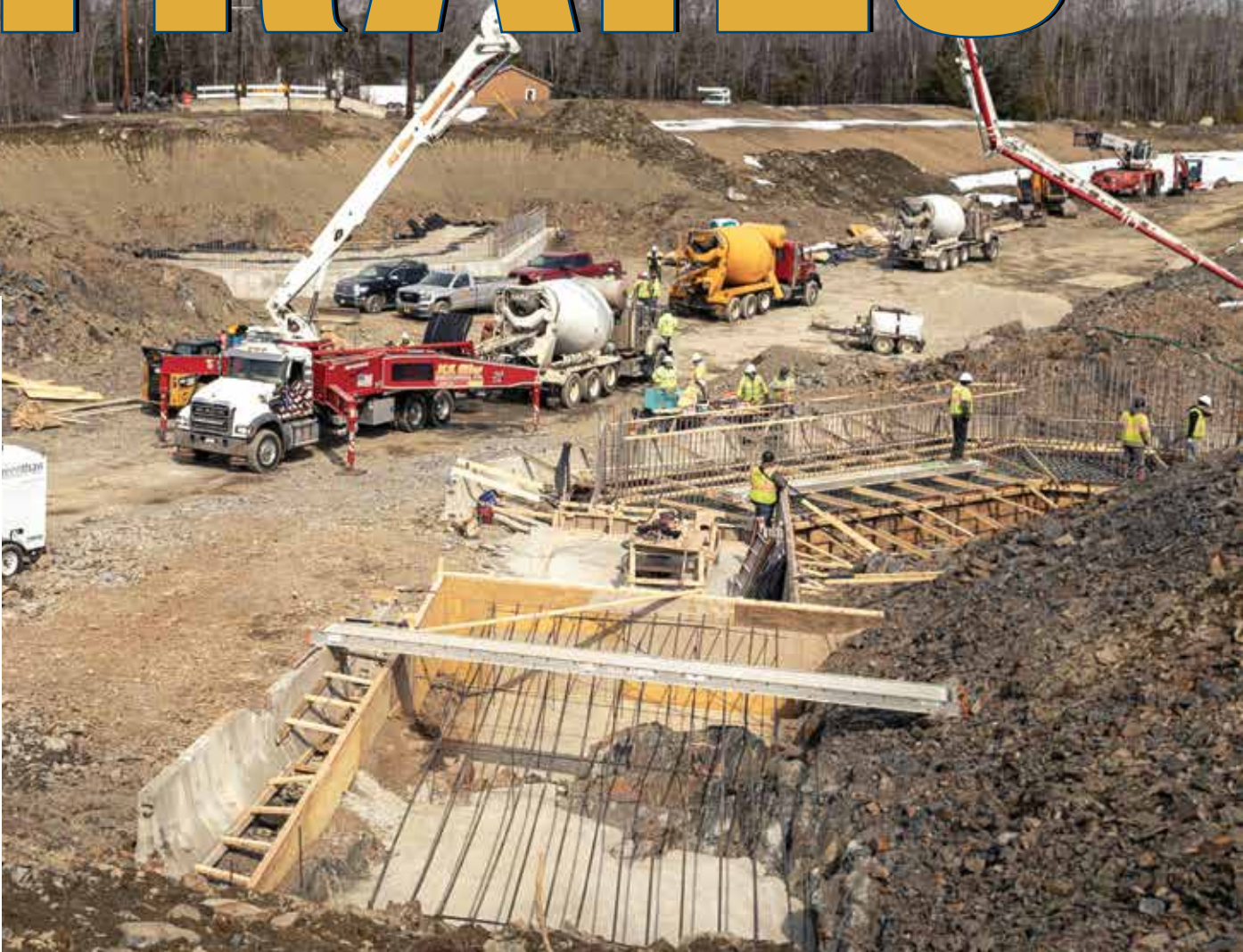


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MAINE TRAILS

IN THIS ISSUE:



14

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- 9 Making connections.** Collaboration is essential in this hardworking profession. **By Eric Ritchie**

CALENDAR

- 11 Upcoming MBTA events.**

ON RAMP

- 13** A digest of recent transportation news.

COVER STORY

- 14 'A lot of everything.'** Building the I-395/Route 9 Connector. **By Betty Adams**

MAINE NEWS

- 21 Traffic fatalities on the rise.** Maine sees a 17 percent increase in traffic deaths.
- 27 Courageous.** Remembering Maine Senator Christine Savage.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

- 29 Did someone say 'challenge'?** The MBTA 84th Annual Meeting in Freeport.
- 35 Oh! Orono!** Transportation on Tap series goes "tubular" at Orono Brewing.

MEMBER NEWS

- 39 Gaining traction.** Jordan Equipment Company expands with Augusta branch. **By Kathryn Buxton**



29



39

- 45 Dysart's is No. 1.** Food and Wine loves Maine's favorite truck stop.

MAINEDOT VIEW

- 47 A big step.** The Maine Legislature passes funding legislation for a more sustainable Highway Fund. **By Bruce Van Note**

EXIT RAMP

- 57 Mapping the future.** In the mid-1940s, the U.S. was planning for a major highway building spree.

On the cover: At work on the I-395 / Route 9 Connector. **Sargent photo**



Maine Better Transportation Association

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by Eric Ritchie, MBTA President

Making connections

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IT WAS humbling to stand in front of my family, friends, coworkers, and the MBTA membership at the Annual Meeting in May. Though I have known and worked with so many of you over the years, it is an entirely different thing to have been elected as the leader of an organization that for the past 84 years has played such a critical role in our state.

As I thought about what I wanted to achieve during my term as president, I looked to a couple of documents that embody the guiding principles of this organization. First there is the MBTA mission statement. Our mission is simple and straightforward: "To improve the quality of life for Maine citizens by advocating for a safe, efficient transportation infrastructure network." It is an important mission for reasons that we all know.

I also looked to our strategic plan, and there was one aspect of that which particularly resonated with me. It reads: "Connecting and collaborating with public and private organizations to advance a better transportation network." For a group of hardworking businesspeople like us who plan, design, build or maintain roads and other transportation for a living, this makes total sense. The roads and bridges we build connect people to the places they want and need to go; and we would not be able to build them without a lot of collaboration between all the entities involved.

Collaboration is a straightforward word, one we all understand. It is defined as "a working practice whereby individuals work together for a common purpose to achieve a common goal." One book I looked up called *The Five Principles of Collaboration*, laid out a roadmap for achieving collaborative relationships: trust; respect; willingness; empowerment; and effective communications. Breaking those principles down one by one offers us a way to advance the MBTA mission.

First, trust and respect. It seems obvious – but it is important to say that we have to trust and respect each other if we are going to build something, fix something, or improve something.

"If the pandemic wasn't a wakeup call that things can turn on a dime, then I don't know what is. We all have had to think differently, shift the way we work, become a little more open-minded and flexible, look for ways of doing things not only better, but smarter. On the one hand, we became more self-reliant and on the other, we became painfully aware of how much we need to rely on each other and how much we need each other. . ."

Next, willingness. We all must be open and willing to come together, to listen, and to really hear another point of view.

Third is empowerment. It is important that



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Last, there is effective communication. This is probably the hardest one of all. When we talk, we know what we mean to say, but that doesn't always get transmitted or received in the way we expect it should be, and at times, we all struggle to be effective listeners.

Why is collaboration so key to what we do? It's because we work with so many other entities: each other, our competitors, project owners, local, state, and federal agencies. One of the great things about MBTA is that we have members from so many different sectors, who all rely on and thrive with an improved transportation system.

We are fortunate to have great partners in MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority, municipalities, other agencies, legislators, other associations, businesses, and with our state legislators and congressional delegation and their staffs.

This past year has been a busy one for many of us. All companies, organizations, and individuals are thinking differently in the post-pandemic era. If the pandemic wasn't a wake-up call that things can turn on a dime, then I don't know what is. We all have had to think differently, shift the way we work, become a little more open-minded and flexible, look for ways of doing things not only better, but smarter. On the one hand, we became more self-reliant and on

the other hand, we became painfully aware of how much we need to rely on each other and how much we need each other – not only to make our businesses, but all aspects of our lives thrive.

It feels like life and work have gotten more hectic. As we run around taking care of things, making sure our kids are getting to where they need to be, ensuring we are supporting them enough, confirming that our workforce and our families have the resources they need, I think we sometimes forget that we need to take time to nourish our partnerships.

But I also wonder if we are so busy running around that we sometimes don't take time to reflect, to share our expectations, be willing to better trust and respect each other, and perhaps most importantly – communicate effectively with our partners, with our owners, with our competitors, and with everyone who is working toward the same goal – to improve transportation in Maine.

How do we promote more collaboration? I am not sure, but I would really appreciate hearing your thoughts and opinions on this.

And speaking of collaboration, something very significant happened during the legislative session this year. The Maine Legislature passed and Governor Mills signed legislation which would replace annual General Fund moneys with ongoing funding to the Highway Fund, through sales tax receipts which have always gone strictly to the General Fund. It may not sound like

much, but it is.

This will provide more predictable funding and stability to MaineDOT, which means more predictability also for the private sector companies that work for the department, and most importantly, for the traveling public. Please see Commissioner Van Note's column on this topic on page 47. This would not have happened without a bipartisan group of legislators on the Transportation Committee, who stood together and made an historic choice. Senator Brad Farrin (Norridgewock) and Representative Wayne Parry (Arundel) have been working on sustainable funding for many years. They were joined by some newer members on the committee on both sides of the aisle. We will have a story about this in the next issue of *Maine Trails*.

In closing, I would like to say thank you for your trust in me and thank you to my family – my daughter Brooklyn and son Nicholas – for cheering me on and supporting me in the coming year. I'd also like to thank my predecessor Tony Grande for setting an outstanding example and for all his work to make the transportation profession in Maine open to fresh faces and ideas. That is a great jumping off point for the connections and the collaborations we have ahead of us. Thank you, Tony!

I also look forward to seeing you at events this year: Transportation on Tap, the Aroostook County Meeting, the Fall Convention, and more. ■

MBTA CALENDAR

Thursday, August 3

TRANSPORTATION ON TAP
Burano's, Hallowell

Thursday, August 10

AROOSTOOK COUNTY MEETING
Northeastland Hotel, Presque Isle

Friday, September 15

FALL GOLF / CONVENTION
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Saturday, September 16

FALL CONVENTION
Samoset Resort, Rockport

September 23 - 24

DEMPSEY CHALLENGE RIDE
Lewiston

Friday, September 29

PDH TOUR
Location and Time TBD

Wednesday, October 18

TRANSPORTATION ON TAP
Flight Deck Brewing, Brunswick

Thursday, December 7

MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE
Augusta Civic Center

Thursday, December 14

HOLIDAY-SCHOLARSHIP MEETING
Black Bear Inn, Orono

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



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ONRAMP



Trucks roll across the newly-opened section of I-95 in Philadelphia on June 23.

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Fast work

ON FRIDAY, June 23, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro and PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll officially announced the re-opening of a stretch of I-95 that had been closed after a section of the highway had collapsed just shy of two weeks before. The collapse had been caused when a tanker truck carrying gasoline rolled over and caught fire. The truck's driver died in the accident.

Originally, officials had predicted the highway would be closed for several months, but the state worked with its contractors and engineers to devise a plan to get the highway,

which is part of a critical north-south route, reopened. Crews completed demolition within the first week, then put a temporary roadway in place, bolstered by 15,000 cubic yards of aggregate comprised almost entirely of foamed recycled glass. The foamed glass was used as fill in the collapsed section, and crews built a temporary road over the fill. According to its manufacturer and MBTA member AeroAggregates of North America, the foamed glass fill is 85 percent lighter than quarried aggregate, is non-leaching, non-flammable, rot-resistant and creates a "highly frictional surface, which makes it suitable as a lightweight backfill." The

company recycles approximately 40 million glass bottles each year at its plant in Eddystone, Pennsylvania. The bottles are crushed into a powder, mixed with a foaming agent and heated to 1800° Fahrenheit to create the foamed glass fill.

The temporary section of I-95 has six 11-foot-wide lanes – three northbound and three southbound – and is slightly narrower than the section it is replacing. Crews are expected to continue work over the next several months to complete the construction of a permanent roadway. That section of highway carries more than 160,000 vehicles daily. ■

15-minute cities

THE CONCEPT of the 15-minute city – an urban area in which primary services should be accessible within a 15-minute walking/biking/transit radius – has taken a beating lately. Naysayers have called the concept "anti-car." Still some city planners see opportunity in the concept. The National League of Cities (NLC) recently looked at two cities' plans to achieve that goal in real life: Portland, Oregon; and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Since 2010, Portland has worked toward becoming a "20-minute city" by 2030 as a means of achieving urban equity and climate goals. The city has actively promoted transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements to connect neighborhoods, as well as building affordable housing in amenity-rich neighborhoods.

Cedar Rapids adopted a Community Action Plan in 2021 that has

the ambitious goal to reduce carbon emissions by 45 percent by 2030 and be net-zero by 2050.

The plan is multi-pronged: to create a sustainable development policy; to fill in missing amenities within the city's neighborhoods; to enhance transportation options within and connecting neighborhoods; and to prioritize vulnerable and under-resourced areas to help provide amenities, transportation and tree cover.

The NLC says the 15-minute city concept could hold benefits for communities of all sizes. Writes NLC program specialists Kyle Funk and Julia Glickman, "Depending on a municipality's geographic size, needs and layout, there is something for each local government to take away from this concept. While every city, town and village will not be able to achieve an exclusively walkable and bikeable 15-minute city, complete neighborhoods, human-centric design, safety, adding mobility modes, and walkability are important goals for municipalities to consider." ■



Sargent crews construct box culverts along the connector route.

SARGENT PHOTOS

‘A lot of everything’

Long in the planning, the new I-395/Route 9 Connector promises to improve connections within and beyond state borders

By Betty Adams

MORE THAN 25 years after the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) authorized an engineering study on a corridor to connect I-395 and Route 9 (also known as the Airline) in Penobscot County, the project is more than a third of the way to completion.

The Orono-based firm Sargent began work on the connector shortly after being awarded the \$84 million contract from the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) in January 2022. The overall cost for the connector, according to the department, is \$124 million, and that includes design, engineering, and right-of-way acquisition, as well as several other items involving the Wilson Street Bridge and culvert work. The completion date is July 2025.

Some 60 percent of the funding is coming from the federal government

with almost \$25 million through the U.S. Department of Transportation Infrastructure for Rebuilding America program, and 40 percent from the state.

The Maine Better Transportation Association supported that infrastructure grant application in an October 2017 letter to then-MaineDOT Commissioner David Bernhardt and listed a number of reasons to build the new artery:

- To help revitalize the Downeast region of Maine, one of the most impoverished regions in New England, by improving shipping connections to industries there and to eastern New Brunswick;
- To significantly reduce travel time for both freight and passenger users;
- To improve safety at a time when highway accidents are increasing precipitously;
- To improve traffic flow to the Acadia region, visited by millions

of visitors per year;

- To improve east-west connections in Maine and across the region; and
- To connect to a highway system of regional and international significance.

The “Project Description” in the infrastructure grant application says MaineDOT “is developing the I-395/Route 9 Connector project to complete a ‘missing link’ that would provide a regional solution to improve transportation-system linkage, safety, and mobility between DOT and Route 9 in north-central Maine. The greater Bangor/Brewer area is the economic and employment center for the northcentral Maine region and a center for goods movement because of its proximity to the interstate system and Canadian markets. Outside of the Bangor/Brewer area, the area quickly becomes very rural.”

In an e-mail in mid-June, MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note said: “This project is a good example of the fact that transportation is not just about a series of projects – but an overall system. The I-395/Route 9 Connector is a big investment in



“This project is a good example of the fact that transportation is not just about a series of projects – but an overall system.”

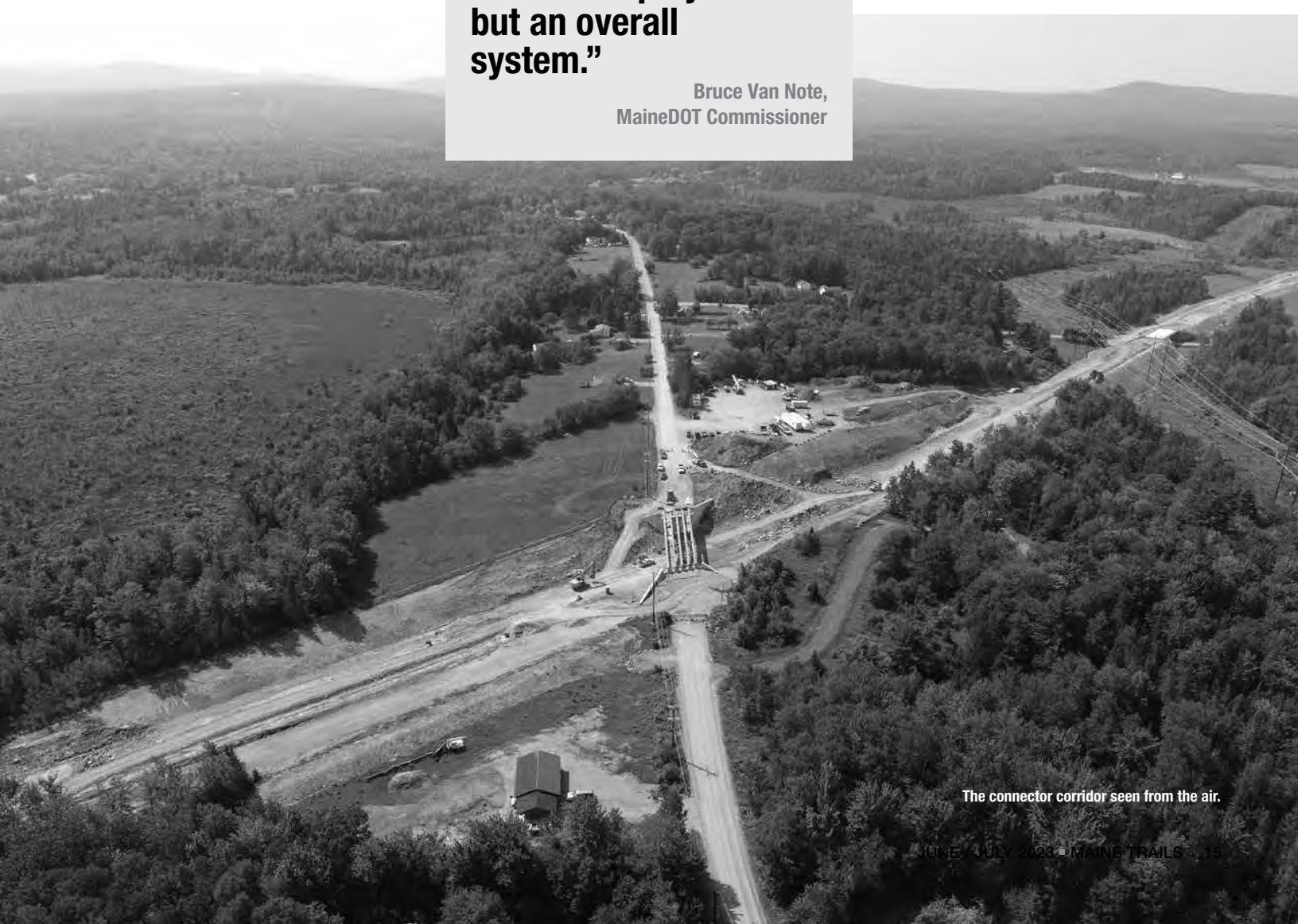
Bruce Van Note,
MaineDOT Commissioner

a relatively short distance of highway, but it will improve our overall transportation system, including the connections that go beyond Maine’s borders.”

Steve Groves, a consultant serving as the state’s construction project manager on the connector, says the contract is the largest dollar amount that the state has paid to build a road.

It’s also the largest contract awarded to Sargent, and involves creating more than six miles of a limited-access, two-lane roadway, including five bridge spans and two large box culverts as it runs through Brewer, Holden, and Eddington.

The Maine Division of the Federal Highway Administration’s 2016 record of decision says the I-395/Route 9 Connector “will improve system continuity for regional travel between I-395 and Route 9 by providing a new two-lane, controlled-access highway with improved continuity in speeds and roadway geometry. The proposed highway will carry a similar lane configuration throughout the entire length and divert a substantial portion



The connector corridor seen from the air.



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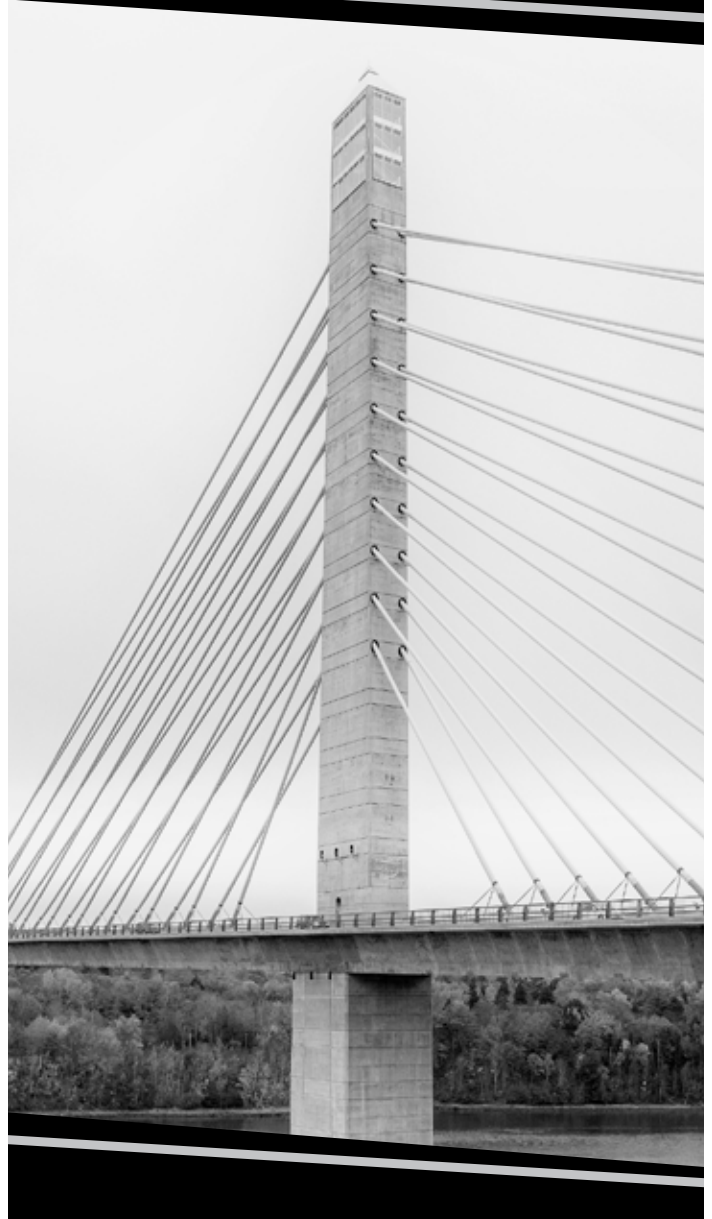
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The new highway will have eight box culverts, including two for snowmobile trails and two wildlife crossings.



of heavy truck traffic and other through traffic along Route 1A, Route 46, and a portion of Route 9 in Brewer and Eddington.”

Van Note has described the project as one of the “few new alignment projects” in the state. “New capacity is generally not needed in a lot of areas in Maine,” Van Note explained. “We also don’t pursue them very often because of funding, environmental, and other challenges. We only pursue creating new limited capacity roadways when there is a specific, targeted reason on a system level to do so. In this case, there was poor system linkage between I-395 and Route 9: the existing highways transition between wider, higher-speed segments to narrower, lower-speed segments. The current roadways are inefficient and often create delays for passengers and freight movement. There are also conflicts between local and regional traffic.”

He pointed to the Presque Isle Bypass as another example of a new capacity project. The first 1.7-mile section of that bypass – aimed at diverting trucks from city streets – opened in June 2019.

Asked why the I-395/Route 9 Connector project was approved as a two-lane highway,



“[This project] means a lot to our crews and the greater Bangor/Brewer region in general. We see it as a community project we’re proud to have our hand in.”

**Herb Sargent,
Sargent CEO**

Van Note said, “Transportation planning involves planning for the long-term future. Expansion is possible on this project. However, this highway is being built to meet the current needs. Right now, there is no need for a four-lane highway. Also, the Connector will tie into a two-lane highway on the eastern end, providing continuity for travelers.”

The state purchased a 200-foot right of way for the corridor.

Van Note offered examples of other two-lane, controlled access highways: the Topsham Bypass and many sections of Route 1 (east of Nobleboro).

Groves was a member of a “constructability committee” that met online every three or four weeks for a year-and-a-half even before construction began to help plan the new connector work. “There were so many things that we’d never really done before, lightweight fill, moving transmission lines,” he said. “We had water lines that needed to go over bridges.”

Work on the I-395/Route 9 Connector began with clearing along the entire route, and then installation of some 975,000



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vertical feet of wick drains in the area near I-395 and Lambert Road so water could be drained from the clay and soft soils.

“We install the drains so that we can put fill on top of the road, and when it settles, the wick drains help the water come up out of the ground,” Groves said. In some of the areas, lightweight foamed glass fill from AeroAggregates, another MBTA member and a Philadelphia-area firm, was used. (That firm also supplied the fill to begin the rapid reconstruction in June of a collapsed section of I-95 in Philadelphia.)

“We have areas where there is two feet of lightweight fill and areas where there’s 20 feet,” he added. By mid-June, some 90 percent of that area met settlement criteria of the geotechnical engineers to provide a stable working platform. The remaining area was expected to reach the criteria shortly.

Sargent President and CEO Herb Sargent said, “This project really has a lot of everything – bridges; temporary local road closures; wick drains; lightweight fill; animal passages; earthmoving; rock blasting – a lot of challenges to coordinate to meet milestones. Some of these items represent substantial costs due to the highway traversing very challenging subsurface soils. The lightweight fill alone accounts for nearly 15 percent of the roadway’s cost. However, when complete, the I-395/Route 9 Connector

will improve Maine’s East-West connection significantly, both in terms of time traveled, as well as safety, while minimizing East-West’s traffic on roads/intersections that already suffer from traffic overloading.”

Another early portion of the project included having two major power transmission lines raised by Versant so the roadway could be installed under them and proper clearance maintained. Groves said the lines over the Lambert Avenue bridge had to be raised almost 30 feet high and one halfway between Levenseller and Route 9 “out in the middle of the woods” had to be raised an additional 20 feet.

Groves said the ones over Lambert Avenue were raised in the spring of 2022, and the other site was set for 2024. However, he said that Sargent roughed in a road so Versant could do that work last fall. “Both of them have been taken care of at this point. We don’t have to wait for any utilities in that area,” Groves added.

Along with the five bridges, the work includes a total of eight box culverts: two for snowmobile trails, two for wildlife crossings, and four for streams.

The connector road weaves its way cross-country over and under roads and waterways. The Lambert Road bridge, which was the first one built, is the only one on the connector that goes over another road. The Clewleyville, Levenseller, and Eastern Avenue bridges will go over the new connector. Another bridge will cross Eaton Brook.

A large box culvert was used in the Felts Brook area, and that construction site – some 500 to 600 feet away from I-395 – was visible from Wilson Street in Brewer. “That was the first one we had to cross,” Groves said, “and some of the worst soils on the project were in that area.”

T Buck Construction, Inc. is the subcontractor doing the bridge work



“Most people don’t even know that it’s there . . . they might see the construction, but they don’t realize that we’re building six miles of road.”

**Steve Groves,
MaineDOT Consultant/Project Manager**

and in June was working on the Clewleyville and Eastern Avenue bridges and beginning the Eaton Brook bridge.

In the meantime, Versant has begun installing 28 new utility poles to accommodate the realignment of the intersection with Route 9. Work on that intersection is expected to take place in the fall of 2024.

By mid-June, Groves said a vehicle could travel the entire length of the projected connector.

“It’s a little bit of an unusual project because it’s not on a roadway, it’s not on a current corridor, so it doesn’t impact the traveling public,” Groves said. “Most people don’t even know that it’s there. The residents that live along the six-mile corridor, they all realize it’s going on. But any of our tourists, or our travelers or anybody going from 395 headed Downeast, they might see the construction, but they don’t realize that we’re building six miles of road.”

For many Sargent workers, the project is in their backyard.

“This is by far the largest contract we’ve had, and that, in addition to being the extension to our I-395 project, means a lot to our crews and the greater Bangor/Brewer region in general,” Herb Sargent said via email. “We see it as a community project we’re proud to have our hand in.”

He also noted that Sargent built the I-395 spur on the Brewer side, beginning in 1983 which was itself, at the time, the largest highway project in Maine (the I-395/Penobscot Bridge became the largest almost immediately after). “These numbers indicate how important this connection is to the safety and efficiency of travel in and out of the Downeast area of Maine,” he said.

Groves summed up the impact of at least part of the project: “Currently a lot of traffic uses Route 46 in East Holden to connect to Route 9 in East Eddington. The biggest thing this project will do is reduce traffic on Route 46 in East Eddington, which was never really built to carry the traffic load that it currently does.”

Later work under the contract will also take place around I-395 at the Brewer end. “We will realign a couple of existing ramps so they work for the connector and then we’ll actually build two ramps,” he said. “There will be a giant cloverleaf that wraps up around and meets up with Wilson Street on the southeast side of the connector.”

At the other end of the corridor, the project calls for the creation of an intersection where the new connector – to be known as Route 9 – will be for through traffic, and the old Route 9, which continues into downtown Brewer, will have a stop sign. The old Route 9 will be redesignated as Route 9B (Business Route 9), Groves noted. ■

FMI: MaineDOT has a web page offering news and updates on the connector project (bit.ly/I-395-connector).

About the author: Betty Adams is a freelance writer and journalism instructor. She lives in Augusta and can be reached at adamsbetty00@gmail.com.



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TRIP REPORT

Maine traffic fatalities increased by 17 percent from 2019 to 2022

Fatal and serious traffic crashes in Maine resulted in \$10 billion in economic and quality-of-life costs in 2022

THE NUMBER and rate of U.S. traffic fatalities surged in 2020 and 2021 and decreased slightly in 2022 from the previous year, but remained at a high level as vehicle travel returned to near pre-pandemic levels. This is according to a report released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, entitled *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 documents the increase in the number and rate of traffic fatalities from 2019 to 2022 at the national and state levels, examines causes for this increase, calculates the cost of fatal and serious traffic crashes, and prescribes a broad, comprehensive approach to reducing traffic fatalities in the U.S.

In April 2020, as most activity was curtailed in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, U.S. vehicle miles of travel (VMT) was 40 percent lower than April 2019. By the end of 2020, overall U.S. VMT was 11 percent lower than in 2019. Vehicle travel rebounded to four percent below pre-pandemic levels in 2021, and in 2022 rose to one percent below 2019's pre-pandemic levels.

However, from 2019 to 2022, while vehicle travel decreased and then began to rebound, the number of traffic fatalities and the rate of traffic fatalities per 100 million VMT soared and has remained significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. The number of U.S. traffic fatalities increased 19 percent from 2019 to 2022, from 36,096 to 42,795, and the nation's fatality rate per 100 million VMT increased 22 percent during that time, from 1.11 to 1.35.

In Maine, from 2019 to 2022, the number of traffic fatalities increased 17 percent and the fatality rate per 100 million VMT increased 20

Maine's 17 percent increase in fatalities mirrored a national trend, which a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration analysis attributes to drivers' riskier behaviors – speeding, failure to wear seatbelts and driving under the influence.

percent, while vehicle travel decreased by one percent. Data for all states can be found in the report.

"Maine's numbers have, unfortunately, mirrored those of the nation in terms of traffic fatalities on our roads," noted Maria Fuentes, executive director of Maine Better Transportation Association.

"We have seen sharp increases in bike and pedestrian fatalities, along with those by motorcyclists. The numbers are obviously devastating to families who have lost loved ones, but they also create – in the aggregate – profound societal and economic harm to our state," added Fuentes.

Bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities, which accounted for 20 percent of all U.S. traffic fatalities in 2022, increased 19 percent from 2019 to 2022, while the number of pedestrians killed increased 18 percent and the number of bicyclists killed increased 26 percent.

U.S. motorcyclist fatalities increased by 20 percent from 2019 to 2022, which coincides with the rise in the share of motorcyclists who reported not wearing helmets, up 17 percent to 29 percent. While motorcycle travel accounted for 0.6 percent of annual VMT in 2021, motorcyclists represented 14 percent of traffic fatalities.

Traffic crashes result in a significant economic burden. According to a 2023 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report, the tangible economic costs of traffic crashes include medical care, lost productivity, legal and court costs, insurance administrative costs, workplace costs, congestion impacts (travel delay, excess fuel consumption and pollution), emergency services, and property damage.

Based on NHTSA's traffic crash cost methodology, TRIP estimates that fatal and serious traffic crashes in Maine in 2022 caused a total of \$10 billion in the value of societal harm, which includes \$2.5 billion in

MAINE TRAFFIC FATALITY AND VEHICLE MILES OF TRAVEL (VMT) DATA					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019-2022 Change
Traffic Fatalities	157	164	153	183	17%
Fatalities per 100M VMT	1.06	1.25	1.07	1.27	20%
VMT (Billions)	14.9	13.1	14.6	14.7	-1%

The report notes that increasing investment in roadway safety improvements is likely to pay off after a rapid increase in fatalities.

TRIP

economic costs and \$7.7 billion in quality-of-life costs.

The significant increase in traffic fatalities since the onset of the pandemic appears largely related to increased risks being taken by drivers. In an October 2021 report, NHTSA found that “after the declaration of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly. Of the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in riskier behavior, including speeding, failure to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.”

To combat the increase in fatalities, in early 2022 the U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a comprehensive National Roadway Safety Strategy (www.transportation.gov/NRSS), a roadmap for addressing the nation’s roadway safety crisis based on a Safe System approach (bit.ly/Safe_System). The strategy includes five targets, which can be further explored by accessing the TRIP Safety Report (bit.ly/TRIP-Safety-Report): 1) Safer People; 2) Safer Roads; 3) Safer Vehicles; 4) Safer Speeds; and 5) Post-Crash Care.

Consistent with the Safe System approach, safety at highway work zones can be improved by implementing a comprehensive work zone safety strategy that includes ensuring a proper work zone layout; prioritizing work zone safety training; ensuring the use of high visibility safety apparel and appropriate traffic control devices; creating an internal traffic control plan; and implementing strategies to reduce aggressive driving.

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 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. 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. ■

FMI: To download the TRIP Safety Report, visit bit.ly/TRIP-Safety-Report.

MaineDOT’s ‘active transportation’ plan finalized

MAINEDOT FINALIZED its first-ever “active transportation” plan this spring. The plan, developed with public input and spearheaded by MaineDOT, provides a groundwork for enhancing safety and accessibility throughout Maine for a wide range of human-powered and human-scale modes of transportation: walking, bicycling, skating, skateboarding, operating a wheelchair or other mobility device, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Active transportation also includes some small-scale electric devices such as electric bikes, electric scooters, and other similar devices.

More than 2,000 public comments were recorded during the process, and the resulting plan sets five goals: 1) to make prioritized, cost-effective improvements to the on-road AT network; 2) to make prioritized expansions to the off-road AT network, given available resources; 3) to enhance multimodal connections for all Maine people; 4) to improve AT education and outreach efforts; and 5) to identify and pursue new funding opportunities.

Strategies for achieving those goals include continuing to monitor and update MaineDOT’s efforts to implement its “complete streets” policy “to re-envision transportation infrastructure in Maine’s villages and downtowns, leveraging federal discretionary funding to support either small, spot improvements to active transportation infrastructure or large, transformative projects including speed calming measures, improved crosswalks, and expanded or enhanced sidewalks—among other possible improvements.”

Other strategies in the plan include: paving shoulders on rural roads that are high priority active transportation corridors; assessing speed limits and identifying opportunities to adjust road design to enhance safety; providing increased access to multimodal connections; developing high-priority active transportation (HPAT) trails along some state-owned, inactive rail corridors; and providing additional consideration for underserved communities in an effort to improve equity in the state’s active transportation network.

MaineDOT worked with VHB, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, and

Cushman Transportation Consulting to manage the public process, develop the plan, and strategies. ■

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Breeze Airways, which had a successful debut in Portland earlier this year, is adding new flights to Florida to its roster.

Airline announces new Orlando-Portland service

BREEZE AIRWAYS announced in mid-June that it will begin non-stop air service from Portland to Orlando, Florida, beginning in early September of this year. The airline will offer flights connecting the two cities on Wednesday and Saturdays.

This is the sixth Portland-based route launched by Breeze since May, when the airline first began serving Jetport travelers. Breeze also serves Charleston, South Carolina; Islip (Long Island), New York; Norfolk, Virginia; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Tampa, Florida nonstop from Portland.

“Today’s news that Breeze Airways is adding

winter service to Orlando is brilliant,” said Portland Jetport Director and former MBTA President Paul Bradbury. “We’ve heard great things from our customers about the Breeze experience and now customers will be able to fly to Orlando, our most popular winter destination, with ‘seriously nice’ service,” he said.

“We have seen amazing demand out of Portland as we continue to expand and grow in Maine,” said Breeze Airways President Tom Doxey. “This new route to Orlando will offer all of our guests in Maine a great, family-friendly vacation destination.”

Breeze currently flies both short distance

and transcontinental flights within the U.S. on a fleet of Embraer 190/195 and Airbus A220-300 aircraft. The carrier has ordered 80 A220s, with options to purchase 40 more.

The airline offers three levels of service which it calls “Nice,” “Nicer,” and “Nicest.” Nicest includes extra legroom, two checked bags, and complimentary snacks and beverages, including alcohol. The airline also offers a liberal cancellation policy and family-friendly and *a la carte* travel options. ■

FMI: To learn more about the Portland Jetport, visit portlandjetport.org.

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A message from the MBTA Board of Directors

November referendum – a critical issue for Maine voters



D ID YOU know there will be a sweeping and consequential referendum question on the ballot this November, asking Maine voters if they want to create a government-run electric utility called Pine Tree Power that would be required to forcibly take over CMP and Versant?

Here are some of the key facts about the Pine Tree Power proposal:

- It's incredibly expensive: conservative estimates put it between \$10 billion and \$13.5 billion.
- It introduces politics into our electric grid, giving unqualified, elected politicians control over our electricity.
- It provides no guarantees – or even so much as a plan – for how it will lower our energy prices or enhance our critical energy infrastructure.
- Instead, it will subject Mainers to billions of dollars of state debt; create instability and confusion while this unprecedented statewide takeover is litigated; and layer bureaucracy and politics onto what will become a massive government utility.

- And at the end of the day, this politician-run utility will still have to hire a for-profit operator to manage the day-to-day operations.
- Simply put, Pine Tree Power will be bad for our state.

That's why the MBTA Board of Directors voted to join the Maine Affordable Energy Coalition and is working alongside other concerned organizations and businesses to defeat this measure in November. It's also why we think it's important to educate MBTA members about the costs and risks of Pine Tree Power.

We could use your help spreading the word about the risks posed by Pine Tree Power. Share the facts about this referendum with every Maine voter you know – family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Add your name to the Maine Affordable Energy Coalition. Follow the coalition on your favorite social media site: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Thank you. ■

FMI: To learn more about the Maine Affordable Energy Coalition, visit maineaffordableenergy.org.

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MaineDOT breaks ground on Acadia Gateway

Facility will serve as a welcome center and transit hub for the busy national park

THE MAINE Department of Transportation joined with local, state, and federal partners from both the public and private sectors in late May to celebrate the beginning of construction on the new Acadia Gateway Center in Trenton. The project represents the culmination of years of partnering and planning to create a welcome center and transit hub for Downeast Maine and Acadia National Park.

Once completed, the Acadia Gateway Center will serve as a location where visitors can access regional tourism information, purchase park entrance passes, and connect with transit options to help them explore the region car-free. The project will incorporate several sustainability features, including a geothermal heating and cooling system, a rooftop solar panel array, and electric vehicle charging stations.

“Partnerships and perseverance pay off,” said MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note. “The team at MaineDOT is proud to be delivering this long-awaited project. We are grateful to our partners at the Federal Transit Administration, the National Park Service, Friends of Acadia, and Downeast Transportation. Not only will the Acadia Gateway Center enhance the experiences of the millions of visitors who come to this region every year, but also it will have long-lasting economic and sustainability impacts on the Downeast region.”



U.S. Senator Angus King spoke at the groundbreaking.

The new Acadia Gateway Center is being constructed on a site in Trenton that sits between Ellsworth and Mount Desert Island; its location was designed to intercept traffic traveling south on Route 3 before arriving onto Mount Desert Island.

With nearly four million visits, Acadia National Park was the fifth most visited national park in 2022. According to a recent report by the Maine Office of Tourism, visitors to Downeast Maine (including Acadia) had an economic impact of more than \$1.5 billion last year.

Current construction represents the final two phases

of work that began more than 20 years ago. The first phase, completed in 2012, included the construction of a park-and-ride, office space, and a bus maintenance facility for Downeast Transportation, which operates the Island Explorer shuttle.

“Many of my favorite family memories have been made in Maine’s great outdoors,” said Senator Angus King. King is chair of the Senate National Parks Subcommittee. “The new Acadia Gateway Center is an excellent example of how the federal and state governments can work together with local organizations to expand opportunities for the park and its surrounding communities.”

The project is scheduled to be finished by May 2025. ■



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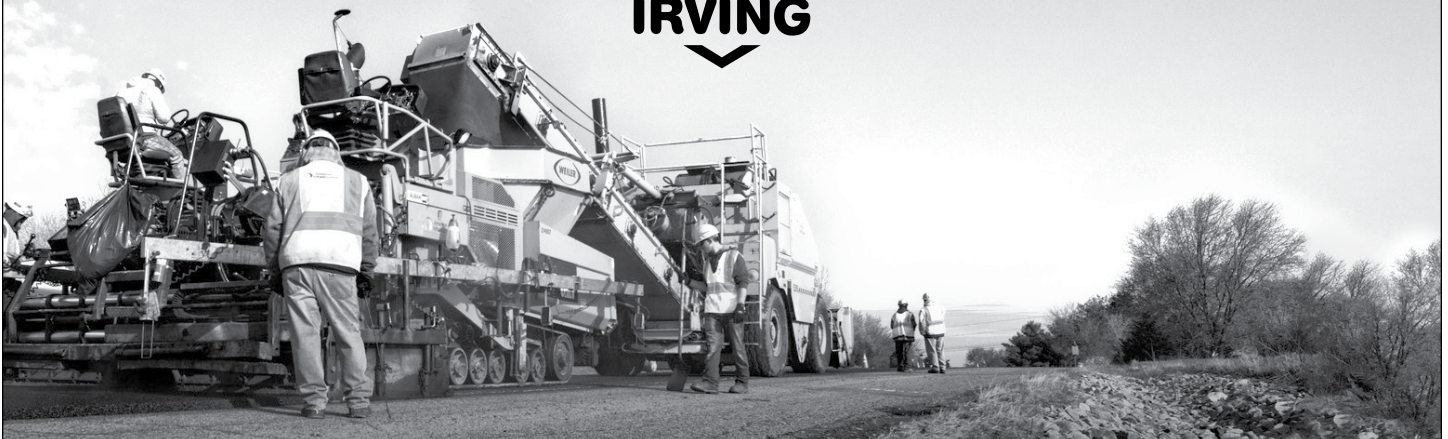
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Christine Savage, 1931 - 2023

‘Courageous’

Former Maine legislator worked to make Maine highways and bridges safer

MAINE SENATOR Christine R. Savage, who served six terms on the Maine Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, including as senate chair, passed away at the age of 91 on May 12, 2023.

She was born Aug. 5, 1931 and grew up in Union. She graduated high school at the age of 16 and was married shortly thereafter to Elmer “Bud” Savage, who she had met while working on Bud’s blueberry raking crew. They raised four children, three girls and a boy.

Savage lived most of her life in District 22, in the towns of Union, Searsport and Camden. She had a deep commitment to community service that began when she was raising her young family and working as a bookkeeper for a local business, all while volunteering for the local 911 emergency dispatch service and at the Union Fair.

Her public service began in earnest during the 1970s when she and her family moved to Camden – her husband, Bud, had been hired as town manager. She worked for the Knox County Commissioners as an administrative assistant and eventually for Camden as a bookkeeper before serving as interim town manager for Camden when her husband retired.

Savage served as town manager in Warren where she also was road commissioner. She was elected to the Union Board of Selectmen in 1992. She then moved on to state government in 1996, serving six years in the Maine House of Representatives and eight in the Maine Senate. She also served on the town of Union’s Budget Committee from 1999-2002.

It was her experience as road commissioner that inspired legislative leadership to ask her



Sandra Savage (right) presented the Maine Transportation Lifetime Achievement Award to her mother, Senator Christine Savage (left) in 2008.

to serve on the Transportation Committee in 1994. Her long service on the committee was informed by her understanding of municipal operations. Her well-earned institutional knowledge and understanding of the state’s Highway Fund and Maine Turnpike Authority budgets proved essential to her fellow committee members and to the transportation community at large.

“Christine was such a pleasure to work with over the years,” said MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes. “She was a remarkable advocate for Maine roads and for making them safer. She did her homework and knew what questions to ask, whether the debate was about a piece of legislation or the Highway Fund budget. She was a mentor to so many, and a loyal friend to so many others. She was extraordinary.”

In 2008, the MBTA honored Senator Savage with a Maine Transportation Lifetime Achievement Award for being a “relentless champion for investment in Maine’s transportation infrastructure” during her 14-year legislative career

and for her willingness to take “courageous stances” on issues she felt were important, regardless of political consequences. She was known for having supported issues that made Maine highways and bridges safer, and helped Maine communities, including advocating for several transportation bond issues and many other funding, safety, and common-sense measures.

One piece of legislation she fought hard for was “An Act to Make Failure to Wear a Seat Belt a Primary Offense” – a bill she sponsored and for which she braved strong vocal opposition. After much debate, the bill passed and was signed into law by Governor John Baldacci in 2007. Savage’s daughter, Sandra Savage, speaking at the Maine

Transportation Achievement Award ceremony one year later, said her mother was determined to see the legislation pass, because “it would all be worth it if lives could be saved.”

Those who knew her enjoyed her stories and pride for her many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Savage was predeceased by her husband Elmer “Bud” Savage. She also was predeceased by four brothers and one sister. She is survived by her daughters, Sandra and her partner Barry; Althea and her husband Mike; Gloria and her husband Wayne; son Elmer and his wife Holly; six grandchildren – Chad Stafford, Ty Butcher, Bethany Wiley, Matthew Wiley, Jacob Savage, Caleb Savage; 11 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

In remembrance of Christine, her family has requested those who wish may make contributions to People’s United Methodist Church (PUMC), P.O. Box 105, Union, Maine 04862 or Come Spring Food Pantry P.O. Box 524, Union, Maine 04862. ■



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MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note (left); Maine State Economist Amanda Rector (middle); and Maine Turnpike Authority Executive Director Peter Mills (right).

MBTA 84th Annual Meeting

Did someone say ‘challenge’?

THERE'S SOMETHING about being in a room with 200 transportation professionals that gets people talking. Just ask the crowd gathered at the 84th MBTA Annual Meeting on May 4th at the Hilton Garden Inn in Freeport.

First, there was the thought-provoking panel discussion with three speakers: Maine State Economist Amanda Rector, Maine Turnpike Authority Executive Director Peter Mills, and MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note.

Then there was the election of new officers, including incoming MBTA President Eric Ritchie, and a farewell to outgoing MBTA President Tony Grande.

And of course, there was plenty of catching up to do as the assembled MBTA members and guests looked ahead to the 2023 construction season which promised challenges for the state and its economy.

TALES OF GROWTH, HOPE FOR A ‘SOFT LANDING’

Rector was the first to speak, and she gave attendees a snapshot of trends affecting the region's economic outlook. She led with the story of growth that had captured local headlines across the state – that Maine had seen the 14th highest rate of migration in



Outgoing MBTA President Tony Grande



Newly elected MBTA President Eric Ritchie

the country (1.7 percent) between 2020 and 2022 and that while Maine was still the oldest state, with a median age of 44.7 years, it was the only state in the U.S. to see a decrease in median age from 2020 to 2021.

Rector also zeroed in on the data behind those trends: that some of the fastest growing areas are rural counties, including Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, Lincoln, Knox, and Hancock; and the population gains were largest in two key age groups – children under 16 moving to the state with their parents, and adults age 35 to 44.

She drilled down to look at trends affecting Maine's workforce, which in March had an unemployment rate (2.6 percent) well below the national rate of 3.5 percent. She further broke that down to show how unemployment varies across Maine's 16 counties with Somerset having the highest (4.8 percent) and Cumberland and Sagadahoc the lowest (2.3 percent). She noted that employment in Maine now records slightly more jobs (638,700) than it did during its pre-pandemic peak in mid-2019 (637,100).

While these all augur well for the state's future economy, Rector also pointed to several challenges that Maine faces: a tight labor market, despite bringing more people into the state; statewide housing supply and

BOTTOM PHOTOS: SEBASTIAN BENNAGE



Nicholas, Eric and Brooklyn Ritchie (left). Paul Bradbury, Dana Knapp, Jon Shaw, Andrew Sturgeon, and Herb Sargent (right).

childcare that has not kept up with demand; and uncertainty about whether or not Maine and the nation would experience a “soft landing” as inflation slowed.

WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THAT TRAFFIC

Maine Turnpike Authority Executive Director Peter Mills used his turn at the podium to bring MBTA members and guests up to speed on efforts to construct a new east-west connector to ease traffic west of Portland. Mills began by showing a series of drone photos demonstrating congestion on key arteries leading into greater Portland from communities including Hollis, Buxton, Gorham, Standish, Windham, and Waterboro – congestion that no longer is contained to the traditional morning and evening commutes.

He also spoke of his agency’s efforts to plan for construction of the connector – a project that has been under consideration for the past 35 years and may begin construction as early as 2026. He then spoke of the challenges that lay ahead for that project, including increasingly tight environmental regulations and efforts the Turnpike Authority is undertaking to meet those regulations, including preserving a significant amount of wetlands in the region.

THE MAN WITH THE PLAN

MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note rounded out the panel with a discussion of the Department of Transportation’s most recent \$1.3 billion three-year work plan, and the challenges that lay ahead for this and the next two years. It was no surprise that one of those challenges is funding.

Van Note spoke about the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL),

which increased federal transportation dollars to states. That has created challenges of its own for states like Maine to be able to meet the matching fund requirements.

The BIL also has created expectations in the public and among lawmakers who see the additional funding as a windfall. He spoke of a recent proposal to use BIL funding to extend I-95 to the St. John Valley – a project that could cost approximately \$3 billion – and Van Note said the challenge has been to “manage expectations” about what the new funding can and cannot do.

Like Rector, Van Note indicated his agency is keeping tabs on inflation and the labor market and how those have created construction cost inflation of nearly 50 percent over the past two years.

He also expressed concern about the debt ceiling impasse in Washington, which at the time threatened to derail federally funded programs including transportation construction. “We’re planning as if it is going to happen,” said Van Note. “And the doors are closing.” [The U.S. House of Representatives finally reached an agreement to suspend the debt ceiling in early June, just days before the country would have gone into default.]

In conclusion, he noted that MaineDOT would focus on “pragmatic and practical” solutions and continue to work with the transportation community to promote a sustainable approach to funding the state’s Highway Fund.

CONNECTING AND COLLABORATING

The balance of the evening provided MBTA members the chance to socialize, network, and finish out the year by electing new board members and new officers for the 2023-2024 term.

Outgoing MBTA President Tony Grande was the evening’s emcee,

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Michelle Iburguen, Conrad Welzel, Shannon Walton, and Rich St. Pierre (left). Kim Suhr, Jake Jones, Larry Grondin, Tim Ouellette, Susan Morrison, and Julie Turner (right).

welcoming notable attendees that included Sarah Williams from U.S. Congresswoman Chellie Pingree’s office, Maine Representative Lynne Williams (D-Bar Harbor), who is House chair of the Transportation Committee, and Transportation Committee members Senator Brad Farrin (R-Norridgewock) and Representative Austin Theriault (R-Fort Kent).

Grande welcomed new MBTA members including Paul Dumoulin of Kenway Composites, Keith Sorota of Infrasense, and Rich St. Pierre of Skowhegan Savings, and several former MBTA Scholarship recipients: Jordan Pelletier of VHB; Yi Peng of HNTB; Casey VanDenBossche of MaineDOT; and Katherine Wight of Stantec.

After giving his sincere thanks to the MBTA Board of Directors, his co-workers, and employer (VHB), and his wife Maureen for the support they offered during his term as president, Grande presided over the annual MBTA election.

The officers elected included: Eric Ritchie of Sargent as MBTA president; Michelle Iburguen of Cross Insurance as first vice president; Erik Wiberg of R.W. Gillespie & Associates as second vice president; and Jason Griffiths of Pike Industries as secretary-treasurer. Members also extended the terms of several board members and voted in two new directors: Bradley Lyon of Sebago Technics; and Patrick Brady of Bernstein Shur Sawyer & Nelson.

Incoming MBTA President Ritchie gave a heartfelt thanks to Grande for his “hard work, steady hand, and guidance in the last year” and praised Grande’s inclusivity and passion for transportation. “Tony is a hard worker and puts in the hours, but he also knows how to have fun and loves engaging with people,” said Ritchie, noting Grande’s efforts to bring more young people and diversity to the state’s transportation workforce.

Ritchie gave a shout out to his daughter Brooklyn and son Nicho-



Shane Kelly, Lester Kenway, and Chris Bales (left). Tim Cote and Ben Tracey (middle). Trevor Kraus and Chris Snow (right).



Team Sargent: Doug Morrison, Brent Williams, Matt Thibault, Sebastian Bennage, Herb Sargent, Tasha Gardner, Eric Ritchie, Cody Jean, Glenn Adams, Craig Shorey, Amanda Martin, Jim Braley, Peter Parizo, and Tim LePage.

SEBASTIAN BENNAGE

84TH MBTA ANNUAL MEETING

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Bob and Katy Hews

las, who were in the audience for their dad's election, and to his employer Herb Sargent, his co-workers at Sargent, and fellow MBTA members.

"I am honored to serve as president of the MBTA, and I appreciate this opportunity. I am grateful to Herb Sargent and all the folks at Sargent who support me and who support each other and the industry every day. And thanks to our members for entrusting me with this opportunity."

Ritchie also spoke of his goal for MBTA in the coming year - to promote connections and collaboration with MBTA's partners by fostering trust, respect, and empowerment, and demonstrating the willingness to work together and promote effective communication.

"Why is collaboration so key to what we do? It's because we work with so many other entities: each other, our competitors, project owners, local, state, and federal agencies," said Ritchie. "One of the great things about MBTA is that we have members from so many different sectors, but who all rely on and thrive with an improved transportation system. And we are fortunate to have such great partners in MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority, municipalities, other agencies, legislators, other associations, businesses, and with our congressional delegation and their staffs."

The evening closed with drawings for door prizes and the 50-50 Raffle. Erin Courtney and Michelle Ibarguen each won a gift certificate to the Heritage House Restaurant in Skowhegan; and Tony Grande of VHB and Tom French of HDR each won a gift certificate to the Old Mill Tavern, also in Skowhegan. The gift certificates were a generous donation from former MBTA President Greg Dore and Paula Dore.

Tim LePage of Sargent was the lucky winner of the 50-50 Raffle, taking home the \$650 prize (an equal portion of proceeds from the raffle went to the MBTA Scholarship Fund). ■



Tim Folster, Senator Brad Farrin, and Tasha Gardner (left). Kristi Van Ooyen, Tony Grande, and Sara Devlin (middle). Will Gayle, Natalie Bogart, Patricia Quinn, and Sarah Lawrence (right).

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Bruce Manzer, Mark Barnes, and Bob Brady (left). Erik Wiberg, Be Schonewald, and Lori Driscoll (right).



Tony Grande, Erin Courtney and Rep. Austin Theriault (left). Jasmine Strout, Matthew Homer, and Marie Shelley (right).

84TH MBTA ANNUAL MEETING

DOOR PRIZES

Old Mill Pub \$50 gift cards:

Tony Grande, VHB; and Tom French, HDR

Heritage House Restaurant \$75 gift cards:

Erin Courtney, Maine Turnpike Authority; and Michelle Ibarguen, Cross Insurance

50 – 50 RAFFLE

Tim LePage, Sargent



Kristi Brown, Ethan Davidson, and Judy Gates (left). Andy Blaisdell and Sean James (right).



Greg and Paula Dore (left). Thomas Gleeson, Chloe Loukes, Katherine Wight, Kyle Jacques, and Amanda Scudder (right).



Virtual innovations

MBTA Board tours UMaine's Ferland Cente, VEMI Lab



Top photos: The MBTA toured the classrooms and collaborative work areas at UMaine's new Ferland Engineering Education and Design center.

ERIC RITICHE PHOTOS

BEFORE THE Young Professionals' Transportation on Tap event on June 15 in Orono, the MBTA Board of Directors toured the UMaine Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center (EEDC). Designed by MBTA member WBRC, the EEDC is a multi-use academic and laboratory building, with three stories and a 107,000 square-foot LEED-certified facility. The tour was led by Kyle Guerrette, who highlighted multiple innovative spaces for teaching and research facilities, collaborative areas, and public spaces designed to support engineering education, design, and research.

The state-of-the-art project was awarded ACEC Maine's Grand Conceptor Award for engineering excellence. WBRC shared the award with Thornton Tomasetti, another MBTA member, who was the structural engineer and sustainable design consultant.

The group also toured the university's Virtual Simulation Lab (VEMI) which recently

launched its custom-built multi-person autonomous vehicle simulator, a unique platform for human-subject research in the automotive space.

VEMI Lab Director Richard Corey led the tour and explained that the simulator is the first fully autonomous "people mover" or "robo-taxi" motion simulator, designed as a replacement for the human-driven taxis or ridesharing services available today.

Members sat in the simulator, which has no steering wheel or pedals, and has a cabin outfitted with multi-directional seating for up to six people. The cabin sits on top of a motion platform powered by actuators that give passengers the feeling of movement on the roads. Realistic cityscapes are projected onto 360-degree screens surrounding the unit, and integrated audio systems simulate both on-board and environmental sounds for a fully immersive experience. The VEMI Lab is working with federal and state agencies, and with private firms including some of the

country's largest automobile manufacturers who see the future in autonomous vehicles. VEMI Lab Director Corey and his team have won numerous awards for their work with autonomous vehicles and their commitment to increasing opportunities for physically challenged individuals to utilize AV's.

MBTA extends gratitude to Aaron Schanck of TIDC who organized the tour, and to tour guides Kyle Guerrette at EEDC, and Paul Gallego and Richard Corey at VEMI, along with Jim Bryce of TIDC and Sheila Pendse at EEDC for their assistance. ■



Bottom photos: At the VEMI Lab, board members got to experience the new "robo taxi" simulator.



Oh! Orono!

Transportation on Tap goes 'Tubular' at Orono Brewing

THERE WAS an afternoon downpour, but the clouds parted just in time for the MBTA's Young Professionals (and those young at heart) to gather Thursday, June 15 at Orono Brewing in Orono for the second meeting in the 2023 Transportation on Tap (T2) series.

Forty MBTAers had the opportunity to network, enjoy a bit of sunshine, and sample some of Orono Brewing's brightest brews including Tubular IPA, Totally Tubular IPA, The Way Life Should be IPA, Let's Go Black Bears IPA (the official beer of the UMaine Black Bears), and Everlasting Farm.

"There's a good reason the T2 series is so popular. It is such a great way to unwind after a busy day on the job site or at the office – and a great way to get to know your fellow MBTA members a little better," said MBTA Young Professionals Chair and MBTA Board Member Patrick Brady.

Many thanks to T2 series sponsors Sargent and Indus! ■

FMI: To learn more about Transportation on Tap, visit the Event page at MBTAonline.org.





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Update

Paul Koziell Scholarship

THANKS TO the generosity of Paul Koziell's family, friends, and colleagues, the MBTA Educational Foundation has been able to raise more than \$100,000 to honor the former MBTA president and board member who did so much for the industry through his passion for transportation and generosity.

Many thanks to the donors below who – in addition to those listed in the last two issues of *Maine Trails* – helped put the Paul Koziell Scholarship over the top! ■

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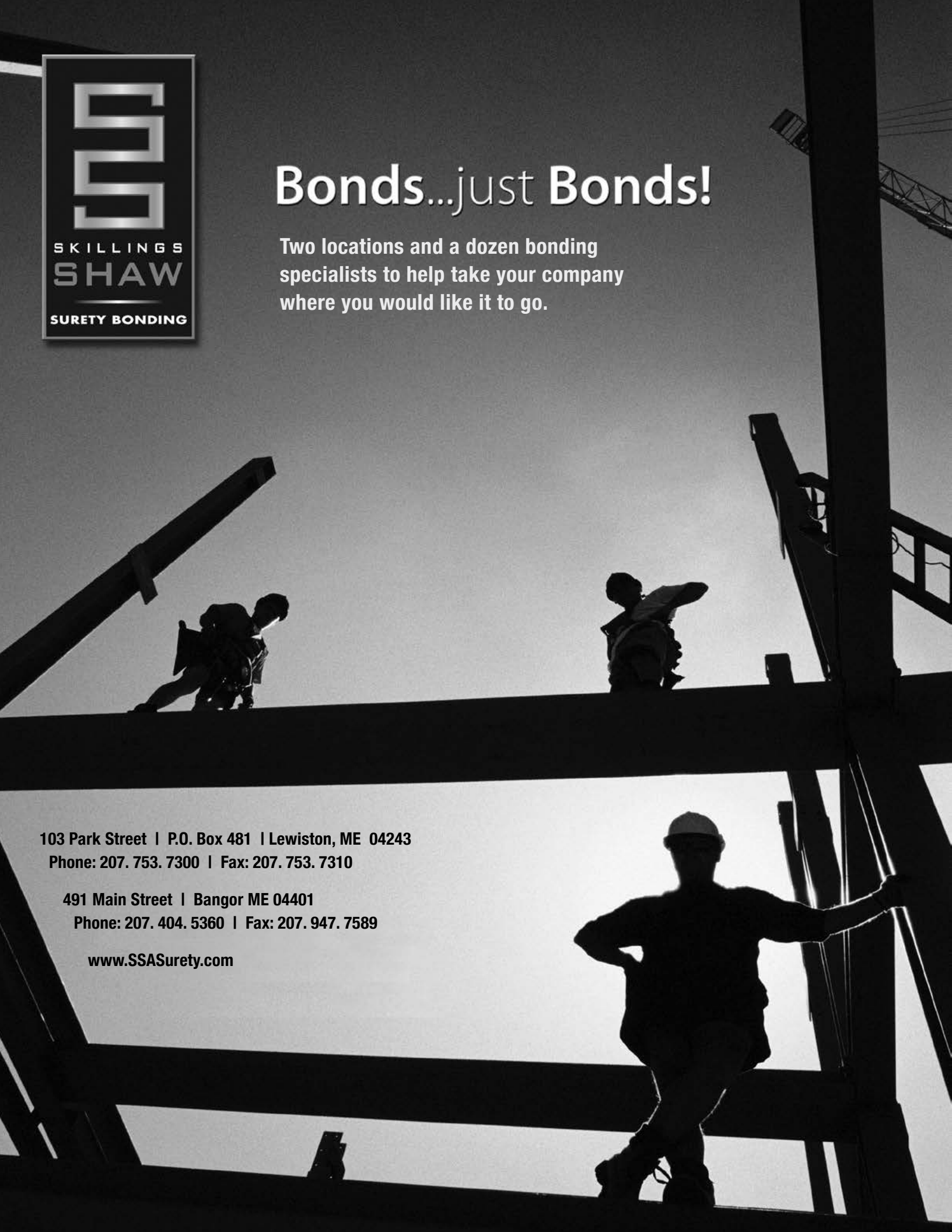
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Gaining traction

Jordan Equipment launches new retail location in Augusta

IT'S A summer midafternoon, and a steady stream of traffic runs by the new Jordan Equipment dealership in Augusta. Located on Civic Center Drive (Route 27), equipment surrounds the new building that houses a showroom, offices, three large service bays, and a rigging shop. A dozen or so Bobcat compact tractors are lined up at the road's edge, with compact excavators and loaders parked at one end of the property and rental and used equipment at the other. Inside the showroom, the shelves are stocked with parts and safety equipment.

Chuck Lavigne, president of Jordan Equipment, says the search for a new branch location started in 2018, two years shy of the company's 70th anniversary. Finding the right location for the new branch at the right cost proved challenging. "I was shocked at land prices when I started looking around," said Lavigne.

He finally settled on purchasing a three-acre site with a small log cabin that fronted Route 27 on the north side of Augusta. The new branch is well situated: to the north is the Belgrade Lakes region, to the east is the bustling midcoast and to the west is rural farmland.

Lavigne and his staff worked on designing the new dealership from the ground up, bringing in ideas and experience from the company's three other locations: the headquarters and original showroom on Blackstrap Road in Falmouth; and branches in Pembroke, New Hampshire and Hermon, Maine.

In December 2022, the Augusta branch opened its doors to the public and its customers at an open house, and business has

been brisk ever since.

"Business usually ramps up in the spring and this year has been very busy," said Lavigne, who noted the location has so far exceeded expectations for the volume of business. "We keep hearing about a slowdown in the economy, but we haven't seen it yet."

CARVING A NICHE

Jordan Equipment was founded by Ken Jordan in 1950, who began by selling adapters and bucket teeth manufactured by the Esco Steel Foundry Company out of the trunk of his car. Jordan soon after purchased a building and leased the land it stood on in Falmouth. The parcel had served as a staging area for a contractor working on the construction of the Maine Turnpike.

Jordan's primary market was the construction business, but he also found opportunities in other foundational sectors of the state's economy. He soon filled the building with a diverse range of products and equip-

ment, including wire rope, slings and other products for the logging, paper, and ship-building industries. The company incorporated in 1959 and became a Bobcat dealer in 1964.

The company, which retains its founder's name, has changed hands just three times in the past 73 years. First in 1967 when salesman Dana Willard and his partner Charles Vogler bought out Jordan. Donald Booker, who had joined the company as a salesman in 1969, became a partner in the



Bobcat tractors lined up outside of Jordan Equipment Company's new Augusta branch.

business in 1980 and took the reins two years later when Vogler died (Booker served as president of Maine Better Transportation from 1992 to 1993). Michael Lavigne bought the business from Booker in 2004, bringing on his son Chuck to help run the business.

“My father met Don Booker at Espan’s restaurant in Portland,” recalled Lavigne who began his career as an estimator at his father’s business Dirigo Drywall Company. Booker and the elder Lavigne were both regulars at the restaurant and one day started talking over a cup of coffee about Booker’s plans for the business.

“Not having family members in the business, I was looking for a new owner that would protect what we had done and move the business forward,” Booker told *Maine Trails* in 2004 at the announcement of the sale.

From the beginning the Lavignes worked hard to maintain Jordan Equipment’s reputation for quality gear and equipment and good customer service. While growing the business, they retained several of Jordan’s long-time employees, among them Roland Durloo, Jordan’s former vice president who retired only two months ago after more than 40 years with the business; and former general manager Rick Murphy who has been with the company more than 30 years and who still works part-time for the business. Roger Fortin, who joined the company in 2003 manages the Hermon branch.

Today, as the elder Lavigne has stepped back from the business, Chuck Lavigne has made some key hires. Trevor Walls, who joined the company in 2018 and is the general manager of the Falmouth branch. Tracy Bragg, who joined Jordan in 2019 after more than two decades working heavy equipment service, heads the Pembroke, New Hampshire branch.

Throughout the years, Jordan Equipment also has been a generous supporter of Maine Better Transportation Association and is a regular sponsor of the

organization’s annual meeting and other events. Jordan Equipment is an active member of the Maine Aggregate Association and MELNA (Maine Landscape & Nursery Association) and donates money to the Maine State Troopers and local first responders and various other causes.

STRATEGIC GROWTH

The business has grown steadily and strategically. The company bought the land it had been leasing on Blackstrap Road in 1968, and has renovated and expanded its flagship facility there three times. Jordan Equipment opened its Bangor area branch in 1980 but moved to Hermon in 2007. The company added the Pembroke, New Hampshire site in 1993.

Along the way, the company has become something of a general store for the construction, logging and agricultural businesses, as well as for the public works departments of Maine’s towns and cities by adding a diverse range of product lines from trusted manufacturers. In addition to equipment and gear by Bobcat, Esco, and Wacker Neuson, Jordan also carries wire rope, rigging and all types of slings, trench shoring equipment, lift equipment, snow plow blades, undercarriage parts, plow shoes, excavator bucket teeth, cutting edges, crushing parts, rippers, and other wear equipment. The company also rents and sells used equipment.

The company now employs 50 employees at four locations, including sales staff, service technicians, parts specialists, and mobile service crews who provide support for customers at job sites.

While Lavigne and his staff are always on the lookout for new talent, staffing the Augusta branch worked out well. Lavigne has tapped Robb Pawson, who joined the company’s Bangor branch sales team in 2018, to manage the Augusta branch, while Tom Gagnon is the branch



A young customer at the Augusta branch open house earlier this year.



Jordan Equipment President Chuck Lavigne (left) with Augusta Manager Robb Pawson; and Falmouth General Manager Trevor Wells.

service manager/inside sales, and Vinnie McGuire is head of Augusta's parts counter sales. Lavigne also noted that the company has been fortunate to hire a talented crew of technicians to run the service and rigging shops.

While Lavigne knew that opening a branch in the Augusta region would open up opportunities and help the company better serve its customers in the construction, municipal and agricultural markets, he has been surprised by how strong the residential market has been.

"We've drawn in quite a few homeowners who want tractors," said Lavigne, adding Bobcat has a line of subcompact and compact tractors that have appeal for that market because they are nimble and easy to operate for smaller jobs like lawn care and clearing snow – much like Bobcat's compact excavators and loaders appeal to the company's core construction and municipal customers.

Still, the successful opening of the Augusta branch has not stopped Lavigne from "looking around" and keeping an eye out for the next, new opportunity. ■

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



(Left to right) Lori Milton, Pembroke Branch Manager Tracy Bragg, Dylan Richardson, Ray Brasley and Bob Labonte.



(Left to right) Cote Rossignol, Darren Flewelling, Roger Fortin, Chris Choiniere, and Kasey Fair.

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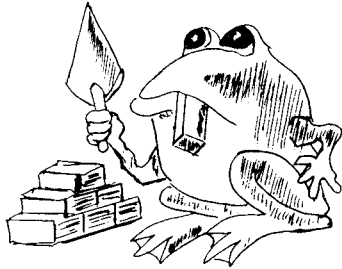
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O'Brien, Buck join McFarland Johnson

MCFARLAND JOHNSON has announced two new hires: Ellen O'Brien has joined the firm as principal water resources engineer and will work out of the firm's Freeport, Maine, office; Nicole Buck has joined as water resources practice lead and will work out of the Williston, Vermont, office. Both will focus on the study and development of water resources solutions for clients throughout the northeast.

"We are pleased to have Ellen and Nicki join our growing employee-owned firm. They bring exceptional hydrologic and hydraulic expertise to the firm, and I am confident in their ability to help us better serve our clients," said McFarland Johnson Vice President Tom Kendrick. "Their knowledge and experience combined with their commitment to developing resilient and environmentally sensitive solutions will be an asset to new and existing clients."

O'Brien will assist clients on projects requiring complex hydraulic modeling and other hydrology and scour analysis related projects. She brings 35 years of experience as a professional engineer and certified geologist concentrating on upland and tidal hydrologic and hydraulic design modeling. She has specialized experience in the tidal environment in the replacement and rehabilitation of tidal bridges as well as prediction



Ellen O'Brien

and simulation of storm surge and wave action. Recent experience includes modeling and simulation of complex hydrologic/hydraulic environments, particularly for bridges and dams. Her experience also includes teaching surface and ground water hydrology courses at Bates College.

Buck brings more than 20 years of experience in hydrologic and hydraulic engineering, including the development of advanced two-dimensional hydraulic modeling of riverine systems. In her new role she will be responsible for the continued growth of McFarland Johnson's water resources practice, including the advancement of projects requiring complex flow modeling, hydraulic studies, and providing analysis of fluvial geomorphology, hydrology, fish passage, scour, and sediment transport.

McFarland Johnson, Inc., is a 100-percent employee-owned leader in the planning, engineering, environmental, technology, and construction services of innovative aviation, transportation, civil/facilities, and environmental projects. With office locations throughout the United States, the firm has been serving clients for 76 years. ■

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

ACEC recognizes outstanding Maine projects

THE AMERICAN Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) recognized three Maine projects for excellence at the 2023 Engineering Excellence Awards Gala on June 13 in Washington, D.C.

HNTB received one of 16 Honor Awards for the Veranda Street Bridge project. The project in Portland, Maine, culminated over one weekend in April 2022 when workers rapidly demolished and replaced the aging I-295 bridge over Veranda Street using self-propelled modular transporters. The project also included reconfiguration of the exit ramp and Veranda Street to improve safety. It was a first-of-its-kind project in Maine and reduced the total construction time of the bridge, ramp and section of street by half.

Winners of the 51 state competitions were also recognized at the event called the "biggest night in engineering." Two Maine projects



Demolition of the old Veranda Street Bridge.

were included among those winners: TYLin's work on the Piscataqua River Bridge; and Thornton Thomasetti and WBRC for their work on the Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center at the University of Maine College of Engineering. Both received Honor Awards from ACEC of Maine.

The Engineering Excellence Awards are an annual celebration of engineering excellence, honoring projects worldwide that demonstrate innovation, creative problem-solving, and engineering's unique ability to improve the world. The competition is juried by a panel of industry, government, and academic experts. All projects considered by the national competition must first be entered through one of ACEC's 51 state and metropolitan member organizations. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit www.acec.org/awards.

Robbins Lumber receives Workforce Transportation Pilot grant

ROBBINS LUMBER in Searsport has received a \$41,000 grant through the Workforce Transportation Pilot Program, an initiative created by Governor Janet Mills' administration, as part of the state's Jobs & Recovery Plan funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. The pilot program is designed to connect workers from rural areas to centers of employment through the use of "shared mobility."

Robbins Lumber, a high-tech lumber manufacturer, will use the grant to offset the costs of an existing program that

provides transportation for employees from a nearby correctional institute. Robbins Lumber is a member of MBTA.

"This grant provides a transportation solution to help employees re-entering the workforce learn a trade and the chance to have a stable, long-term career," said Catherine Robbins-Halsted, co-owner of Robbins Lumber.

The grant was one of four announced in early June. MaineDOT has awarded nearly \$2 million in worker transportation grants since last fall.

"With the workforce shortage hurting businesses across Maine, my

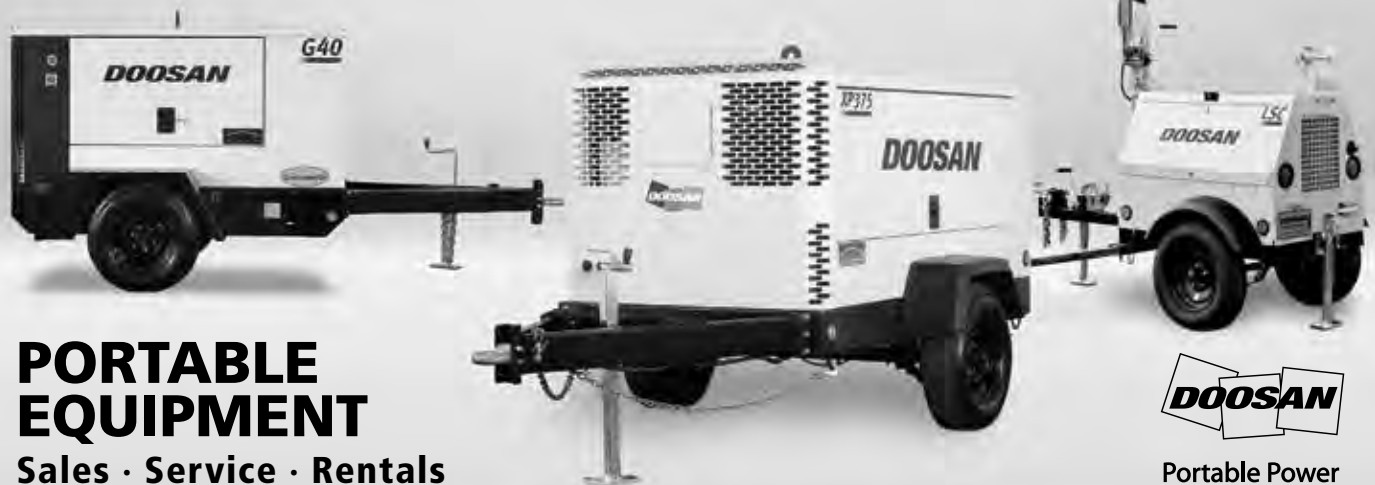
administration is committed to advancing innovative solutions that will knock down barriers preventing people from being able to take and stay in jobs," said Governor Mills.

MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note added, "These awards support several unique approaches to addressing the specific workforce transportation challenges seen by these employers." ■

FMI: To learn more about the Workforce Transportation Program, visit www.maine.gov/jobsplan/program/workforce-transportation-program.



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The national publication awarded Dysart's in Hermon the coveted title "Number One Truck Stop Food in America."

The magazine virtually swooned with praise for the venerable Maine restaurant: "Open since the 1960s, Dysart's has mastered the art of sweet blueberry bread, which they slice, batter, and turn into French toast with



blueberry compote. Their crave beans, made with molasses and salt pork, feature heirloom beans grown right here in Maine, a reminder that New England sometimes isn't all that far from the original copy. . . Everything at Dysart's, from the baking to the cooking and even the rushed-off-their-feet service, feels intentional, like somebody actually gives a damn. When you run a restaurant like that for as long as Dysart's has, people come to count on you — truckers, loggers, summer

people, local retirees on a fixed income, and everybody else hanging around Maine's third-largest city."

The management at Dysart's is taking the praise in stride. "It means so much to us just seeing everybody each and every day, that's the biggest award we can get," said Manager Jordan Dysart told Fox 22 News about the announcement.

MBTA congratulates Dysart's, a long-time member of the association, on this national and well-deserved award. ■

FMI: Dysart's Restaurant & Truck Stop is located at 530 Coldbrook Road, Hermon. You can find them online at www.dysarts.com.

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A big step

Bipartisan Highway Fund budget moves sustainable funding forward



Commissioner Van Note and members of the Transportation Committee look on as Governor Mills signs new Highway Fund budget.

ON THE morning of Friday, June 16th, Governor Janet Mills stood in her cabinet room, flanked by Democrats and Republicans, and signed Maine's Highway Fund budget into law. This new budget was the result of a bipartisan compromise to include a new, dedicated funding stream for transportation funding – a big step forward to the tune of \$100 million a year, ongoing, for capital needs. This bipartisan compromise, which was enacted nearly unanimously in the Maine Legislature, dedicates 40 percent of the sales and use tax on vehicle purchases to the Highway Fund. Again, this is a huge step forward toward the more-than-\$200 million that the Maine Department of Transportation needs each year to manage our state's spread-out, multimodal transportation system.

This deal also ensures operational stability for the dedicated workers at MaineDOT. Had an agreement not been reached, a department shutdown on July 1st would have been disruptive to our people, our contracting partners, and our customers – the people who live, work, and travel in our great state. Dedicated funding will help us plan for future years. Transportation is a long-term endeavor, and long-term planning that relies on funding assumptions is not the best way to set our course.

All the challenges associated with transportation funding in Maine did not appear overnight; they are systemic and developed over decades. Maine is a big state with a vast, multimodal transportation system. We are roughly the size of the rest of the other New England states combined, and our population is equivalent to that of New Hampshire's, meaning we simply have much more transportation infrastructure per capita than other states do. Further, construction costs in Maine have increased by about 50 percent in the last few years due to tight labor and materials markets.

Maine's Highway Fund has not been up to these challenges for many years. Before this historic budget, Maine's Highway Fund was funded only by per-gallon fuel taxes and motor vehicle fees, neither of which grew over time. In fact, with vehicles getting more fuel efficient, and with electric vehicles using little or no fuels (a good thing), it was clear

these traditional Highway Fund sources would be wholly inadequate.

In response, we have often resorted to bonding. In recent years, Governor Mills and the Maine Legislature have provided unprecedented levels of one-time General Fund support for transportation – averaging almost \$200 million per year in the last two years. These transfers helped support infrastructure projects, leverage federal dollars, and eliminate the need for voter-approved bonding in those years. These one-time fixes were much needed and appreciated, but they were not reliable, making long-term planning very difficult.

Against this backdrop, lawmakers of good faith began talking earlier this year about dedicating new funding streams to the Highway Fund. Importantly, discussions went beyond the Transportation Committee. Discussions in the Taxation and Appropriations Committees focused more attention on the need to counter cost increases and leverage federal funds under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. A possible solution – dedicating a portion of the sales tax on automobiles – received a 12-1 approval in the Taxation Committee. The idea certainly got some resistance early: it passed out of the Transportation Committee as a divided report. By the time the proposal made its way to the full legislature, the Appropriations Committee had improved the concept, and it had unanimous support. This bipartisan success will benefit all Maine travelers for years to come.

Of course, in the transportation business, we are always looking ahead. Vehicles will continue to become more fuel-efficient and electric. Construction prices may stabilize, but they are unlikely to go down significantly. This means that we will still need to seek sources of capital funding each year to meet the transportation needs of Maine people. That will always be the case.

However, this year, Maine state policymakers – working in a thoughtful and bipartisan way – made the first big step toward fixing a problem that had vexed Maine for decades: the need for sustainable transportation funding. This is a big deal. Please join me in thanking them for their engagement, wisdom, and courage. ■

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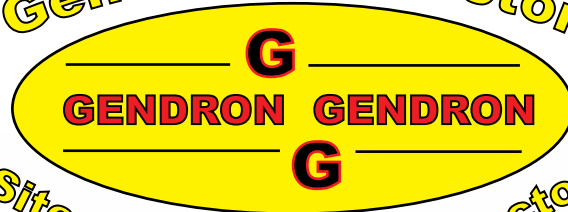


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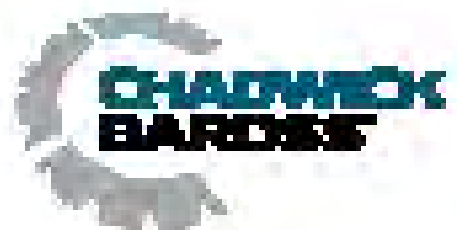
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Mapping the future

IN THE July 1945 issue of *The Trail* magazine (the forerunner of today's *Maine Trails*), the staff reported on a new effort being launched by the Public Roads Administration to map a 40,000-mile system of interstate highways in preparation for an expected postwar highway building boom. That was by no means the first time the dream of a national highway system had been mapped. As early as 1915, the National Highways Association (NHA) circulated a map it had created proposing a 100,000-mile network of improved roads across the nation.

NHA was founded by Yarmouth, Massachusetts, native Charles Henry Davis (1865 – 1951) in 1911. His family had been involved in roadbuilding, and his grandfather founded the American Road Machine Company, which Davis inherited and where he oversaw the construction of the nation's first “high speed” tram connecting

Washington, D.C. to Mount Vernon, Virginia.

Davis' commitment to highways was significant. He employed 40 individuals working in offices at his South Yarmouth, Massachusetts, home to develop the map. John C. Mulford is the cartographer credited on the final map.

The NHA map forwarded themes that would be taken up by interstate highway enthusiasts that followed him. On the map, Davis called for “Good roads for everyone!” and advanced the theme of national “preparedness” – a message the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower took up when advocating for passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. The map also compared the cost of building the network with that of the Panama Canal which at the time had just completed construction – though how the NHA derived the estimate of those costs, the Library of Congress notes, is unclear. ■



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