

VOLUME 41 ■ OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2023 ■ NUMBER 5

The Magazine of the Maine Better Transportation Association

# MAINE TRAILS



## **INTERSECTIONS**

Giovanna Guidoboni, UMaine's inaugural dean of engineering and computing

## **DRIVING THE BUS**

New owner at VIP Tour & Charter





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The Magazine of the Maine Better Transportation Association

# MAINE TRAILS

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## Maine Better Transportation Association

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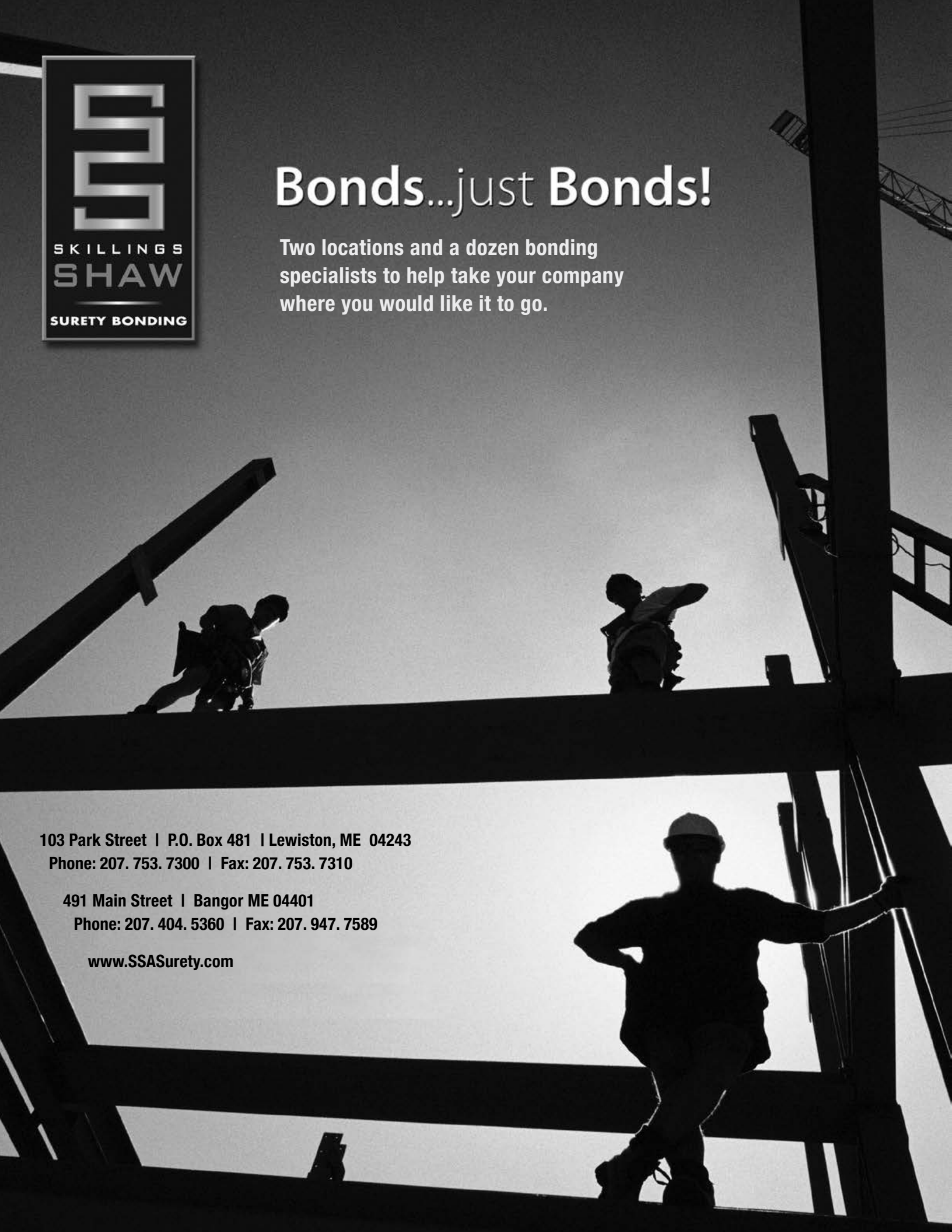
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by Eric Ritchie, MBTA President

# Ideas can shape and build our way to the future

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**MARIA FUENTES**  
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**T**HIS DECEMBER, transportation professionals from around the country and specifically our region descended on Augusta for the 72nd Maine Transportation Conference. It is a gathering that many of us look forward to every year.

A lot of ideas and perspectives get thrown around at these conferences, and that makes it a fun place to be for transportation nerds, like I know most of us are.

At these conferences we learn about ideas that have shaped our jobs and Maine's transportation system as we know it today. Just in the past few years, speakers have touched on some really big ideas – electrification, composites, big data, winter tech, and more – ideas that continue to transform our transportation systems across the state and across the country.

This year was no different. The theme of the conference was “smart investments, strong infrastructure” – and, once again, we had a great line up of speakers.

We learned about ideas to strengthen our transportation systems in a time of climate change, innovative ways to address traffic, and ideas that are literally out of this world – our keynote speaker was Master Sergeant Kyle Duley of the United States Space Force. In between the sessions, it is always fun to walk the exhibit hall and see what our colleagues have been up to. This is a great chance to see innovative projects and new toys of the trade.

This year we also got to learn about the behind-the-scenes work that went into the new state transportation funding bill Governor Mills signed into law in June. That MaineDOT now has a sustainable, long-term funding source that can help counter the ever-shrinking gas tax is an idea that this organization has long advocated for. And we are so fortunate that a bipartisan group of state legislators on the Transportation Committee took this idea and ran with it. They stepped up and made the pitch to their

**“But one thing must be made abundantly clear – our work is far from over. Although today the Highway Fund will not have to depend on an annual \$100 million bond per year, we still are not where we need to be . . . With the further adoption of clean car rules, the ever-shrinking gas tax will continue to shrink.”**

colleagues and got the bill passed – no minor feat!

But one thing must be made abundantly clear – **our work is far from over**. Although today the Highway Fund will not have to depend on an annual \$100 million bond per year, we still are not where we need to be. Commissioner Van Note said that the additional ongoing General Fund money, which tops \$100 million per year, will get us halfway to where we should be, but there is more to be done. With the further adoption





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of clean car rules, the ever-shrinking gas tax **will continue to shrink**. We are doing even more light capital paving now, which is an indication that Maine has more “basket case” roads. We need to have more funding for safety and rehab projects, so that our roads and bridges are safer for a longer time, and so that we can build more paved shoulders and sidewalks for active transportation. The never-ending battle to find, secure and hold tight to adequate funding to simply maintain our transportation systems leaves us in a place where we are not able to look outside of the system at what opportunities we could create/take advantage of to increase economic opportunity in our great state – opportunities that keep our young people here and provide for future generations.

Regarding the conference, I particularly enjoy the student paper session. That is where you get to hear and see what kinds of ideas excite young people just coming into the field. It’s a wonderful way to see the ideas coming out of the minds that will be paving our future.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that “Many ideas grow better when transplanted

into another mind than in the one where they sprang up.” I do not know if they grow better, but they definitely grow stronger and pick up speed at an event like the Maine Transportation Conference.

As you know, this is also the season for the MBTA Holiday Meeting. That is the time we get to meet our most recent MBTA scholarship recipients. This is an industry that thrives on innovation and fresh perspectives, so I know we all count ourselves lucky to be able to meet the best and brightest young talents coming up through Maine’s colleges.

It is also the culmination of the annual Membership Competition and drawing for the Super Raffle. So, there is a lot that has been going on which we will feature in the next issue of *Maine Trails*. I want to thank all of you who bought tickets to the Super Raffle and sponsored the holiday meeting and supported our scholarship fund. You are helping keep our industry alive and full of new talent and new ideas that will power Maine’s transportation now and into the future. I encourage you to get involved, get active and be a part of pulling the solution – we control our destiny and volunteers are wanted!

## STAYING STRONG

Finally, I would like to say thank you to my fellow board members and the MBTA staff who reached out to members and others affected by the terrible tragedy in Lewiston this October. The Lewiston-Auburn area has shown great resilience through this unspeakable killing. We know that we have many members in that area who have stepped up to the plate and given assistance to the families of the victims, to those who are recuperating, and to the community as a whole. We are a tightly knit organization with close ties to communities across Maine, and the shooting shook us all to the core. Knowing that there are people here to help, to listen and who share the sense of grief and loss is one way we all can begin to heal. Thank you all for being there. To donate to the community: <https://onelewiston.org/>

And happy holidays to you and yours! ■

Editor’s note: If you know of anyone affected by the shooting in Lewiston this past October, there is a list of resources on page 45 of this magazine.

# 2024 MBTA CALENDAR

**Thursday, March 7**

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY MEETING**  
Portland Sheraton, South Portland

**Wednesday, May 15**

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport

**Thursday, July 11**

**INFRASTRUCTURE GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
Waterville Country Club, Oakland

**Thursday, August 8**

**AROOSTOOK COUNTY MEETING**  
Northeastland Hotel, Presque Isle

**Friday, September 13**

**FALL GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
Samoset Resort, Rockport

**Saturday, September 14**

**FALL CONVENTION**  
Samoset Resort, Rockport

**Saturday, September 21**

**DEMPSEY CHALLENGE**  
Lewiston

**Friday, September 27**

**PDH TOUR**  
Location TBA

**Thursday, December 5**

**MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE**  
Augusta Civic Center

**Thursday, December 12**

**SCHOLARSHIP/HOLIDAY MEETING**  
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## MORE INFORMATION TO COME

Transportation on Tap 2024 Series: April, June, August, October. Dates and locations TBD.

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# ONRAMP

The study found bicycling was the happiest mode for commuting.



## Road to happiness

**D**R. YINGLING Fan, professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs, has a unique proposition for transportation planners: happiness as a key performance factor in transportation planning.

Fan developed the Minneapolis-St. Paul Transportation Happiness Map project, a study that measured how different transportation modes and routes impact the human experience for the Center of Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota. The study used a GPS-based mobile app to capture commuters’ routes and transportation modes (car, bus, bike, rail, or walking). After the commute, they were asked which emotions they experienced on the trip: happy, meaningful, pained, sad, tired, or stressed.

What Fan found was that, often, happiness was more about the journey than the destination. “. . . when you over-emphasize efficiency, you kind of minimize the human experience,” said Fan in the *ETAP Newsletter*, published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. (*ETAP* stands for Environmental Technical Assistance Program.)

“So, I would say happiness should be a new performance measure for our transportation systems where we can maximize the human experience.”

Route-wise, the study found that commuting along a scenic riverside route made commuters happiest with their commute. Mode-wise, bicycling proved to be the happiest way to commute.

“If you look at the current shifts in the transportation industry, previously we didn’t even count the pedestrian traffic as traffic,” Fan said. “Now, there is this movement, this momentum, to recognize the benefits of those greener transportation modes, and I hope that happiness could be one of the benefits associated with it.”

“We know that our built environment can affect our emotions,” Fan said. “So, from an urban planner and a transportation engineer perspective, I feel like there is a responsibility for us to understand the impact of our infrastructure on people’s emotions.” ■

## Drive OK, okay?

**O**KLAHOMA HAS just become the first state in the nation to require a work zone and first responder safety course for teenage drivers.

The new law will require all Oklahoma teens to complete the free Oklahoma Work Zone Safe and First Responder Safety online education course before applying for their intermediate driver license.

Work Zone Safe – along with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Service Oklahoma – are highlighting this new law as motor vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of deaths for U.S. teenagers.

ODOT added that “it is imperative” new drivers – especially teenagers – understand the importance of driving safely inside work zones and moving over and slowing down for first responders.

The agency said 91 motorists were killed in work zone crashes on Oklahoma state highways and turnpikes in the past five years. Additionally, 102 drivers under the age of 20 were severely injured in work zone crashes in the past five years along with 10 young motorist fatalities in that same time frame.

“We want teenagers who are learning to drive to have the added benefit of work zone safety education before they ever encounter [a work zone] for the first time behind the wheel of a vehicle,” said Tim Gatz, Oklahoma DOT secretary.

While Work Zone Safe is offered to students across the nation as of 2023, Oklahoma is the first state to require teen drivers to take the course before applying for their license. ■



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# Intersections

The new dean of UMaine's College of Engineering and Computing, Giovanna Guidoboni, forges an academic path where disciplines converge and students learn to solve problems

By Betty Adams

**A** PASSION FOR engineering, mathematics, computing and medical advances drove Giovanna Guidoboni to the inaugural post of dean of the College of Engineering and Computing at the University of Maine.

Then there's the added bonuses: the sense of community, good food, the farmer's market, lobsters, Acadia National Park, as well as "the convergence of sky and ocean" that prompted the purchase of a couple of kayaks to help explore the region.

Those are some of the reasons Guidoboni moved from the University of Missouri, where she was associate dean for research and professor in the College of Engineering (and spent 40 percent of her time as a mathematics professor), and relocated with her family to Bangor, Maine, to begin her new post in January 2023.

UMaine's bargaining chips included



its new Ferland Engineering and Design Center, which opened in the fall of 2022, offering student project design suites surrounded by shops where students can fabricate and revise their projects.

The soft-spoken, confident Guidoboni left her native Italy 20 years ago, searching for an opportunity to combine all of her interests. She had undergraduate degrees in materials engineering and a doctorate in mathematics, but said she was considered neither a true engineer nor a full mathematician.

She found a warm welcome in academia in the United States. She described it as "a place that would value my unique contributions." Initially she joined the faculty at the University of Houston. Today at the helm of the new College of Engineering and Computing in Maine, she said, "I am very excited to be able now to lead and to help shape the vision of this new college that builds upon incredible accomplishments of everyone



UMaine Dean of Engineering and Computing, Giovanna Guidoboni (top). She is the first to fill that post. (Below) Students at work on a project outside the new Ferland Engineering and Design Center.

UMAINE PHOTOS



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UMAINE IMAGES

The College of Engineering and Computing was one of several initiatives to come out of an historic Harold Alfond Foundation grant to spark innovation in academia and address Maine's need for "a highly skilled workforce and innovations critical to moving Maine's economy forward."

before me and people who are already here. Moving forward, I can help to enable the convergence of disciplines and to broaden access to engineering and computing.

"Engineering and computing means creativity. It means building things. It means finding solutions to problems that – once you solve them – you have actually changed the world. And then who cares if you prefer to do it with your hands building something or with a mathematical model that you ran on the computer? The best is when the two



The Factory of the Future, a new 3D printed building in the works that will expand engineering and design space on campus.

things actually come together and then you can use the simulations as a virtual laboratory that can inform the physical solution."

A UMaine press announcement about the April 1 launch of the new college calls it "a signature initiative of the Harold Alfond Foundation's historic \$240 million investment to revitalize the University of Maine System UMS TRANSFORMS. The grant provides \$150 million (\$75 million commitment from the Harold Alfond Foundation with a \$75 million challenge match) to address statewide needs for a highly skilled workforce and innovations that are critical to moving Maine's economy forward."

Guidoboni aims to help students find their passion as well and notes how the Ferland facilities can help do that because it brings in people from so many different disciplines. "I feel like I am back home," she said. If people find their passion, she added, they become not only graduates, but also leaders.

She talked of encountering a group of students last spring in Ferland working on a capstone project that involved using drones to inspect bridges, a project that required electrical engineers to design the electrical

side of the drone, computer scientists and computer engineers to do the sensors and design and interpret streams of data, mechanical engineers for the structure of the drone, and civil engineers for where to look and what to look for. She said that example shows how the collaborative spaces, including the surrounding shops, inspire teamwork.

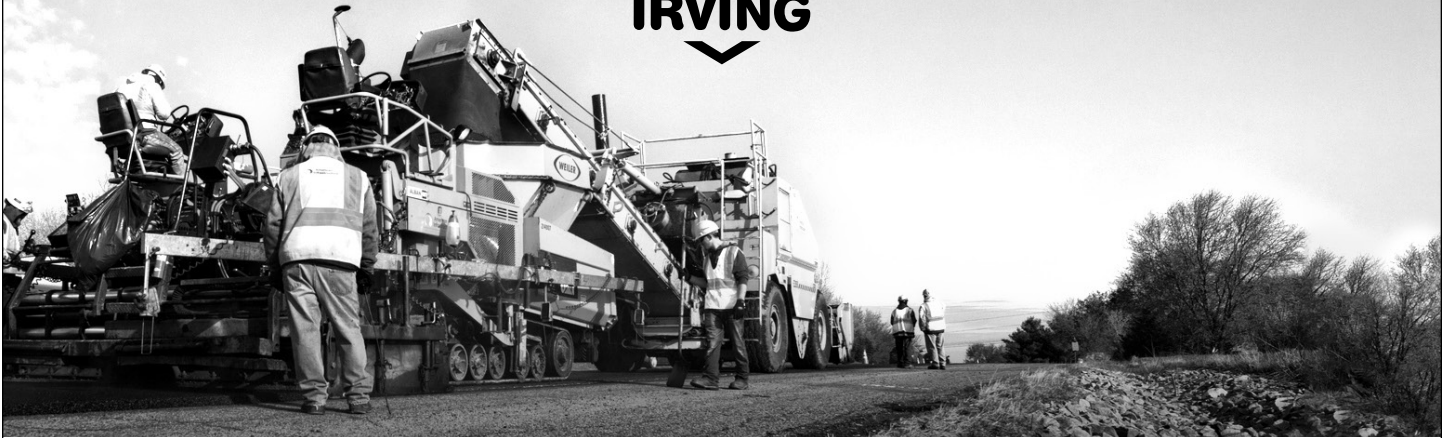
"For transportation, when you need to optimize traffic routes and where to build, there is a lot of simulation and data collection for which you need all the engineering

and computer disciplines to come together because there is the environmental impact: Where do people live? How do you carve up the data? How do you assemble them? And then there is the costs. These are experiences that you do not get, if you just focus on your degree. What the new building enables is a space that is meant for students to come together and solve real problems, so it prepares them for the future to be impactful in their jobs.

"Different disciplines bring different perspectives. We come from different places. We have seen different things. We experience the same bridge and the same road in many different ways. If we enable those interactions and collaborations, we can get the solutions that hopefully work for more than one person only. And so, I think that building that sense of community and the fact that each of us brings a perspective is valuable."

She questioned the students about the drone in particular. "Does it fly?"

They told her, "Yesterday it did," but added that it was back to the drawing board for a redesign, because the weight of the blades had fried



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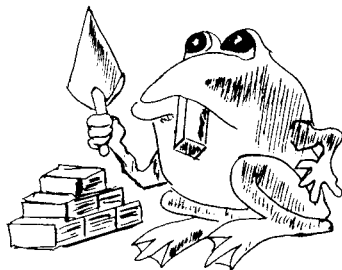
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a motor.

“Technically that first test failed,” she said. “But they were extremely excited because they understood what the problem was, and they were moving forward with the design. They were learning from their mistakes. I was very inspired by that moment because I was thinking how many times we focus on passing tests, and so if you fail a test, it is very bad, so you almost tend not to try so many things.”

“The new spaces in Ferland have allowed a new way of learning that enables students to explore ideas in a safe environment, to be able to try out ideas and learn from mistakes and improve on them, and as a team getting input from other people who may work on other projects.”

The presence of students from different disciplines means they can help each other. “When you are out there, why should you reinvent the wheel every time you have to solve a problem?” she said. “You look at what other people have done and how that can help you do things.”

Guidoboni shared some figures that indicate the approach is working well. Fall 2023 enrollment in UMaine’s College of Engineering and Computing is 3% higher than a year earlier, with 27% of the incoming undergraduates transferring from other institutions, and a 7% increase in the graduate student population. Retention numbers are good as well, she said.

“We have overall more people in the college, and more people that are attracted to our college and decide to move here.”

Interestingly, mechanical engineering is the largest major by enrollment throughout all majors at UMaine, she said, replacing psychology. “And the home of mechanical engineering is in Ferland,” she noted.

In a video on the UMaine website, Guidoboni invites students to join her on campus and talks about the interplay between engineering and computing: “When you really bridge engineering and computing, there is nothing that you cannot do: from designing new ways to produce sustainable energy to finding new ways to providing quality healthcare to everyone everywhere.”

Guidoboni is accessible. Big signs in the Advanced Manufacturing Center point the way to the dean’s second floor office. She welcomes visitors – including the MBTA members who attended the Maine Better Transportation Association’s PDH Tour Sept. 29.

She also talked about leading a tour of the biomedical engineering area on the third floor of the Ferland building where undergraduates were working in a laboratory. They asked one student why she was there in the summer when classes were not in session. “Here it feels like home,” the student replied.

“It is also a welcoming space that people feel good in,” Guidoboni said. She noted that the seniors in the various programs design their capstone projects in the fall and then build them in the spring.

Guidoboni hopes to offer access to the building to more people as well, including high school and middle school students.

“This building is really an incredible resource for the whole state and not only for people involved in our programs but also connecting what we have here, and this way of approaching problems could be very helpful in K-12 to help young minds see themselves as potential engineering and computing students.”

But she wants them to see other possibilities as well.

“My dream is to help young minds explore different careers,” she said. For instance, she talked of the importance of art in engineering: “If you design a product that nobody likes, it will end there.”



Students practice building scaffolding for a construction safety class.

The college too is partnering with Dr. Habib Dagher, executive director of the UMaine Advanced Structures and Composites Center, on the design phase of a new 3D-printed building adjacent to that center that will offer more space for innovations and a focus on the use of green energy and materials. Dagher was recognized as the MBTA’s 2019 Transportation Champion.

“The beautiful thing in my opinion is that to actually make this innovation happen, you need to have civil engineers who can help with the design, you need mechanical engineers, because you need to print in many different directions and you need the robotics and electrical engineers for all the wiring and also the robotics. There is computer engineering and computer science for sensors, software, the data collection. There is mechanical engineering, because these are all new materials, biobased, and how do you make them? So basically, all

disciplines are coming together in addition to physics and chemistry and math.”

She sees that as bringing innovations into education and workforce development. “A lot is coming along,” she said.

And with everything else, she runs her own firm, GSpace, which focuses on biomedical engineering. “That is just my passion. I love to do research because it keeps me alive,” Guidoboni said.

In consultation with another company, she developed noninvasive sensors to monitor cardiovascular function and uses it to track her parents’ health in Italy. “Because these sensors just stay in the mattress, you just sleep or you rest, and I can monitor the heart rate, the respiratory rate, the cardiac function and see over time how that changes. Engineering principles are used for that, engineering and physics. It is just understanding how the blood, which is a fluid, moves in the human body. And these are the same principles to study the flow in rivers.”

“I like to solve problems; that is what I like to do,” she said. ■

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



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# MTA wraps up Portland area widening

**C**ONTRACTORS HAVE finalized work on the Maine Turnpike Authority's Portland Area Widening Project and the addition of a third lane, both northbound and southbound, from Exit 44 to Exit 48 on the Maine Turnpike.

After more than four years of complex planning and construction, night crews finished restriping the first section of the new third lane and the MTA opened the lane to traffic in late September. The new third lane extends from Exit 44 to Exit 48, north and southbound.

"This is an exciting day in the evolution of transportation in Maine," said Peter Mills, the Turnpike Authority's executive director. "We are always responding to capacity challenges as we manage the greatest flow of vehicular traffic that exists in the state of Maine. This project will have a dramatic impact on reducing congestion through this busy corridor."

The Portland to Augusta extension of the Maine Turnpike opened in 1955. It was built when the average daily number of cars and trucks on the Turnpike was 2,500. Today's daily average hovers around 190,000 with many days seeing 60,000 vehicles or more traveling through the Portland mainline alone.

The \$146 million master plan for improving this turnpike section required more than simply paving two new lanes. The most dramatic aspect involved rebuilding of bridges and lengthening overpasses in four locations to accommodate the wider highway. In addition, improvements to each of the five interchanges along this corridor were made, including a substantial reconfiguration of Exit 45, the hub of activity for the Maine Mall area. The projects will also improve safety in the busy section of highway. From Mile 43 to Mile 49, the median guardrail was replaced with a 36-inch high concrete barrier and a paved median to make it safer to work on disabled vehicles.

"Another reason we widened this section is that we wanted to do an even better job of keeping traffic off of I-295 through Portland," Mills added. "The Turnpike's mainline, now wider and more efficient, is designed specifically to handle higher traffic volumes. It's straighter, access is limited, and it's the shortcut around downtown Portland," Mills said.

According to Erin Courtney, public outreach manager for the Maine Turnpike Authority, the numbers on the roadway tell the story behind the widening project. "Since 1947 when the road first opened, Turnpike traffic through Portland has increased 25-fold. Demand surpassed the design of this section some time ago."

With tourism now an \$11 billion contributor to Maine's economy, the Turnpike continues to be a key player in that industry. And because its operation is paid entirely by user tolls, out-of-state visitors traveling the Turnpike actually pay two-thirds of those tolls each year.

"Maine has increasingly become a very popular place, and the Portland mainline is the passageway for tens of millions of travelers every year," said Courtney. "The expansion and the improvements we've made will make that travel smoother, safer, and more enjoyable for everyone concerned." ■



MAINE TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

The Maine Turnpike Authority widened six miles of the highway in Portland to accommodate increased traffic in the region. The \$146 million project was completed this fall.

FMI: To learn more about the Maine Turnpike, visit [maineturnpike.com](http://maineturnpike.com).



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# MaineDOT receives \$7.1 million Lincolnville ferry terminal

**T**HE MAINE Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) will receive a grant award of \$7.1 million through the U.S. Department of Transportation's (U.S. DOT) Ferry Service for Rural Communities Grant Program, according to an announcement by the office of U.S. Senator Susan Collins, vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

This funding will go toward upgrading and modernizing the ferry terminal in Lincolnville to better meet current and anticipated future demand. Earlier this year, Senator Collins sent a letter to U.S. DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg in support of MaineDOT's funding request.

"The Lincolnville Ferry Terminal plays a crucial role in the daily lives of local residents and businesses alike, providing freight and postal services while transporting students to school and people to their jobs," said Senator Collins.

"This investment will help to ensure safe and reliable transportation service for the estimated 180,000 passengers that travel to and from Islesboro every year. As vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will continue to advocate for programs that contribute to the economic development, tourism, and overall connectivity of rural

communities throughout Maine."

The current ferry terminal, constructed in 1959, is reaching the end of its service life. In addition to necessary modernization, improvements are also needed to accommodate a new plug-in hybrid ferry, which is expected to be delivered in 2027. This vessel will primarily operate on battery power, supported by a diesel backup system, and will have the capacity to transport 10 additional vehicles.

Earlier this year, Senator Collins and U.S. Representative Chellie Pingree announced \$33 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding to support, improve, and modernize passenger ferry service in Maine.

The funding was awarded to MaineDOT through new ferry grant programs established under the BIL to support passenger ferry systems as they transition to climate-friendly technologies.

As one of the six island communities that MaineDOT's Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS) serves, the *Margaret Chase Smith* Islesboro route is the most traveled, with roughly 600 year-round residents. The route carries approximately 180,000 walk-on passengers and more than 80,000 vehicles every year. ■

# Bangor, Biddeford and Portland awarded \$1.4 million in second round of 'safe cities' grants

**T**HE U.S. Department of Transportation announced \$817 million in grant awards for 385 communities through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program, including \$1.376 million in grants for the cities of Bangor, Biddeford and Portland. This was the second of two funding announcements for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 funding round and includes 337 planning and demonstration grants. During the first round of funding earlier this year, Bar Harbor, Androscoggin County, Sanford and Portland projects received \$836,000 in grants.

Maine cities have received a total of \$2.24 million from the grant program to date. The Safe Streets for All program is administered

by the U.S. Department of Transportation and is currently funded with \$5 billion over five years.

The funding helps communities address roadway safety through a comprehensive approach that uses all types of interventions, and that aligns with the U.S. DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy. The funds help tackle the preventable crisis of deaths on the nation's roads through safer people, roads, and vehicles, appropriate vehicle speeds, and improved post-crash care. This first-of-its-kind program was created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden in 2021, part of more than \$14 billion in the law dedicated to roadway safety.

The Maine cities receiving the grants will

use them to address safety issues and develop safety action plans.

A total of 572 planning and demonstration grants received \$295 million in Federal funds in fiscal year 2023. Helping communities plan and design safer streets is a key element of USDOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy to combat the crisis of deaths on our nation's roads as part of the Department's vision of zero roadway deaths through a Safe System Approach. ■

FMI: To learn more about the National Roadway Safety Strategy, visit [www.transportation.gov/NRSS](http://www.transportation.gov/NRSS). To learn about Safe Streets for All, visit [www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A](http://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A).

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# Sunny, with a chance of hurricane

## Even Tropical Storm Lee couldn't dampen members' enthusiasm for fun and a good cause at the 2023 MBTA Fall Convention



The Ranger teams enjoy the sun before the storm on the golf course. Ranger's Jon Sanborn, Danyl Sanborn, Tyler Robitaille, and Jason Millett won Top Net honors.

**A**S MORE THAN 100 gathered for a continental breakfast before heading onto the links for the 2023 MBTA Fall Golf Tournament on the morning of September 15 in Rockport, the forecast was sunny with a chance of hurricane. The good weather held for the kick-off day of the weekend, and golfers enjoyed a picture perfect day on the storied course at the Samoset Resort in Rockport.

The play was congenial yet competitive, with golfers completing the course before heading to the Samoset's State of Maine Room for a barbecue luncheon and awards ceremony. The team from Ware-Butler Building Supply – Alan Cobb, Gary Blake, Jim Keiser, and Andrew LaBrecque – took the win for Top Gross Foursome with a score of 57. The Top Net Foursome prize went to the Ranger Construction team (Jon Sanborn, Danyl Sanborn, Tyler Robitaille, and Jason Millett) for their score of 56. The combined team from the Varney Agency and Clark Insurance (Steven Coward, Susan Coward, Matt Greenleaf, and Jenna Greenleaf) scored 65 and that secured them the title of Top Mixed Foursome.

There were several outstanding individual players who were recognized as well. Paige Lane from the Eurovia team earned Closest-to-the-Pin-Women with landing her putt just 6'10" from the 11th hole. Aaron

Buzzell from Bangor Natural Gas was Closest-to-the-Pin-Men winner (13'9"). Longest Drive winners were Heather Grondin from R.J. Grondin & Sons and Ryan Barnicle from Core & Main.

That set the stage for a lively evening that included the Opening Reception, Lobster Bake, the Silent and Live Auctions and the traditional post-auction MBTA Cribbage Tournament.

Convention Committee Chair and MBTA Vice President Michelle Ibarguen presided over the evening's events. She welcomed the crowd of nearly 200 MBTA members and their families, and offered her thanks to everyone who braved the forecast and came out to have fun, network and support the work that the association does to improve the access to, efficiency and safety of Maine's transportation system.

"I hope everyone enjoyed the Opening Reception, which was brought to you by our Grand Sponsor, Sargent," said Ibarguen, kicking off the Lobster Bake festivities. She then gave another big shout out to the weekend's other major sponsors: Event sponsors All States Materials Group and HNTB; Cruise sponsors Anderson Equipment and Cross Insurance and Cross Surety; Program sponsors Chadwick-BaRoss, Northeast Paving, Pike Industries, VHB and Varney Agency; Grand Golf sponsors All States Materials Group, Bernstein Shur, N.S. Giles Foundations, Ranger Construction Corporation, and Ware-Butler



Left: Paula Dore, Greg Dore, Judy Wiberg and Erik Wiberg. Middle: Closest to the Pin-Women winner Heather Grondin. Right: The Ware-Butler team won the Top Gross honors.

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The Varney Insurance - Clark Insurance team won the Top Mixed award.



The Sargent team (above) and the Bernstein Shur - Shaw Brothers team (below).



Building Supply; and the tournament's 19th Hole sponsor Varney Agency.

Ibarguen thanked MBTA staff and her fellow Convention Committee members for all their help organizing the event over the past several months: Alan Gould (White Cap); Tony Grande (VHB); Jason Griffiths (Pike Industries); Sharon Perry (Frankenmuth Surety); Brian Raymond (Dirigo Materials); Bruce Rideout (Bitumar); MBTA President Eric Ritchie (Sargent); and Irv Smith (BET Transport). She then called attention to the Silent Auction items displayed on tables around the ballroom, and reminded members to get their bids in "early and often" for the items that they had set in their sights.

After dinner, Ibarguen introduced the evening's auctioneers, Oliver Zubrick and Emily Tilton of Central Maine Auction, who presided over the Live Auction that featured an impressive array of items, from highly coveted tickets to the region's favorite sports teams (Celtics, New England Patriots, Red Sox, and Bruins) and NASCAR events to getaways at several Maine resorts and spas. Bidding was lively for a signed jersey from former Boston Celtics point guard Marcus Smart and a football signed by New England Patriots linebacker Matthew Judon.

Bidding was also competitive for several items that were particularly appreciated by those members in heavy construction and transportation – pumped concrete, equipment rentals, hot mix asphalt, and a "Welcome to Maine, The Way Life Should Be" highway sign, a replica of the one that greets travelers on the Maine Turnpike in Kittery.

The Fall Convention requires much help from members to support the MBTA's operations and mission, and at the close of the evening Ibarguen

## 2023 MBTA FALL CONVENTION

### FALL GOLF WINNERS

**TOP GROSS TEAM: WARE-BUTLER SUPPLY (57)**

Alan Cobb, Gary Blake, Jim Keiser, and Andrew LaBrecque

**TOP NET TEAM: RANGER CONSTRUCTION (56)**

Jon Sanborn, Danyl Sanborn, Tyler Robitaille, and Jason Millett

**TOP MIXED TEAM: VARNEY AGENCY / CLARK INSURANCE (65)**

Steven Coward, Susan Coward, Matt Greenleaf, and Jenna Greenleaf

**CLOSEST TO PIN-WOMEN (6'10")**

Paige Lane, Eurovia

**CLOSEST TO PIN-MEN (13'9")**

Aaron Buzzell (Bangor Natural Gas)

**LONGEST DRIVE-WOMEN**

Heather Grondin (R.J. Grondin & Sons)

**LONGEST DRIVE-MEN**

Ryan Barnicle (Core & Main)

### CRIBBAGE TOURNAMENT

**FIRST PLACE**

Tim Folster and Conrad Welzel

**SECOND PLACE**

Pat Dubay (Sargent) and Shannon Walton (Cross Insurance)

### DOOR PRIZES

**AUCTION \$50**

Tim Folster and Julie Hews (Hews Company)

**AUCTION \$75**

Kasie Carey (Northeast Paving)

**AUCTION \$100**

Rod Faloon (Pike Industries)

### 2023 CONVENTION COMMITTEE

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Michelle Ibarguen, Cross Insurance

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Joe B. Rollins, Dirigo Materials

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2023 MBTA FALL CONVENTION

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**Rick Chagnon and Jean Chagnon from the All States Materials team (left). Rod Lane, Paige Lane, Novilla Rollins and Joe Rollins (top right). Paige won Longest Drive-Women and Joe was the Golf Tournament chair.**



**The CPM Constructors team (left). The Bangor Natural Gas team (right). Aaron Buzzell won Closest-to-the-Pin Men.**

**The Core & Main team (left). Ryan Barnicle won Longest Drive-Men. Jenna Greenleaf and Matt Greenleaf (right) collect the Top Mixed Team award from Tournament Chair Joe Rollins.**



thanked everyone – sponsors, conventioners, donors, volunteers, and staff – for their generosity and time.

The final event of the day was the annual MBTA Cribbage Tournament with teams of two vying for the title. Former MBTA President Tim Folster and Conrad Welzel took first place, and the team of Pat Dubay (Sargent) and Shannon Walton (Cross Insurance) placed second.

On Saturday morning, MBTAers were greeted by the arrival of Lee, which had been downgraded to a tropical storm by the time it entered the Gulf of Maine. Due to the weather, several activities planned for the day, including the Harbor Cruise and excursions into Rockland, had been cancelled.

Other activities were added as the association took over Samoset's Spruce Point, Owl's Head and Schooner rooms for a day of waiting-out-the-storm fun. Members learned how to line dance, attended a wine tasting, and played several lively rounds of Name That Tune Trivia. A team from MBTA (Maria Fuentes, Jeff Romano and Cindy VanDenBossche)

dominated the warm-up round. When the play turned competitive, two trivia teams came out on top: the Raymond family (Brian, Kendra, Kent, Kristany, Nellie, and Nolan - Dirigo Materials) won one round; and Roland and Billigene Lavallee's (HNTB) team won the other. The team from Pike Industries also took home honors.

"A lot of other groups might have looked at the forecast and cancelled their event, but MBTA members are a hardy bunch and we know how to have a good time no matter the weather," said Ibarguen. "We all care so much about this organization and the role it plays in supporting our state's economy and keeping transportation safe and efficient for all Mainers. Thanks to the generosity and hard work of our members and volunteers, we were able to network, have some fun, and raise money – through the auction – for the MBTA's Infrastructure Development Fund. ■

## 2023 MBTA FALL CONVENTION MANY THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

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**Bret Grenier, Roland Lavallee, Tim Cote, and T.J. Poulin teamed up for HNTB.**



**Convention Chair Michelle Ibarguen and auctioneer Oliver Zubrick (above). Auction spotter Glenn Adams keeps an eye on the bidders (below).**



**Tim LePage and Matt Thibault.**





Top left: The Pike Industries crew explored the famous Rockland breakwater. Top right: The cribbage players were very competitive. Lower left and middle: Line dancing. Lower right: The Raymond family at the Lobster Bake.

## 2023 MBTA FALL CONVENTION GOLF

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# Making connections

## MBTA's 2023 PDH Tour explore three groundbreaking Bangor region sites

**M**ORE THAN 40 Maine Better Transportation members and friends gathered on September 23 at Sargent's newly renovated head-quarters in Orono to kick off the annual PDH Tour.

The tour, which has become a regular feature on MBTA's autumn calendar, offers MBTA members a great way to earn PDH credits, and to gain insights to some of the state's most intriguing projects. This year, three sites were included on the tour: 1) the \$16.5 million expansion of Northeast Paving's terminal and hot mix plant in Hermon, including three 10,000-ton tanks for storing liquid asphalt and a 250-ton tank to hold polymer; 2) MaineDOT's I-395 / Route 9 Connector, the "missing link" being built by Sargent between the two critical routes in southern Penobscot County. When completed, the connector will provide a regional solution to congestion, connectivity, mobility, and safety problems; and 3) projects at the University of Maine including the new Ferland Engineering and Design Center, the new \$8.3 million field hockey complex, and a \$9.5 million softball complex with bleacher seating for 500 fans. MBTA members heard from UMaine Dean of Engineering and Computing Giovanna Guidoboni, UMaine Associate Athletic Director Seth Woodcock, and UMaine Hockey Coach Ben Barr who has led his team to a 10-3-1 record so far this season. Go, Blue!

Many thanks to MBTA members Sargent, Northeast Paving, Dirigo Materials, and Copiam, who helped organize this event, and to MaineDOT and the University of Maine for welcoming MBTA to their projects. ■

Kicking off the tour at Sargent's new headquarters





# Northeast's new terminal and hot mix plant





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MBTA's 2024 calendar is out, and from regional issue meetings and the Maine Transportation Conference to Transportation on Tap and the Infrastructure Golf Classic, we have lots of great things planned.

Sponsorships are available. Watch your e-mail, [MBTAonline.org](http://MBTAonline.org) and our social media sites for information.

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## Transportation on Tap No. 4

# Flight of fancy

**M**AINE BETTER Transportation Association's Young Professionals gathered at Flight Deck Brewing in Brunswick for their final Transportation on Tap of the year on October 18. The brewery and restaurant is located in the former Small Arms Firing Range of the redeveloped Brunswick Naval Air Station (now called The Landing). The brewery is known for its mission of sustainability and community – all of their beers are made with 100 percent renewable energy from on-site solar panels. And the delicious wood-fired pizza is made from grain grown right in Maine.

More than 40 MBTA members, joined by the AGC Emerging Contractors group with Chair Nick Gaddar, showed up to enjoy the brews – with imaginative names like Pre-Flight Czech List and Googly Skies – and the good company of their transportation industry colleagues. “This has been a great year, and we are so grateful to our series sponsors indus and Sargent for helping making these gatherings so successful,” said MBTA Young Professionals Chair Patrick Brady. Brady also thanked CPM Constructors and the Varney Agency for their event sponsorship of Transportation on Tap No. 4. ■

The 2024 Transportation on Tap series will launch next year in the late spring. Watch for details in your e-mail box and at [MBTAonline.org](http://MBTAonline.org). See you then!



# MBTA welcomes these new members

## CORPORATE

### **COPIA SPECIALTY CONTRACTORS, INC.**

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 E-mail: lees@copiasc.com  
 Contact: Lee Stanley  
 Recruited by: Jim Wentworth

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### **HERC RENTALS**

148 Pleasant Hill Rd., Scarborough, ME 04072  
 Phone: 207-885-0101  
 E-mail: benjamin@scarborough@hercrentals.com  
 Contact: Benjamin Scarborough  
 Recruited by: Jim Wentworth  
*Rental equipment supplier.*

### **KELLER NORTH AMERICA**

30 Martin St., Ste. 4A, Cumberland, RI 02864-5350  
 Phone: 401-334-2565  
 E-mail: dwfinocchio@keller-na.com  
 Contact: David Finocchio  
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 Phone: 207-844-1154  
 E-mail: ryan\_foley@miltonrents.com  
 Contact: Ryan Foley  
 Recruited by: Glenn Adams

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### **SOUTHERN MAINE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SMPDC)**

110 Main St., Ste. 1400, Saco, ME 04072  
 Phone: 207-494-7065  
 E-mail: dwilliams@smpdc.org  
 Contact: Dean Williams  
 Recruited by: Tony Grande

*SMPDC provides transportation planning and technical assistance to 39 municipalities as well as a variety of regional groups and committees.*

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*General contractor.*

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 E-mail: george.peterson@tkl360.com  
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# Driving the bus

VIP Tour & Charter Bus Co. was founded on the idea that getting people to where they wanted to go safely and comfortably was a sound business proposition

**R**AYMOND PENFOLD had been working in the trucking industry for four decades when he founded VIP Tour & Charter Bus Company in 1985. People who knew him weren't surprised. He had started and run several businesses before – including Penfold Trucking and Ra-Ma Equipment – and he had operated the Exit 7 Truck Stop on I-295. So he knew a good business opportunity when he saw one.

As the family legend goes, he asked himself, “Why not purchase a motorcoach and transport people? The freight walks on and off itself.” And everyone knew how much he liked people.

“He was gregarious and tenacious. He really filled the room,” said Ray's wife of 31 years, Pat Penfold, who, with Ray's daughter, Lana Sawyer, and VIP Vice President for Business Development Jason Briggs, have continued to run the business since Penfold died in 2016.

Penfold loved to drive, and when he wasn't driving a truck, he drove for fun – competing in and winning stock car races and starting Penfold Motorsports with his son Bill. So Penfold bought a used bus, a 1953 GMC 4104, and began offering charter coach tours and services.

That old bus is still around, parked at VIP's headquarters on Fox Street in Portland, a reminder to everyone in the company of Ray's vision – to provide safe, efficient, reliable, and comfortable transportation, tours and travel services.

This fall, 38 years after Penfold founded the company, VIP has been sold to Conway Scenic Railroad, based in North Conway, New Hampshire. The railroad is another New England legacy business that will celebrate its 50th year in business in 2024; its scenic Mountaineer excursion over Crawford Notch enjoys world-wide recognition and is among the region's most distinctive attractions.

## ONE COACH AND A BIG IDEA

The railway and coach businesses will together create a formidable force in the New England tourism industry. The acquisition opens Conway Scenic to opportunities for vacation packages and international travel in the White Mountain region and is aimed at boosting tourism with a minimal carbon footprint.

The new chapter for VIP is a testament to the remarkable business that Ray Penfold and his family have built over the years. From a single coach and Ray as the only driver, VIP has grown to 15 full- and part-time employees who manage and operate a fleet of 14 vehicles ranging in size from luxury motor coaches that carry up to 55 passengers to luxury passenger vans that carry between 4 and 14 passengers. The company's business is year-round, and serves almost every sector



The Penfold family recently sold the company to Conway Scenic Railway, but family members Pat Penfold and Lana Sawyer (top) plan to stay on in management roles. The company, founded by Ray Penfold in 1985, has grown from one coach to a fleet of 14 luxury vehicles.



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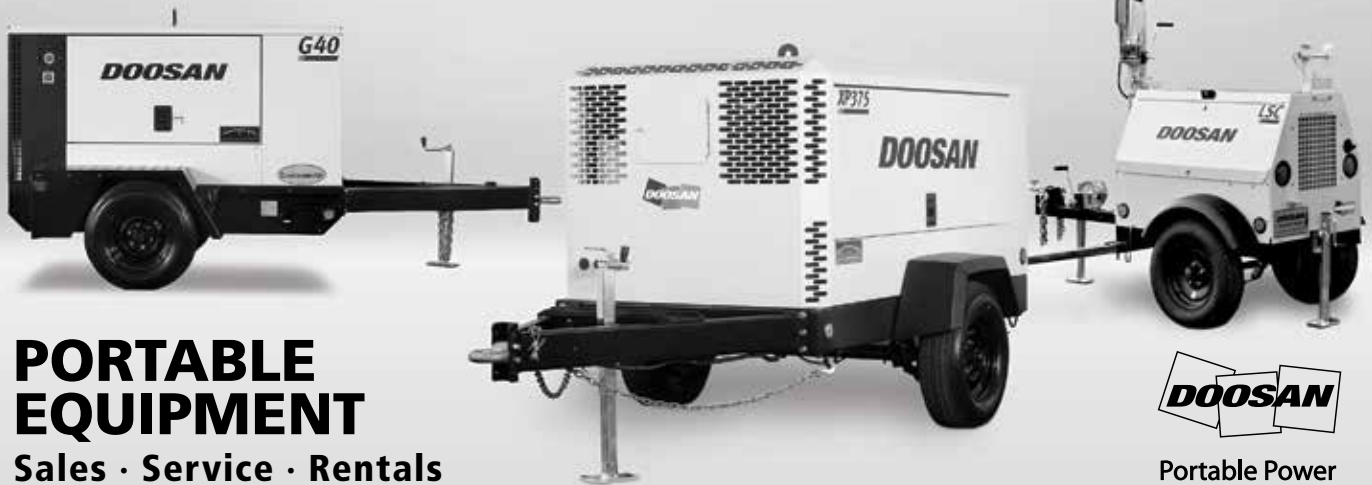
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The original VIP luxury coach (top), a 1953 GMC 4104, is parked on the lot at VIP headquarters in Portland. Ray Penfold (below third from right), VIP Tour & Charter founder, with his family and Jason Briggs. Pat Penfold (far right), Jason Briggs, and Lana Sawyer (second and third from left) took the reins of the bus company after Ray's death in 2016.

of Maine's tourist and entertainment economies.

Pat Penfold said the family has had a lot of potential buyers interested in the land that VIP is located on, but none have seemed the right fit until the railway came along.

David Swirk, who purchased Conway Scenic Railway in 2018 with a partner and serves as the railway's president and general manager, said he sees VIP's connections to the Portland Harbor and the more than 200,000 annual cruise ship visitors as playing an important role in the railway's growth in coming years. All three of VIP's executive management team, Pat Penfold, Sawyer and Briggs, plan to stay with the business as the new owners come on board.

### LEAVE IT TO THE PROFESSIONALS

Just days before the sale was finalized, Maine Trails spoke with Jason Briggs, VIP's vice president of business development about the challenges of working in a small, family-owned business. Briggs has been with the company for almost as long as it has been in business, joining 34 years ago.

Like many small businesses, employees often need to be flexible, and when Briggs isn't booking charters, checking in with long-time customers, or advocating for the charter coach industry within Maine and in Washington, he can be found behind the wheel of one of the company's luxury passenger vans, shuttling performers to Merrill Auditorium in Portland or driving for weddings and other events.

"It's a fun business and always changing," said Briggs. "If you like to do the same thing every day, then this isn't the job for you."

VIP is one of several charter companies that work with destination services firms to provide transport to cruise ship passengers to shopping and attractions while they are anchored in Portland, Rockland and occasionally Bar Harbor. CruiseMaine, part of the Maine Office of Tourism, estimates that of the more than 450,000 cruise ship passengers to visit Maine's ports between April and early November this year,

approximately 200,000 were on ships that called on Portland.

Weddings are a big business for VIP, as well. This year, Briggs estimates the company contracted to provide transport services for approximately 200 weddings. Like charters that customers book for concerts and sporting events, the wedding charters serve many purposes. They ease parking pressures at venues and enable passengers to enjoy the big day and get to and from the event safely with a professional watching the road.

Recently, it was playoff season for several high school sports, and there has been a new trend of schools hiring VIP to transport their teams to games around the state. "Schools used to rely on school buses, but now, more and more, they want to rent charter buses," said Briggs.

### CHARTER CHALLENGES

While the phones and coaches are busy at VIP these days, there were some darker moments in the industry's recent history. In March of 2020, when Covid-19 blasted onto the scene and the country went on

lockdown, the company faced an uncertain future. Suddenly what had promised to be a busy summer with hundreds of wedding, cruise and event bookings was a summer full of cancellations.

VIP wasn't alone, and the company joined a convoy of buses from companies all over the country that descended on Washington, D.C., in May 2020. Their goal was to get Congress to include motor coach operators in the \$1.6 billion in expanded pandemic relief funding provided to impacted businesses.

Briggs and the Penfold family are appreciative of the efforts of Maine Senator Susan Collins, who was the ranking member of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, and Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, who worked together to establish the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) grant program that was launched in August 2021.

"We are so grateful to Senator Collins and Senator Reed," said Briggs. Nevertheless, the pandemic was hard on the industry. In 2019, according to the American Bus Association Foundation, there were 3,300 charter bus companies in the United States, with 92 percent of them family owned. The industry shrunk by almost half to just 1,700 charter coach companies during the pandemic. It has begun to rebound, and today there are 1,900 charter coach services operating in the U.S.

### FEEDING THE COMMUNITY

VIP has been deeply committed to the communities it serves, and throughout the years, the company has partnered with groups including the Kiwanis Club to provide support and cheer. The bus company regularly volunteers its warehouse to organize gift bags and deliveries for veterans and senior citizens at Valentine's Day, Easter, St. Patrick's Day, and Christmas. VIP has also provided transportation at cost to Gold Star families for the Wreaths Across America convoy to Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the past two decades, Briggs and the VIP staff have helped organize what he calls "Potato Palooza," the distribution of tons of Aroostook County potatoes to food pantries and soup kitchens in southern Maine. The enterprise began 20 years ago when Briggs was looking for a memorable way to thank VIP customers for their business during the holidays.

"Everybody sends you a card and box of chocolates, but no one ever gives you potatoes with their holiday card," said Briggs, who grew up in Presque Isle, and used to work on the potato harvest when he was younger. He called on his longtime friend Bob Davis, vice president of the Maine Farmers Exchange, to help secure the potatoes.

The first year, Briggs ordered a pallet and gave out dozens of 10-pound bags to customers (a pallet holds 200 10-pound bags). He distributed the rest to local food pantries and soup kitchens. The second year, he ordered two pallets. The rest is history. When the pandemic rolled around, Briggs ordered what had become his usual 5,000 pounds of potatoes to gift and donate, but then 50,000 pounds arrived. So the "Potato Palooza" operation went into overdrive.

Briggs is quick to give credit to the Penfold family for their support of the operation, to the Episcopal Diocese of Maine for logistical support and help funding the project, and to Ross Express for delivering the potatoes to Portland. Frequently one of the Exchange farms will donate an extra ton or two, as well. The effort has grown, and this year Briggs ordered 15 pallets.



**Jason Briggs, VIP's vice president of business development, has been an active advocate for the transit and tourism industries, and founded VIP's holiday tradition of "Potato Palooza" that annually distributes many tons of Maine potatoes to families throughout the southern region of the state.**

### TRAVEL FORECAST

For now, the Conway Scenic Railway, Penfold family and Briggs see a bright forecast for the region's charter bus and tourism industry. Three years after the pandemic, bookings have returned to normal rhythms, with cruise ship and wedding charters dominating the warm weather months and sports teams, concert runs, school field trips, and holiday tours filling out the year. Now, with the acquisition by Conway Scenic Railway, VIP will be adding more runs to North Conway to connect tourists to rail tours through the mountains.

Both Briggs and Pat Penfold see hiring new drivers as a challenge as the business grows. They are keen to bring on the right kind of person who puts safety and their passengers first.

"We like to grow slowly, so we can keep the quality up," said Pat Penfold. "The best drivers come from a lot of different backgrounds." She said some, like Ray, are former truck drivers looking for a career change, while others are a quick study and willing to learn.

Like many Maine transportation businesses, VIP and its new owners are keeping a close eye on proposed regulations for electric and low emission vehicles and has no plans yet to electrify its fleet. For charter coach companies like VIP that cover long distances and would require lengthy charging times, going electric will have to wait until the technology advances and battery range and charging times improve.

"It's just not practical," said Briggs, noting that VIP buses travel hundreds of miles a day during the busiest times. Stopping to recharge the buses on longer tours and charter trips just won't work until battery and charging technology advances. "Maybe, if you're just running trips in town and going in a circle. For us, it doesn't work that way." ■



# Hammond Lumber to donate \$100,000 in support of victims, families of Lewiston tragedy

IN THE wake of the tragedy that struck the community of Lewiston, Hammond Lumber Company has donated a total of \$100,000 to support the affected victims and families. As a longstanding member of the Lewiston-Auburn community, the company is committed to providing immediate assistance and resources to help those in need.

“On behalf of our company and employees, our hearts go out to the victims and their loved ones,” said Mike Hammond, president and CEO. “The devastating events in Lewiston have deeply touched our hearts, and we stand in unity with our close-knit communities during this difficult time. We hope that these donations will help alleviate some of the burdens faced, as we navigate going forward.”

Donations will be used to support multiple initiatives and organizations aimed at helping the victims and their families in their recovery process:

- A donation in the amount of \$20,000 will go to supporting the Maine Community Foundation’s Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund, which provides immediate and long-term aid to the victims, families, and communities impacted by the tragedy.
- A \$20,000 donation will be given to the United Way of Androscoggin County’s Community Fund which supports community partners providing mental health services and other critical needs.
- An additional \$20,000 donation will be made to the LA Metro Chamber Foundation where donations will be collected and shared with organizations responding to the greatest need and supporting EMS workers.
- Direct donations equaling \$15,000, including all proceeds from purchased Lewiston Strong apparel, will be provided to support the first annual Lewiston

Strong Memorial Benefit Softball Tournament that took place on Saturday, November 11 in Lewiston.

- There will be \$25,000 in funding to be distributed toward the forthcoming needs of the community.

“Hammond also wants to take the opportunity to express profound gratitude to all the medical providers and law enforcement who have shown immense heroism and unwavering commitment to protecting and assisting others in a time of need,” said a company statement released announcing the donations. “Hammond remains deeply committed to the Lewiston-Auburn communities and will continue to provide assistance and support as we collectively work toward healing and recovery.” ■

FMI: To learn more about the company, visit [hammondlumber.com](http://hammondlumber.com).



## Ways you can offer support

- **THE LEWISTON CHAMBER**, in conjunction with the Governor’s office, has a website with links to legitimate philanthropic initiatives for the region: [onelewiston.org](http://onelewiston.org)
- **GOVERNOR MILLS’ ADMINISTRATION** also has a webpage, *Healing Together: Supporting Victims and Families of the Tragedy in Lewiston* ([www.maine.gov/governor/mills/Lewiston](http://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/Lewiston)). It is a clearinghouse for ways to support the victims, their loved ones, first responders and the overall community.
- **MAINE’S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES** also has created a webpage - *Behavioral Health Resources for Those Affected by the Violence in Lewiston* ([www.maine.gov/dhhs/node/4919](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/node/4919)) to help connect anyone affected with support from professionals. The webpage includes resources for children and families.

Anyone who has experience in public and/or behavioral health and wishes to volunteer to support the community is encouraged to register at [MaineResponds.org](http://MaineResponds.org).

MBTA IS THINKING OF OUR MEMBERS in Lewiston/Auburn and throughout the state.

Please contact us if there is any way we can assist you ([maria@mbtaonline.org](mailto:maria@mbtaonline.org) or 207-622-0526).

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SARGENT CORP. PHOTOS

Cutting the ribbon at the new headquarters (above). Sargent Corporation President and CEO Herb Sargent (below).

# Sargent employees, friends christen new headquarters



**S**ARGENT CORPORATION hosted a grand opening ceremony November 13 at its new corporate headquarters on Godfrey Drive in Orono. The event was attended by a large and diverse group that included employees, business colleagues and clients who got to tour the newly refurbished 25,000-square-foot building that includes meeting space, offices, a museum, media room, and a training center that accommodates up to 120 people.

“Investing in a new Sargent headquarters

and training center is about making an investment in our people for the next 50 to 100 years. Everyone in the office will be closer and centered on Sargent trainees,” said Herbert R. Sargent, Sargent Corporation president and CEO. He is the grandson of the late Herbert E. Sargent who founded the company in 1926 in Alton, Maine, with a single dump truck, a used Reo, which he used to haul material and plow snow. ■

FMI: To learn more about Sargent, visit [sargent.us](http://sargent.us).

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# Bangor Chamber to honor S.W. Cole's Dunning

**D**AVID DUNNING, vice president of human resources and marketing for S.W. Cole Engineering, Inc., has been selected as recipient of the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce Sarah Dubai Professional Service Award.



David Dunning

The award recognizes an individual who embodies Sarah's generous spirit, donating over an extended period of time their expertise to both the Chamber and the community at large. Dunning will receive the award at the

chamber's Annual Business Awards Dinner on Friday, January 26th, 2024 at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor.

Dunning has been with S.W. Cole for 37 years in various capacities, including senior science officer and corporate health and safety officer. He first joined the firm in 1986 as a laboratory technician. Over the years, he has been generous with his time and talents for

chamber activities and for other organizations and causes in the greater Bangor region. He

served as chair of the local chamber board of directors in 2015, is a member of the Maine State Workforce Board, and has been an instructor at the Orono-Hampden-Old Town Adult Education Partnership for 24 years.

Dunning is native to Maine, and grew up throughout New England and New York. He received his bachelor of science degree in environmental technology from Cornell University. He is a shareholder at S.W. Cole and serves on the firm's board of directors.

The MBTA Board of Directors, staff and members congratulate Dave on this momentous award. ■

FMI: To learn more about S.W. Cole Engineering, Inc., visit [www.swcole.com](http://www.swcole.com).

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# WTS-Maine features Schonewald, Frazier for Women's Small Business Month

**B**E SCHONEWALD and Lynn Frazier, MBTA members and founders of women-owned businesses, were featured by WTS-Maine in recognition of National Women's Small Business Month. Both women were interviewed for the organization's newsletter and revealed what inspired them to become entrepreneurs and certified Women Owned Businesses (WBEs) with MaineDOT. Both of their firms are also members of Maine Better Transportation Association.



**Be Schonewald**

Schonewald founded her business, Schonewald Engineering Associates, Inc., during the Great Recession. Based in Cumberland, Schonewald EA is a one-person firm that specializes in traditional geotechnical, transportation geotechnics, earthwork / geosynthetics, soft soils, and geotechnical instrumentation.

"Schonewald EA was born out of necessity," Schonewald told WTS-Maine. "In 2008, I was well established in my career and had developed an extensive network of peers, who, like me, were in senior positions in their respective firms. So when I was laid off after 21 years with a regional firm due to lack of work during the 2008/2009 economic downturn, I took a leap of faith and went out on my own – there weren't many other options given the economy."

Frazier told WTS-Maine that she founded Frazier Signal Technologies, located in Veazie, "out of frustration."

"I always wanted to work in the signal cabinets and help with construction and maintenance," Frazier said, "but as a designer, the potential for field work was limited." She launched her company in 2022 and now



**Lynn Frazier**

has 10 full-and part-time employees, including master electricians and certified electrician helpers.

Schonewald credits her network of business contacts, established over years in the business, with helping establish her firm. "My chief advocates were my professional contacts and peer network; this is a small community. One of my first steps was to reach out to friends and colleagues who had started their own firms. They were tremendously gracious and helpful. . . and at the same time, I reached out to my

professional contacts and peer network. My first projects were for those firms, thanks in large part to networking and relationship building."

Frazier said she is grateful to her former boss, George Campbell, who was president of James W. Sewall at the time. Campbell "heard me say how cool it would be to build traffic signals one too many times and eventually took away all the excuses I could think of," she recalled.

Frazier and Schonewald said they are also thankful for the support and networking opportunities created by WTS-Maine.

"The support system and network are incredible in our chapter," said Frazier.

"WTS-Maine is such a dynamic group of professional colleagues and friends," said Schonewald. "The single most important thing COVID taught me as a sole proprietor is how important in-person networking is for a very small business." ■

FMI: To learn more about WTS-Maine, visit [www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/maine](http://www.wtsinternational.org/chapters/maine).



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# Clement joins McClure

**C**HRIS CLEMENT, former commissioner and chief executive officer of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation, has joined Midwest-based McClure, a firm specializing in civil, structural, and environmental engineering and surveying as chief operating officer.

“Chris is a proven leader and his vision and thought process align perfectly with our culture at McClure, said Dustin Leo, McClure’s chief executive officer. “Chris embodies all of the core values we have worked to develop within our company – integrity, innovation, fun, kindness, and commitment – and, under his leadership, we are thrilled for the future of our team members and clients.”

Clement’s resume has included notable roles including director of global product management for Heidelberg / GOSS International, vice president of finance



Chris Clement

and administration, chief financial officer, and chief operating officer for the University of New Hampshire, and most recently CEO of a start-up robotic infrastructure inspection company. He also served as an advisory board member for Franklin Treadwell Infrastructure. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering technology from the University of New Hampshire, and a master’s degree in business administration from the New Hampshire College Graduate School of Business.

Clement will be based in McClure’s Portsmouth, New Hampshire, office.

McClure currently has 12 offices throughout Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas. McClure recently acquired Iron Engineering in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, adding the firm’s first east coast office. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit [mcclurevision.com](http://mcclurevision.com).

# Maine Chamber picks Woodcock

**T**HE MAINE State Chamber of Commerce announced it has named Patrick Woodcock as president and CEO effective October 2. In the announcement, the Chamber called him “a trusted and respected consensus builder. . . widely recognized for his ability to broker compromises on policy work at both the state and federal level.”

Maine State Chamber Board Chair LuAnn Ballesteros said, “The chamber is thrilled that Patrick will bring his expertise and leadership experience back home to Maine.” Ballesteros is vice president of external and government affairs for The Jackson Laboratory.

Woodcock served as commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources from 2019 to 2023 under Governor Charlie Baker, where he led a staff of 60 and oversaw offshore wind procurements, new building codes,

solar policies, and all other state and regional energy policies. Woodcock also served on the Board of the National Association of State Energy Officials, and several state and regional energy boards.

As director of Maine’s Energy Office from 2013 through 2016 under Governor Paul LePage, Woodcock helped advance air source heat pump adoption and additional energy efficiency investments in Maine, and served on the Board of Efficiency Maine Trust. He served as an energy and environment adviser to U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe from 2005 through 2012.

“The Maine economy is at a critical moment,” wrote Woodcock in the



Patrick Woodcock

Chamber announcement. “I look forward to collaborating with the business community, the governor, the legislature, and Maine’s congressional delegation to maximize economic opportunities throughout our state with a singular goal to make Maine a top state in which to live, work, learn, visit, and do business.”

Born and raised in Hampden, Woodcock graduated from Bowdoin

College in 2004 with a bachelor of arts degree in government. He and his wife, Robin, live in Portland with their two children. ■

FMI: To learn more, visit [www.mainechamber.org](http://www.mainechamber.org).



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# Transportation progress under the State House dome

**T**HE BIGGEST transportation-related headline to come out of the work of the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature was the dedication of new state funding to strengthen Maine's infrastructure. This came as part of the Highway Fund budget (LD 259) that Governor Mills signed into law in June. The increase was the result of hard work and bipartisan compromise. This budget dedicates 40 percent of the sales and use tax on vehicle purchases to the Highway Fund. This will provide approximately \$100 million a year in additional funding for the Maine Department of Transportation's capital infrastructure needs.

State funding also helps Maine draw down matching federal funds. Every state dollar can leverage up to three dollars of federal funds. MaineDOT still faces funding challenges – especially as we continue to experience high costs associated with tight labor and materials markets – but the work done under the dome this year provided a new level of long-term stability for transportation funding in Maine.

Overall, this Highway Fund budget allocates \$815.6 million to MaineDOT over the next two years. This funding will go toward MaineDOT's goal of delivering 2,073 miles of light capital paving in the department's current three-year Work Plan. The Local Road Assistance Program, the ongoing municipal revenue sharing of the Highway Fund for local capital highway needs, will provide \$50.3 million to municipalities over the biennium. This budget also continues to include language that allows MaineDOT personnel savings and unallocated revenue to be used for capital programs.

Maine's latest General Fund budget provided \$7.5 million for MaineDOT efforts that support environmental adaptation and resilience efforts. This included \$4 million to support the department's Municipal Stream Crossing Program. This budget provided \$2 million matching state funds for federal grants to improve culverts. MaineDOT also received \$1.5 million for municipal planning and design of adaptation projects.

Beyond the General and Highway Fund budgets, MaineDOT tracked approximately 150 bills in the Maine State House this year. Here are some of the notable laws that were enacted in 2023:

## **LD 404, RESOLVE, TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MOUNTAIN DIVISION RAIL USE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

MaineDOT submitted this legislation. It directs the department to implement the recommendations of the Mountain Division Rail Use Advisory Council and remove 31 miles of state-owned inactive railroad track between Standish and Fryeburg, replacing the track with an interim trail. This interim trail will be a ten-foot-wide paved bicycle and pedestrian trail.

## **LD 607, RESOLVE, TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO EXAMINE IMPROVING HIGHWAY CONNECTIONS FROM INTERSTATE 95 TO THE ST. JOHN VALLEY**

This bill resulted in MaineDOT forming a stakeholder group to review past feasibility studies and recommend highway improvements to strengthen transportation system connections in northern Maine. This group has been holding public meetings in Aroostook County. We will submit a report that includes findings and recommendations by the end of the year.

## **LD 31, AN ACT TO ALLOW THE COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION TO REDUCE SPEED LIMITS AT CONSTRUCTION SITES WITH INPUT FROM MUNICIPALITIES AND UTILITIES**

MaineDOT submitted this bill. It allows the department to perform rulemaking to implement guidance on allowing a municipality or utility to temporarily reduce speeds in active construction zones. The idea for this legislation came in collaboration with MaineDOT's contracting partners, who expressed concerns with the inability to establish legal "work zone" speeds when not working on a MaineDOT or Maine Turnpike Authority project.

## **LD 467, RESOLVE, TO STUDY ACCESSIBLE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS**

This resolve directs the MaineDOT Commissioner to convene a working group on accessible electric vehicle charging stations. This working group's mission is to develop a document that simplifies and standardizes the U.S. Access Board's Design Recommendations for Accessible Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. This work will help contractors design and install charging stations that are accessible to all people, including those with disabilities. This legislation requires this working group to report its recommendations by January 3rd, 2024.

There were several transportation-related bills that did not pass during the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature. While MaineDOT believes these proposals are well-intentioned, some of them would have created redundancies or yielded unintended consequences had they passed into law.

Even when the department opposes legislation, MaineDOT team members work to understand the intent of the proposals and aim to advance discussions about the bill topics. Transportation policy discussions must always view the statewide system as a whole and focus on what changes are practical given available resources. ■

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A section of the Richmond-Dresden toll bridge was swept away in water and ice during the flood of 1936.

## And the rains came

**O**N MARCH 11, 1936, rain began falling in Maine. It was the first day of a three-day rainstorm that caused flooding, resulting in death, major destruction and damage across New England and ravaged the East Coast as far south as Virginia. The flood water burst dams, wiped out roads, ruined businesses and washed away homes. More than 150 people were killed in the floods.

Heavy rains, the result of unusually warm weather, had led to dangerous conditions throughout the northeast. In Maine, melting snow and ice overwhelmed the rivers, flooding towns along the way. The devastation hit western and central Maine hardest, causing an estimated \$10 million in damage (equal to about \$218 million today) at the height of the Great Depression.

On the third night of the storm, a detached piece of a state-operated toll bridge - a thru-truss bridge - linking Richmond and Dresden washed

away down the ice-choked Kennebec River.

Other bridges along the Kennebec, unable to withstand the pressure of thousands of tons of water backed up by ice jams, were torn from their foundations, but this one was caught on film by Gannett's Portland Flying Service, which captured the dramatic image above that was published in the *Kennebec Journal*.

Built in 1931, the toll bridge had not yet paid for itself. The *Portland Press Herald* noted at the time: "Nature showed that she is no respecter of finances or state budgets."

Three of the bridge's five spans had to be replaced after the flooding.

Eighty-four years after it was originally built, a new, modern bridge opened to traffic at the site in 2015. The new bridge, built for approximately \$19 million, was constructed by Reed & Reed and has seven spans covering 1,478 feet. The bridge stands 90 feet above the water at its highest point. ■





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