit costs to worker compensation claims and bond rates.

Abboud knows the local market well. He grew up in Maine and earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern Maine School of Business, with a focus in risk management and insurance. He worked for heavy hitters in the industry, including MEMIC and

The Rowley Agency before joining USI in 2020. Moreover, he points to USI’s deep roots in the region. USI acquired TD Bank’s United States insurance business in 2012, home to the venerable Maine-based insurance broker, Morse, Payson & Noyes, which dates back to 1910.

In the northern New England market, USI manages approximately \$122 million in property and casualty premiums – about 45 percent of that for Maine-based clients. The firm’s national construction practice manages \$1.6 billion in property and casualty premiums for about 8,000 construction industry clients. The company also offers clients risk management consulting and a full range of brokerage services, including employee benefits, personal risk and retirement consulting. Nationally, the firm has more than 9,000 employees at 200 locations.

The team that serves the company’s northern New



Danette Beck



Chris Abboud



Steve Vitorino



Lianna DellaTorre

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USI personnel from its New England offices last year donated more than 11,000 hours during the company's annual USI Gives Back campaign. The Maine offices volunteered at Spurwink. Front row (l-r): Linda Cantara, Cathy Robinson, Chris Abboud, Denise Rybeck, Meghan McDonald, Lorraine Aiello, Kim Gagne, and Josh Doolan. Back row (l-r): Luke Goodine, Sandra Dalrymple, Todd Jacobson, Bailey Imbus, Melinda Voisine, Finlay McIsaac, Dana Scribner, and Ian Bopp.

England clients is an experienced one. Roger Dunning, president for USI's northern New England operations, heads a staff of 89 working from three offices in Maine and New Hampshire and has worked in the industry since 2008 (Dunning is also a graduate of the University of Southern Maine). USI's construction customers in Maine regularly work with a team that includes: Steve Vitorino, senior vice president for surety, who has worked in the surety field since 2002; Lianna DellaTorre, a partner and vice president for employee benefits based in USI's South Portland office, who has been with the company since 2016; and Abboud, as well as risks specialists who are called upon from USI's national network as needed.

‘BUYING UP’

DellaTorre notes that she has been collaborating with clients to identify opportunities to use employee benefits as a hiring tool to attract and retain good workers. With increasing healthcare costs, employers need to get creative. Voluntary benefits are a growing trend, because employees can pick and choose which benefits suit their personal situation. This can range anywhere from additional long-term disability insurance or life insurance to pet insurance.

She said USI regularly surveys its customers to determine key issues and help develop strategies to keep the company's offerings proactive and relevant. Recent surveys have shown 77 percent of construction clients are not currently requiring Covid vaccinations, but there is an

increased demand for “employee education around benefits . . . and an uptick in employee assistance programs to address mental health.”

Hiring and retaining employees is certainly not the only risk factor Abboud and his clients see on the horizon. Working to mitigate the range of risks is at the heart of the work USI Insurance does for its clients. To help in that task, Abboud and DellaTorre often call on the expertise of fellow USI insurance professionals for what the company calls “team-based strategy planning.”

TEAM APPROACH

One of those pros is National Construction Practice Leader Danette Beck, based at USI's national headquarters in Valhalla, New York. Beck, who joined USI in 2018 after nearly two decades in the business, sat in with Abboud on a conference call with *Maine Trails* to talk about national and regional trends in the industry.

Like Abboud, Beck said the skilled labor shortage is a major concern for USI's customers, particularly turnover in the business, where many companies are seeing seasoned construction professionals retiring and being replaced by a less experienced workforce. While that changing of the guard is necessary to keep the industry growing and vital, it does present risks, noted Beck.

“It brings along with it corresponding challenges regarding quality and safety,” said Beck. She cited studies that show more than one-third of workplace injuries occur during a worker's first year on the job.

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To that end, USI works with clients to find ways to ameliorate safety concerns through easy-to-access training as they work to source labor for work in the pipeline.

‘PARTNERING’

Beck notes that her team is keeping an eye on other issues that are affecting the construction industry: supply chain delays and upward pressures on material costs; “nuclear judgements” for casualty claims that have seen exorbitant awards made when claims are taken to trial; the shift to design-build contracts and the added liability that comes with that; and newer concerns, such as cyber security and the need to meet DEI (diversity equity and inclusion) requirements on contracts.

USI’s professionals work with clients to take all of these factors into account and identify the client’s risk profile and provide targeted, cost-effective solutions. That may include a variety of insurance tools: contract review and policy compliance; loss forecasting; project specific liability programs; equipment floaters; surety bonds; subcontractor risk management; and heavy equipment insurance programs.

Abboud notes that the broad range of services and programs USI offers enables the company to take a “client-centric” approach to risk management. “We partner with our clients, and take the time to make sure we understand the issues they face,” said Abboud.

COMMUNITY FOCUS

All 200 of the company’s offices work to maintain strong ties to the industries and communities where they do business. In Maine, USI’s professionals are active in their communities, including memberships

in Maine Better Transportation Association (MBTA), ABC, AGC Maine and the Maine Real Estate and Development Association.

Abboud sits on the MBTA Board of Directors and has been an enthusiastic member of the Membership Committee, helping to recruit new members to the organization. Abboud, with USI Northern New England President Roger Dunning, coordinated the donation of a terrific MBTA Fall Auction item: a signed jersey from Celtics power forward Al Horford, a five-time NBA All-Star. (The Celtics are, of course, a USI client.)

This summer, USI’s New England personnel participated in the ninth annual USI Gives Back campaign and over recent years have donated hundreds of hours of their time to Spurwink, the Animal Refuge League, local police departments and other organizations. In 2021, USI staff nationwide donated more than 11,000 hours during its USI Gives Back campaign.

That enthusiasm for the work they do and the communities they live in and that “all-hands-on-deck” spirit, said Abboud, makes USI a great place to work. The company has been cited as a Top Insurance Employer by Insurance Business America for four consecutive years (2018-2021), and was named to Business Insurance’s list of Best Places to Work in Insurance (2020 and 2021). The company also was awarded Insurance Brokerage & Consulting Firm of the Year by Corporate LiveWire and has received multiple awards for industry innovation, corporate social responsibility, and employee communication initiatives by Property Casualty 360, the Insurance Marketing and Communications Association, and Ragan’s PR Daily. ■

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

Junior Achievement to honor Jon and Dan Shaw

JUST OVER 100 Maine business people have been inducted into the Junior Achievement’s Hall of Fame since 1990. Jon and Dan Shaw, founders of Shaw Brothers Construction, will join that elite group at a ceremony on October 24 in Portland.

Junior Achievement’s Maine Business Hall is recognizing the entrepreneurial brothers for their lasting impact on both the Maine economy and the state’s evolving community.

Junior Achievement of Maine honors Hall of Fame laureates for their leadership and success in business and community involvement. The event serves as a celebration of their careers and contributions, while also an important fundraiser showcasing the impact of Junior Achievement programming on the lives of young people in Maine.

The Shaws are just the type of business owners that would be inspiring to young Mainers. They started their company as young entrepreneurs in 1977 when both were barely out of high school. They worked hard, building their company from just two employees to one of the largest construction firms in the state. They also have been generous, giving back to their community, most recently by establishing the Shaw Brothers Family Foundation. The foundation in recent years has awarded a \$1 million grant to Maine



Jon and Dan Shaw at the company they founded in 1977.

Medical Center in honor of their mother Sally, and with the gift of Shaw Cherry Hill Farm, a recreational center with trails, a historic barn and more, to the town of Gorham.

“We are pleased to honor these influential Maine business leaders this fall,” said Junior Achievement of Maine President and CEO Michelle Anderson. “The electric atmosphere at our Hall of Fame event always sparks an engaging discussion around building our future workforce and how community leaders, like our honorees, are helping lead us to a stronger, more vibrant future.”

Junior Achievement will have two other honorees at the October event: Dajuan Eubanks, president of the Maine Celtics; and the Beaulieu family – third and fourth generation owners of Springer’s Jewelers.

Local third grade and high school students will attend the event to share their involvement and experience with Junior Achievement and help business and community leaders understand the lasting impact of JA experiences and mentors on the lives of young people. The event will take place at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland on Oct. 24 from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

The MBTA board and membership congratulate Jon and Dan for all they have done to inspire a future generation of transportation and construction entrepreneurs! ■

FMI: To learn more, visit maine.ja.org/events/maine-business-hall-of-fame.

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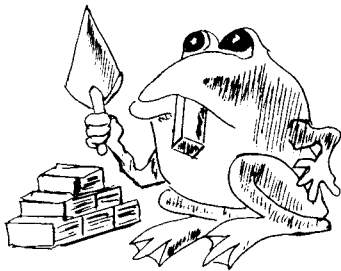
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11 MBTA members named to ‘Best Companies’ list

THE MAINE State Council of the Society for Human Resource Management recently announced the winners in the 17th annual “Best Places to Work in Maine” program. This year 11 MBTA members were among the 100 companies that met the criteria of a “Best Place to Work in Maine.”

Six MBTA members – Bangor Savings Bank, Cianbro, Hammond Lumber, Machias Savings Bank, TD Bank NA, and

Thornton Tomasetti – were named “Best Companies” in the large employer category. Bernstein Shur and Haley Ward, Inc. were listed in the medium employer category; and Gorrill Palmer Consulting Engineers, James W. Sewall Co., and Lebel & Harriman Retirement Advisors were among the small employers cited.

The employer recognition program was launched in Maine in 2006 and recognizes companies that have established and

consistently fostered outstanding workplace environments. Participating companies receive an Employee Feedback Report to help them identify strengths and find opportunities to continue building a better workplace. The program is part of a long-term initiative to encourage growth and excellence in companies throughout the state. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit bestplacetoworkinme.com.

Bogart named NNEPRA deputy director

THE NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND PASSENGER Rail Authority (NNEPRA) has named Natalie Bogart deputy director. Bogart has worked at the agency since 2006 as marketing director for the Amtrak Downeaster. During her tenure as marketing director, annual ridership on the Downeaster has grown by nearly 87 percent from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2019. She has overseen marketing and promotions for the passenger rail service through many changes, including major repairs to the rail line, extension of the service to Freeport and Brunswick,



and expansion of the schedule that now includes five daily round trips between Brunswick and Boston. Bogart is a graduate of Yarmouth High School and holds a bachelor of science degree in communications from Endicott College. She has served on the board of directors of FreeportUSA and volunteered at the Long Creek Youth Development Center. NNEPRA provides the leadership, support and oversight for the daily operations of the Amtrak Downeaster. ■

FMI: For more information, visit www.nnepra.com.

Jonathan Cross to lead Cross Insurance

He is succeeding Royce Cross and is the third generation to lead the family-owned agency

JONATHAN CROSS HAS BEEN named to succeed his father, Royce Cross, as CEO of Cross Insurance, one of the largest independent insurance providers in the Northeast. Royce Cross will continue to serve as company chairman. Headquartered in Bangor since its founding in 1954, Jonathan is the third generation of the Cross family to oversee the company and has served as president since 2020. He told the *Bangor Daily News* that he foresees the company growing, organically and by acquisition, and both locally and into new parts of the country. He said he sees an opportunity for growth in a generation of insurance agents who are aging out of the industry. “I am excited to lead Cross Insurance in its

next phase,” said Cross. “For six decades, my grandfather guided this company from its start with his legendary work ethic and inspiring entrepreneurship. He had incredible vision for business, community and an understanding of the right thing to do. My father has closely followed that example in his decades as chief executive of the company. Under my father’s leadership, we’ve created a family-driven culture while establishing ourselves as one of the largest insurance brokers in the country. I am proud to have the opportunity to continue in that tradition.” Jonathan is the third generation to oversee the company, founded in 1954 by his grandfather Woodrow W. Cross. He first started working for the family’s business part-time when he was 16, helping with numerous projects at the Bangor headquarters. He



Jonathan Cross became a full-time licensed agent after graduating from Husson University in 1998. He worked for many years alongside his grandfather, his father Royce, late uncle Brent, and cousin Woodrow Cross II. As an integral part of the Cross team, Jonathan has played a role in the expansion of Cross’s insurance services and capabilities, which now span beyond the northeast with 50 offices and approximately 1,000 employees. Said Royce: “Our agency is extremely proud of our ongoing legacy and there is no one better suited than Jonathan to carry us forward as we continue towards our long-term strategic goals.” ■

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

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Ruesch elected to ABA's Forum on Construction Law's Governing Committee

VERRILL PARTNER Robert Ruesch was recently elected to the American Bar Association's (ABA) Forum on Construction Law's Governing Committee for a three-year term. Ruesch has a long history with the ABA's Forum on Construction Law, beginning in 2014 when he became a member of the Division 1 Steering Committee and then Chair of the SPEC's Distant Learning Subcommittee since 2016. From April to September of 2020, Ruesch was a part of the COVID-19 Leadership Roundtable Series, moderating and speaking at webinars. Ruesch focuses his practice on construction, design, and surety

law, and counsels his clients through all aspects of the construction process, including contract negotiation, procurement, bid protests, claims management and avoidance, and trials, arbitration, and mediation. Members of the forum represent all segments of the construction industry: owners, design professionals, general contractors, construction managers, subcontractors, suppliers, insurers and sureties. The forum's mission is to serve the construction industry through education and leadership while building the best construction lawyers. ■



Robert Ruesch

FMI: To learn more, visit www.americanbar.org/groups/construction_industry.



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Village investments will move The County forward

ONE OF the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been increased telework flexibility for workers. High-speed broadband access allows many professionals to work from anywhere, and people looking to leave big cities are increasingly discovering the benefits of life in Maine. Our state offers small villages, towns, and pastoral landscapes along with safety, affordability, and familiarity not found in most urban areas. For many, trading the concrete jungle and rush-hour traffic for acreage and rural roads is a no-brainer. Not only has this phenomenon resulted in growth in our state's population centers, but it's also increasing in-migration in one of Maine's most rural areas: Aroostook County.

This population shift is happening at a time when the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is standing up a program to enhance the transportation components of the village streetscapes that make our state special. MaineDOT's Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) helps local leaders reimagine their downtowns and villages by leveraging new funding sources to make those visions realities. For the first time in a generation, federal grant programs will help Maine make smart, targeted investments in the places where people live, walk, bike, skateboard, shop, and do business. These efforts are geared toward solidifying the sense of place and transportation safety while supporting economic opportunities.

Fort Kent, Madawaska, Presque Isle, and Van Buren – all located along U.S. Route 1 – are slated to start the planning phases of VPI projects this fall. Here is some information about what is currently taking shape.

FORT KENT

Fort Kent, which was established as a historic outpost during the bloodless Aroostook War between Maine and Canada, now boasts a vibrant downtown, a border crossing with New Brunswick, and the four-season Outdoor Center. Fort Kent's planning efforts incorporate improvements to existing pedestrian facilities and new connections to transportation generators such as new growth areas and senior living centers. The proposed scope will connect downtown to a three-mile trail loop, the historic Fort Kent blockhouse, recreational trails, and waterfront access to the Saint John River.

MADAWASKA

Madawaska, an Acadian border town in the Crown of Maine, is home to a bustling paper industry, the Four Corners Park, and the Acadian

Cultural Festival of Maine. Nearly 85 percent of households speak French as a first language. Planning efforts in Madawaska are building on previous municipal efforts aimed at strengthening the sense of place and local character through culturally poignant pedestrian parks. The proposed project scope will enhance the look, feel, and character of the downtown, through continuity of materials while incorporating the new International Bridge and U.S. Customs and Border facility into the larger multimodal network.

PRESQUE ISLE

Presque Isle – “The Hub of Aroostook County” – is home to the University of Maine at Presque Isle, Presque Isle International Airport, and a variety of cultural and economic opportunities that draw visitors from the region and beyond. The historic downtown is the center of activity and shopping. Spanning nearly three miles from the University of Maine Presque Isle campus to the Aroostook Center Mall, the proposed project scope will create a unified pedestrian system that not only addresses signal issues in complex intersections but will also connect cultural and recreational infrastructure to education and commerce.


VAN BUREN

Van Buren, situated on the St. John River, is home to Maine's northernmost seaplane landing site. The proposed project scope here will connect the historic downtown to the waterfront by a dedicated pedestrian path. The scope also addresses the look, feel, and character of the historic downtown, while improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and ameliorating accessibility challenges. The municipality has begun investing heavily in bringing back the sense of place and destination development.

Transformative success will come from strong partnerships between municipal leaders and MaineDOT. Local officials understand the histories, needs, and vision of their communities best. MaineDOT offers access to planners, engineers, and project managers – as well as critical knowledge regarding special federal funding opportunities, including competitive grants contained in the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Together, municipalities and MaineDOT can be a winning combination to provide once-in-a-generation improvements to the iconic New England villages that are a key piece of what makes Maine special. VPI efforts in Sanford have already secured a \$25-million federal grant to help improve and invest in its downtown. MaineDOT looks forward to more successful village partnerships ahead. ■

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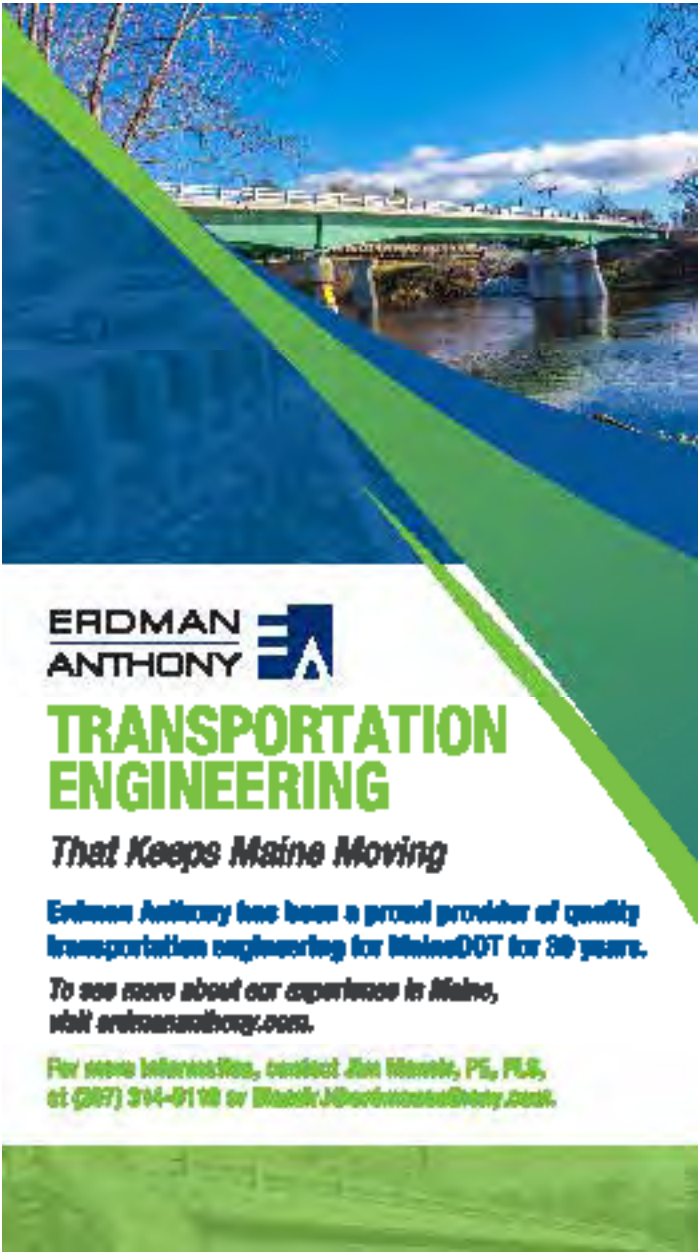
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In November 2012, a crowd turned out in Freeport for the launch of the Downeaster's expanded passenger rail service.

2 decades on track

ON DECEMBER 14, 2001, the Downeaster pulled out of Boston to the rousing cheers and applause of more than 400 invited passengers. As the train approached the stations along the route – Haverhill, Exeter, Durham, Dover, Wells, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, and Portland – there was the pealing of church bells and sound of live music on platforms. On December 15, 2001, at 6:05 a.m., the first scheduled passenger train for the general public pulled out of Portland's new Transportation Center headed for Boston.

In the almost 21 years since, the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA), the governmental agency that oversees the rail service's operations, has overseen major changes, including

the ongoing upgrades of the tracks, sidings and crossings, new passenger platforms, a layover and maintenance facility in Brunswick, and expanded passenger service to Freeport and Brunswick beginning 10 years ago on November 1, 2012.

Today, the Amtrak Downeaster makes five round-trips daily between Brunswick and North Station in Boston and serves 12 communities in three states along a 143-mile corridor.

Currently, the state is in negotiations with the Finger Lakes Railway, which assumed freight operations on the Rockland line at the beginning of August, to launch a two-year pilot of connecting passenger service to the midcoast. As of yet, there is no timeline established for the start of the pilot service. ■