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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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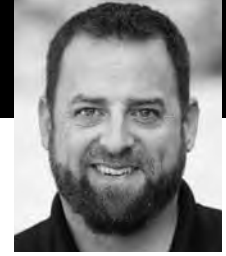
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by Eric Ritchie, MBTA President

# The business of spring

**A**S WINTER – or what we had for the season this year – dies down and we move on to spring, I have had some time for reflection. Does the transportation community have challenges as we look ahead? We sure do... however, I am feeling optimistic about the coming year.

There is a lot of work out there, companies are ramping up, and in terms of projects, it looks like it is going to be another strong year for our industries.

The crystal ball looking into the future is not as clear, but it is encouraging that some key projects have hit milestones in moving forward. Last month, Governor Janet Mills announced her decision on the best location in Maine to pursue a floating offshore wind site. She said that after much deliberation, Sears Island was the best choice - and we agree. You can read more about this in our article on page 21, and in the guest column by MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note on page 49. We know there is a long road ahead, and there will be challenges, but it is heartening to know there is a proposal on the table and we can work toward achieving our clean energy goals, while utilizing a tremendous natural resource for the state of Maine.

Maine acquired Sears Island over several years, and through various funding sources, including \$17.5 million in two voter-approved bond referenda in 1981 and 1983. It was purchased for MaineDOT and was acquired for port development. The port never materialized due largely to delays caused by opposition and multiple lawsuits, so I am thrilled to see the state is working toward a public-private partnership for a clean energy facility on Sears Island. Let's make it happen!

Workforce issues are a challenge and will continue to require our attention. We know that for decades now, the educational system has been pushing students into four-year degree programs, and not promoting trades and hands-on skills as much as we would have liked. That trend has started changing in recent years, as people and organizations have faced shortages of skilled workers and

**“We need to have cultures that care for people and their needs. Part of this means having companies and workers become better at taking care of their mental health and well-being and reaching out for help when needed. No one wants to feel as though they are alone on an island or to suffer in silence.”**

invested efforts into bringing new people into our industries. We have recognized the need to sustain ourselves!

At Sargent, where I work, we have seen a shift in our demographics. It wasn't so long ago that most of our employees were 45-plus years of age; today that has flipped, with 57 percent of our workforce being less than 39 in age, and nearly 25 percent of our employees being under the age of 25! And I know that is happening with other companies as well.

What is also encouraging is that there is more of a push to get students of all ages to

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learn technical or trade skills, another shift from past decades. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have waitlists, and there is even conversation in the midcoast about having a four-year comprehensive technical high school. A feasibility study funded by the Alford Foundation was recently completed to pursue that idea.

Our beloved state has a first-class engineering and computing school and faculty at UMaine, and a state-of-the-art building completed two years ago continues to attract students, instructors, and employers. While all the campuses in the University of Maine system are seeing enrollment declines – like colleges and universities across the country – the Ferland Engineering Education and Design Center has bucked that trend and is enjoying an increase in applications and enrollment for engineering programs. The timing of all these changes is critical – we have a need for engineers now to fill existing gaps that will grow wider in time.

Speaking of time, my how times have changed. And as we evolve – and evolve we must – we recognize some other needs that maybe we would not have even thought about 25 years ago. MBTA is proud to work with AGC Maine and others to offer a program on October 29 focusing on mental health in the

construction and transportation workplaces. Getting people together on this topic is something I have thought about for a while now, and it is timely as companies and organizations are recognizing that addressing addiction, substance abuse and mental health at work should be a priority for all of us.

The goal of the event is to address mental health at work by promoting awareness, helping to reduce stigma, and encouraging people to get help when needed. It will be a day-long program and will include experts in the field of mental health, human resources, and others, but will also be an opportunity for those who may want to share their own stories or experiences. As an industry, we need to better equip ourselves to realize when we or others are struggling or have family members of co-workers who need mental health support.

There are so many aspects to this topic, but it is critical that we all take this seriously, because it truly is a matter of life or death. The statistics in our industries are stark and sobering. Nationwide, the construction industry ranks second highest in suicide among major industries, for men – at a rate of 56 deaths per 100,000 workers. The national average of all industries is 32 per 100,000. Here in Maine, we know we have had more than our share of our workers dying by suicide. We need to

reverse that trend.

In this industry we are stoic, independent, and self-sufficient, we are goal and project-oriented, and we don't like to ask for help. But we know a lot more now than we have in the past. We know today that it is vital that organizations ensure their workforce feels safe, and that they feel a sense of connection and belonging within their companies. We need to have cultures that care for people and their needs. Part of this means having companies and workers become better at taking care of their mental health and well-being and reaching out for help when needed. No one wants to feel as though they are alone on an island or to suffer in silence.

So, what can we do? We can equip our toolbox with knowledge, and better listen and talk to each other. We can learn from experts in the field, from companies that already have successful programs, and from individuals who have had firsthand experiences – like most of us – with mental illness. This summit will help us do that so I hope your organization will participate. Stay tuned!

Our Annual Meeting is Wednesday (NOT THURSDAY!) May 15<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Garden Inn in Freeport and we hope to see you there. Thanks for your support and for all you do for transportation in Maine. ■

# 2024 MBTA CALENDAR

Wednesday, May 15

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
Hilton Garden Inn, Freeport

Thursday, May 23

**TRANSPORTATION ON TAP**  
Topsham

Thursday, July 11

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

Thursday, August 1

**TRANSPORTATION ON TAP**  
Central Maine area

Thursday, August 8

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

Friday, September 13

**FALL GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Friday - Saturday, September 13 - 14

**FALL CONVENTION**  
Samoset Resort, Rockport

Saturday, September 21

**DEMPSEY CHALLENGE**  
Lewiston

Friday, September 27

**PDH TOUR**  
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Wednesday, October 2

**TRANSPORTATION ON TAP**  
Bangor Area

Thursday, December 5

**MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE**  
Augusta Civic Center

Thursday, December 12

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# ONRAMP

## Paying the price

**M**EMBERS OF the Boston City Council are weighing the potential of congestion pricing as a way to reduce traffic and improve the quality of life for people who live in the Massachusetts capital, according to wevb.com.

Congestion pricing involves collecting a toll from people who drive into a metropolitan area or a particular section of that area. In addition, the price of those tolls could be higher for particular types of vehicles.

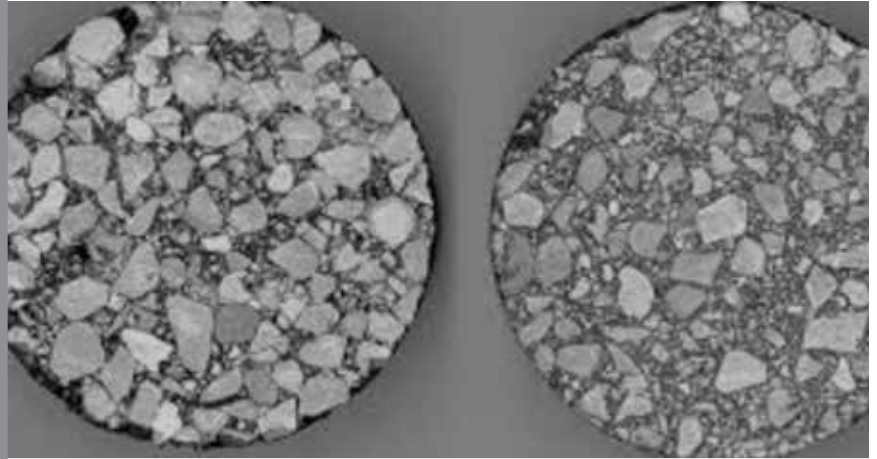
Boston is not the first northeastern city to consider creating a disincentive for drivers as a way to reduce inner city traffic. New York has been considering congestion pricing for several years, and may soon implement the country's first congestion pricing plan. Under that plan, passenger car drivers entering Manhattan south of 60th Street during daytime hours would be charged \$15 electronically, while the fee for small trucks would be \$24 and large trucks would be charged \$36.

Boston City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson recently introduced an order for a hearing to discuss the possibility of congestion pricing.

Fernandes Anderson stated numerous constituents have voiced concerns over the narrowing of streets due to added bus and bicycle lanes in Boston in combination with a rise in vehicular traffic. Fernandes Anderson also stated that narrow and congested streets pose challenges for emergency ambulances navigating already congested areas.

Fernandes Anderson also noted that a set fee placed on drivers entering Boston could benefit the community in several ways. Revenues raised could fund equitable transportation access within the Boston community; it also would reduce traffic, increase transit use, and improve air quality.

Under New York's plan, revenue from the tolls – projected to be roughly \$1 billion annually – would be used to help finance upgrades to the city's mass transit systems. ■



Stone matrix mix (on the left) compared to a typical paving mix (on the right). CTDOT will use stone matrix mix on a heavy traffic section of I-95 in Stamford, Connecticut, to reduce traffic noise affecting nearby neighborhoods.

## Shhhhhhhhh

**I**-95 BETWEEN the New York state border and the city of Stamford, Connecticut, isn't exactly known as a quiet ride. The six-lane highway carries about 135,000 vehicles a day, and that traffic can add up to a lot of noise for local residents, especially during commuting hours.

A local group, Neighborhood Citizens Against I-95 Noise, has been advocating for Connecticut DOT to do something about the noise. Now, the group is about to get its wish fulfilled.

Connecticut DOT is launching a study that will test a "quiet pavement" mix on a 6.7-mile stretch of I-95. The mix has been used in several warm-weather states including Arizona, California, Texas, Georgia, and Florida.

This spring paving crews will replace three inches of the existing pavement layer with a "stone matrix mix" – a one-inch binder-rich intermediate course topped with two inches of stone matrix asphalt. The mix is designed to absorb noise – decreasing noise levels by as much as two to three decibels – and to last longer, as well.

"It's a completely different mix design that takes different ratios of binder and stone aggregate," Connecticut DOT Resident Engineer Andi Karica said. "It's a sticky mix, a little harder to work with, but it should be more durable and translate to less noise."

"This type of asphalt has never been used before in Connecticut, so the Stamford and Greenwich Project will be a pilot program to ensure the longevity and durability of the materials," said Connecticut DOT Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto said. "We look forward to seeing the results as we continue to deliver projects that improve safety and reliability for all roadway users." ■

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

# America's No. 1 project

*Roads & Bridges* names the Maine Turnpike Portland area widening project the No. 1 project in the country

By Betty Adams

**T**HE NEXT time you're traveling along the Maine Turnpike through the Portland area, consider that the toll road in that area was named the No. 1 Road Project in the nation in December 2023 by *Roads & Bridges* magazine.

The publication bills itself on LinkedIn as “the leading industry resource for the road and bridge construction and transportation infrastructure markets.”

And the award, which placed the Maine highway at the head of the list of the Top 10 Roads of 2023, was for the Maine Turnpike Authority's Portland Area Widening and Safety Improvement Program, a project that spanned six years of construction and cost \$200 million, including engineering and other costs, all funded by toll revenue. There was no public money involved.

The honor was given to the Maine Turnpike Authority and to its general engineering consultant, HNTB.

“A major purpose of the project is to retain traffic on the Maine Turnpike that might otherwise use I-295,” noted Peter Mills, executive director of the Maine Turnpike Authority, in an e-mail. “I-295 is a busy highway with little room to expand. Its critical function is to allow vehicles to move in and out of [Portland]. We should avoid burdening I-295 with through traffic.”

Mills wrote: “The turnpike had room to expand onto real estate that it already owned to the south and west of Portland. The turnpike gained extra room by compressing the median into a tall concrete barrier that is virtually impenetrable even by large vehicles. The sturdy median combined with broader shoulders has made the turnpike around Portland



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Peter Mills,  
Maine Turnpike Authority

into a much safer road. The wider shoulders make it easier to assist disabled vehicles, perform road maintenance and construction, (and pull over speeders).”

## **12 CONTRACTS, 62,000 VEHICLES A DAY**

The project – which extended from approximately Mile 42 to Mile 49 – included 12 separate contracts awarded to a variety of construction firms that would work on 16 bridges, five interchanges, and six centerline miles. Now travelers have three lanes both northbound and southbound between New Hampshire and Mile 49 along the Maine Turnpike.

Peter Merfeld, chief operations officer for the Maine Turnpike Authority, said the widening project was initially envisioned about 20 years ago.

HNTB's Dale Mitchell served as project manager for the highway widening portion of the work and talked about the decisions that went into creating a construction management plan for the project.

It was too large for one contractor and too big to have all of it under construction at once, he explained, and the designers didn't want one project blocking access to another. “We developed a series of contracts that were spread out between bridges, highway widenings, interchange reconstruction,” he said. Then there was the relocation of three high voltage lines that went above the turnpike and the lengthening or replacement of water lines belonging to the Portland Water District that went under the turnpike, as well as the creation of two toll plazas.

“As we were looking at this and the number of contracts, we got them down to the right size for our Maine contracting industry, then we needed to think about maintenance of traffic,” he said.

According to the Maine Turnpike Authority, that stretch of roadway averages about 62,000 vehicles a day and considerations included keeping the traffic flowing

with as little impact as possible.

“A series of these maintenance traffic control plans were developed both northbound and southbound to make sure the traffic moves smoothly and





A bird's eye view of the Portland area widening project, looking south toward Exit 48.

MAINE TURNPIKE AUTHORITY

safely and so that we gave the contractors sufficient space so they didn't have to do all night work," Mitchell said.

## **A PUBLIC PROCESS**

Long before construction began, there was a concerted effort to work with the public because of the size and visibility of the project.

"All of this was really going to affect the public," Mitchell said. "It wasn't just the traffic on the turnpike. It was the surrounding communities."

A public advisory committee was created, and that group helped to establish and rank a range of alternatives. "In the end, we – the Maine Turnpike Authority and HNTB – were able to garner wide support with all of the different advocacy groups," Mitchell said. "And we were able to permit the project and ultimately construct the project with hardly any public opposition."

That process took more than two years, and the 12 contracts to perform this work were distributed among eight different contractors who submitted the low bids.

The first construction contract was awarded in February 2018, and all the projects were completed by the end of 2023.

One of the challenges involved the culvert work. "There isn't time in the day when you can just shut the road down," Mitchell said. "There were maybe 40 different cross culverts under the turnpike that needed to be replaced or at the very least extended. We allowed the road to be shut down to a single lane in the middle of the night, and the contractors had to replace the pipes one lane at a time to cross all three lanes.

"It was challenging for the contractors, but most of the public never knew it happened. They just drove the road the next day, and they saw a pavement patch across the road."

## **A CRITICAL INTERCHANGE**

The most extensive and expensive portion of the program – taking up about a quarter of the construction budget – was the work on the Exit 45 interchange, which connects with Maine Mall Road, Payne Road, U.S. Route 1, and State Route 114.

"One of the most interesting contracts was the 'preload' work done by Sargent at a cost of \$14.8 million. The entire area under Exit 45 is covered with blue clay that is 60 to 70 feet deep," Mills noted, adding that "Geologists call it 'Presumpscot Formation.' For the clay to support road structures, it is necessary to squeeze some of the water out. This was done by driving in a series of wicks three feet apart that threaded all the way down to bedrock. Then, Sargent covered the whole area with heavy aggregate that was left in place for more than a year. The weight drove water up through the wicks, compressed the clay and lowered the ground elevation.

"This blue clay is the same stuff that makes the banks of the Presumpscot River cave in when contractors park heavy vehicles on it. And it's this clay that turns the river water into the color of rich cocoa in the spring."

Ray Hanf served as HNTB's project manager for the Exit 45 interchange reconfiguration, and said it was the combination of three separate construction contracts. The preload contract included building embankments as well as doing the water line work for the Portland Water District. The work was done in phases, particularly the effort to remediate the weak soils underlying the project. Part of it was built swiftly, then allowed to sit and compress, and then more work was performed.

"The clays are so sensitive and so weak," Hanf said. "If we built it too quickly, the soils underneath could actually fail. You build it in stages and incrementally compress the soft soils to have strength gained and also to expedite the magnitude of settlement that we anticipated."

"We predicted between seven to eight feet of total settlement," said Hanf, "because of the soft soils, and in geotech fashion we were within



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Vehicles on the newly widened highway in Portland near the Stroudwater River Bridge.



5 percent of our predictions, which is frankly really good for this type of circumstance. Our geotechnical engineers said these are the most challenging soils they've encountered on the east coast."

The wick drains themselves, if laid end to end, would stretch from Portland to New York City, Hanf noted.

Hanf also noted that the area adjacent to the bridge abutments required geofoam, a lightweight fill. In all, the preload to remove water and the addition of the fill "was really a hybrid geotechnical solution," he said.

"The footprint needed remediation to allow an interchange to be located in that area," he added. While the preload occurred, a second contract was advertised to relocate a transmission line which crossed the Turnpike in the area of the Maine Mall. The contract for the relocation of the power lines cost about \$2.5 million.

The third contract was the interchange contract itself, and called for the finishing and repaving of embankments, realigning and replacing the bridge; and the building of two new toll plazas to replace the old and outdated one. The work was performed by CPM, with Shaw Brothers doing earthwork and paving, Hanf said. That \$28.2 million contract was completed in 2023.

**"The clays are so sensitive and so weak. If we built it too quickly, the soils underneath could actually fail. You build it in stages and incrementally compress the soft soils to have strength gained and also to expedite the magnitude of settlement that we anticipated."**

**Ray Hanf, HNTB**

now it is a diamond interchange," he said, noting that a view from above shows two ramps on either side of the main line forming a narrow diamond shape.

### MINDFUL OF THE CUSTOMERS

Hanf also talked about traffic management in that heavily traveled area which includes the southern junction of the turnpike with I-295.

"The Turnpike Authority puts a high value on customer service, because essentially we have a paying customer with the folks who drive on the turnpike," he said. "There's a very strong emphasis on taking care of patrons during construction and developing traffic management solutions that are as least impactful as possible in terms of whether it's detours or interchange closures."

Closures in that area were for such projects as paving and for short duration. Hanf said there was one weekend closure to allow the contractor to demolish the existing toll plaza and repave the area to reopen it to traffic, which was shifted onto the new roadway and the new bridge.

"There were definitely some innovative techniques used to manage traffic to be least disruptive to turnpike patrons," he said.

He also noted that the interchange itself was reshaped. "It was a 1950s-era trumpet interchange;

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Looking north, near the Maine Mall. The \$200 million project included 12 separate contracts, including work on 16 bridges.

### **EAST-WEST IMPROVEMENTS**

Mills, the Turnpike authority's executive director, also said that another purpose of the widening was to improve east-west traffic between Westbrook and Scarborough by widening the heavily traveled Cummings Road Bridge.

The Maine Turnpike Authority also has been working on its next major project, the Gorham Connector, pending approvals and public outreach efforts, the latter of which are expected to begin shortly, Merfeld said in mid-January.

"The Gorham Connector is designed to align with the new Exit 45 so that when traffic from the west reaches a single point on the interchange, it can turn left to Augusta, turn right to Boston or continue ahead to enter the Maine Mall or the City of Portland," Mills said.

"There are hundreds of commercial destinations in this region, many of them along Maine Mall Road and Payne Road. To improve traffic connections west of Portland allows people to travel shorter distances to reach their destinations more quickly and safely with reduced emission of greenhouse gases. It improves service to the thousands of families living in high density housing at Scarborough Downs, the Beacon at Gateway, Latitude behind the Mall, and Brick Hill and Redbank in South Portland."

### **LOCKDOWN OPPORTUNITY**

Mills also noted, "Most of the construction work for (the Portland area widening and safety) program was performed and paid for during the COVID recession. Because the Turnpike Authority had money set aside to complete these contracts, we decided in the spring of 2020 to go forward with the program in hopes that it would help support the southern Maine economy. Most of the construction work could be done safely outdoors, and our contractors agreed to avoid [having] more than one person in the same pickup. Because COVID closed traffic down during 2020, we got a lot of work done with daytime lane closures that might otherwise have required expensive night shift work."



**"Not only do I actually see the turnpike that we worked on, but I drive it every day. . . I know a lot of [turnpike drivers] probably don't recognize anything other than 'Oh, there's another lane.' But that's OK to us. We just know it's safer. We know it's more efficient getting through there. To be part of a project that is going to serve the traveling public for decades is really rewarding."**

**Dale Mitchell, HNTB**

### **'WE KNOW IT'S SAFER'**

Mitchell has a view of the Maine Turnpike outside his office window. "Not only do I actually see the turnpike that we worked on, but I drive it every day. I drive right next to the tractor-trailers, the motorcycles, the people heading north, the people heading south, and I know a lot of them probably don't recognize anything other than 'Oh, there's another lane.' But that's OK to us. We just know it's safer. We know it's more efficient getting through there," he said. "To be part of a project that is going to serve the traveling public for decades is really rewarding."

While Mitchell and Hanf each have worked for HNTB on Maine Turnpike Authority projects for more than 16 years, the relationship between the firm and the Maine Turnpike goes back 78 years. "We worked with the Maine Legislature as the Maine Turnpike Authority was becoming an entity and designed this road for the state of Maine, for the Turnpike Authority," Mitchell said.

"HNTB really wants to thank the Turnpike Authority for entrusting us with some of their most complex, most critical design projects. To be part of this project and know this is the culmination of years of work with the turnpike team, it's rewarding, it's humbling, and we are thankful to be at the table with them and look forward to many more years of it."

Along with being recognized for the Portland Area Widening and Safety Improvement Program, HNTB received two other Top 10 awards from *Roads & Bridges* magazine in December 2023: the No. 9 Road project for the Interstate 95 and 395 express lanes (in Virginia not far from Washington, D.C.) – the longest reversible road in America (easing congestion north in the morning and south in the evening), and the No. 10 Bridge project for the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge Upper-Level Deck and Brooklyn Approach Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. The suspension bridge connects Staten Island and Brooklyn. ■

**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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# Governor tags Sears Island as preferred site for wind port

**G**OVERNOR JANET Mills announced February 20 that the state of Maine has selected a section of state-owned Sears Island that is reserved for port development as its preferred site for a port facility to support the floating offshore wind industry. “This was not an easy decision, nor is it one that I made lightly,” said Mills at the announcement. “For more than two years, my administration has evaluated Sears Island and Mack Point thoroughly and with an open mind, recognizing that each site has its own set of benefits and its own set of drawbacks.”

In the end, Mills said, the Sears Island site “is the best choice for an offshore wind port because it is already owned by the state, designated for the purpose of port development, will cost less in the short-term and long-term, and is expected to result in less environmental harm.”

In related news, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management designated a two-million-acre wind energy area in the Gulf of Maine off the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts on March 15.

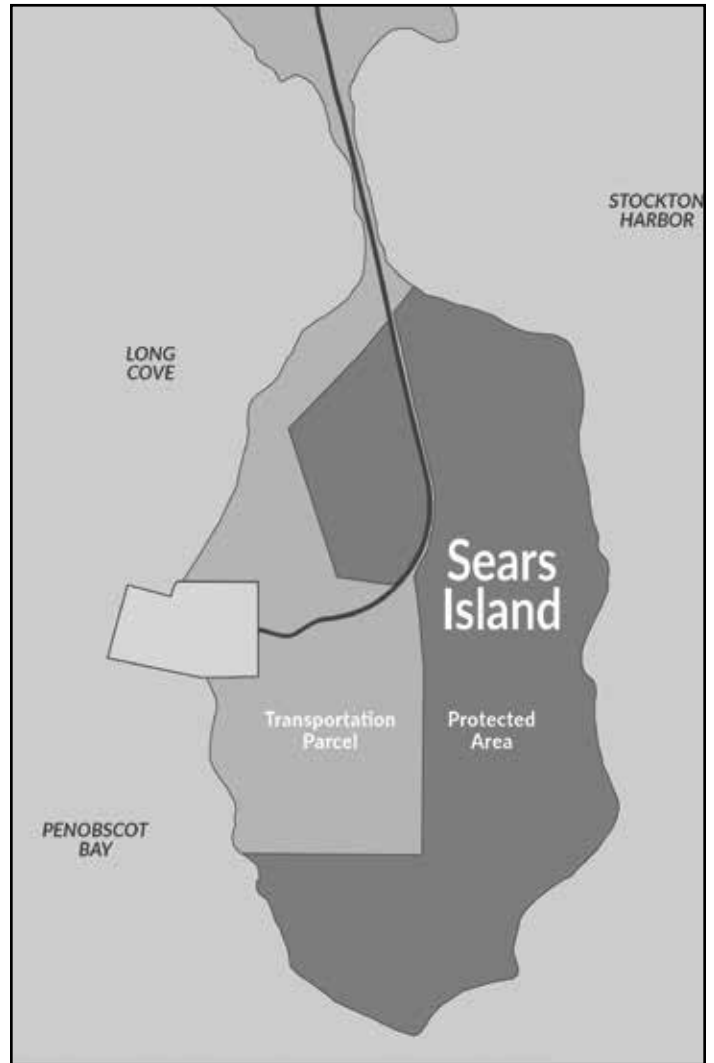
## PUBLIC SENTIMENT

The announcement brought comments from supporters and detractors alike. Those voicing support include the University of Maine Advanced Structures and Composites Center, Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Conservation of Voters, Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group, town of Searsport, the governor’s office and Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium, Gulf of Maine Task Force, Maine AFL-CIO, and others. Many see a windport facility as the chance to create jobs and create a home for technology that has been under development at the University of Maine for more than 15 years.

Those voicing opposition to the site include Friends of Sears Island, Upstream Watch, Islesboro Islands Trust, yet overall, the reaction was positive. Many see the decision as the most logical option available for the port. Captain David Gelinis of the Penobscot Bay and River Pilots Association applauded the governor’s decision, calling it “common sense.”

Said Gelinis: “Decades ago, Maine taxpayers invested millions of dollars in transportation funds for port development on the island, including funding for navigation improvements that rendered sufficiently deep water to avoid the need for new dredging there. A Sears Island location for this new facility will minimize impacts from southerly winds and seas, while providing safe shelter for smaller vessels that will be necessary to service the port. The site offers the most direct approach in and out of the Searsport navigation channel and allows the existing docks at Mack Point to continue accommodating the myriad vessels necessary to serve Maine’s businesses and consumers. We look forward to participating in the next chapter of Searsport’s maritime heritage.”

Maine Better Transportation Association (MBTA) supports establishing a port on MaineDOT land on Sears Island. MBTA Executive



The proposed 100-acre site is located within a larger state-owned parcel that has been earmarked for marine port development. It will include facilities for staging, assembly, maintenance, and deployment of offshore wind infrastructure.

Director Maria Fuentes spoke about the history that led to acquisition of the island. “Decades ago, Maine people voted to acquire Sears Island to enhance economic opportunities to Penobscot Bay communities – and well beyond – through environmentally friendly ocean transportation development,” said Fuentes. “Locating a marshalling port on Sears Island will mean high-paying jobs supporting the production of abundant renewable energy to fuel our entire state’s economy for years to come.”

MAINE DOT



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**ON THE ROADMAP**

Sears Island is a 941-acre island off the coast of Searsport. In 2009, Sears Island was, by agreement, divided into two parcels: approximately 601 acres, or two-thirds of the island, was placed in a permanent conservation easement held by the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, while the remaining one-third, or approximately 330 acres, was reserved by MaineDOT for future development.

The site selected by the state is expected to be about 100 acres, which is about one-third of the state-owned parcel or a little more than one-tenth of the entire island. The proposed port would be a purpose-built facility for floating offshore wind fabrication, staging, assembly, maintenance, and deployment. With deepwater access to the port development site, Maine has the potential to establish a location for the industry and help meet growing demand in the U.S. for offshore wind port infrastructure.

The *Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap*, released one year ago, determined a port facility is a priority for unlocking Maine’s opportunity in offshore wind to create good-paying jobs, spurring broad economic development, and generating abundant clean electricity to stabilize energy costs and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

**WEIGHING FACTORS**

The selection of the site followed an extensive public stakeholder process led by the MaineDOT and Maine Port Authority to consider the state’s primary port development options, including multiple potential sites in the port of Searsport, the port of Eastport, and the port of Portland.

The state concluded that the Sears Island parcel is the most feasible site in terms of location, logistics, cost, and environmental impact based on input from port and offshore wind stakeholders, including the University of Maine, and on technical and engineering analyses. When compared to the existing port at Mack Point, several key issues became clear:

- Unlike adjacent Mack Point, the Sears Island site is not expected to require dredging, a key environmental and financial consideration for a port project;
- The Sears Island site would avoid impacts on existing commercial or industrial activities in the Port of Searsport;
- And because the parcel of land on Sears Island is owned by the state, the upfront and ongoing costs for a port facility are estimated to be substantially less than on Mack Point, which is privately owned and would require monthly lease fees.

The overall cost to develop the port at Searsport Island is estimated to be \$500 million.

“Maine has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help transform its economy and protect our environment by leveraging our North Atlantic winds, our maritime and manufacturing skills, and land reserved for port development to responsibly bring the multi-billion-dollar floating offshore wind industry to our doorstep,” said Bruce Van Note, MaineDOT commissioner.

“This offshore wind port can deliver tremendous investments, workforce opportunities, and innovation to our shores while supporting the generation of clean, affordable, reliable energy for Maine and the region,” said Dan Burgess, director of the Governor’s Energy Office.

“Our heritage as a seafaring state makes perfect sense for utilizing one of Maine’s best assets, its deepwater ports. There is still much work to be done, but I am very excited for the chance to help build a port facility unlike only a small handful of facilities throughout the world,” said Matthew Burns, executive director of the Maine Port Authority. ■

# A drive-free commute?

## MaineDOT prepares to launch pilot commuter bus linking Portland and L-A

IN SEPTEMBER 2023, MaineDOT published the *Lewiston-Auburn to Portland Commuter Bus Implementation Study* that examined the feasibility of operating a commuter bus link between Maine’s two largest population centers: Portland and Lewiston-Auburn.

MaineDOT is advancing the design and implementation of a minimum two-year pilot commuter bus service that provides a level of frequency and service envisioned by recent rail studies of this corridor. The goal is to begin the service in the first half of 2024. This pilot bus service will serve as an indicator of the latent demand and potential market for enhanced public transportation between the Portland and Lewiston/Auburn regions.



MAINE DOT / CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS

Throughout the summer and fall of 2023, MaineDOT and consultant Cambridge Systematics gathered stakeholder input and analyzed several potential routes, ultimately identifying a preferred alternative that includes stops at Bates College, the Oak Street Bus Station in Lewiston, the Auburn Transportation Center, the Maine Turnpike Exit 75 Park and Ride in Auburn, Monument Square in Portland, and the Portland Transportation Center. Service tentatively will be provided from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday and from 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekends. While the focus is on workforce transportation, the service will be open for all trip purposes.

According to the study, the preferred route will connect to existing transit service to University of Southern Maine’s campuses in Portland and Lewiston-Auburn, Maine Medical Center, Maine Mall, Exit 48 and Rock Row.

Earlier this year, MaineDOT followed through on that study and issued a Request for Proposal, seeking bidders for a pilot transit program to provide commuter bus service between Portland and Lewiston-Auburn. Bids closed on February 26, 2024. As of press time, MaineDOT had not yet awarded the contract or announced a schedule for the launch. ■

FMI: The *Lewiston-Auburn to Portland Commuter Bus Implementation Study* is available at <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/transit/publications/>.



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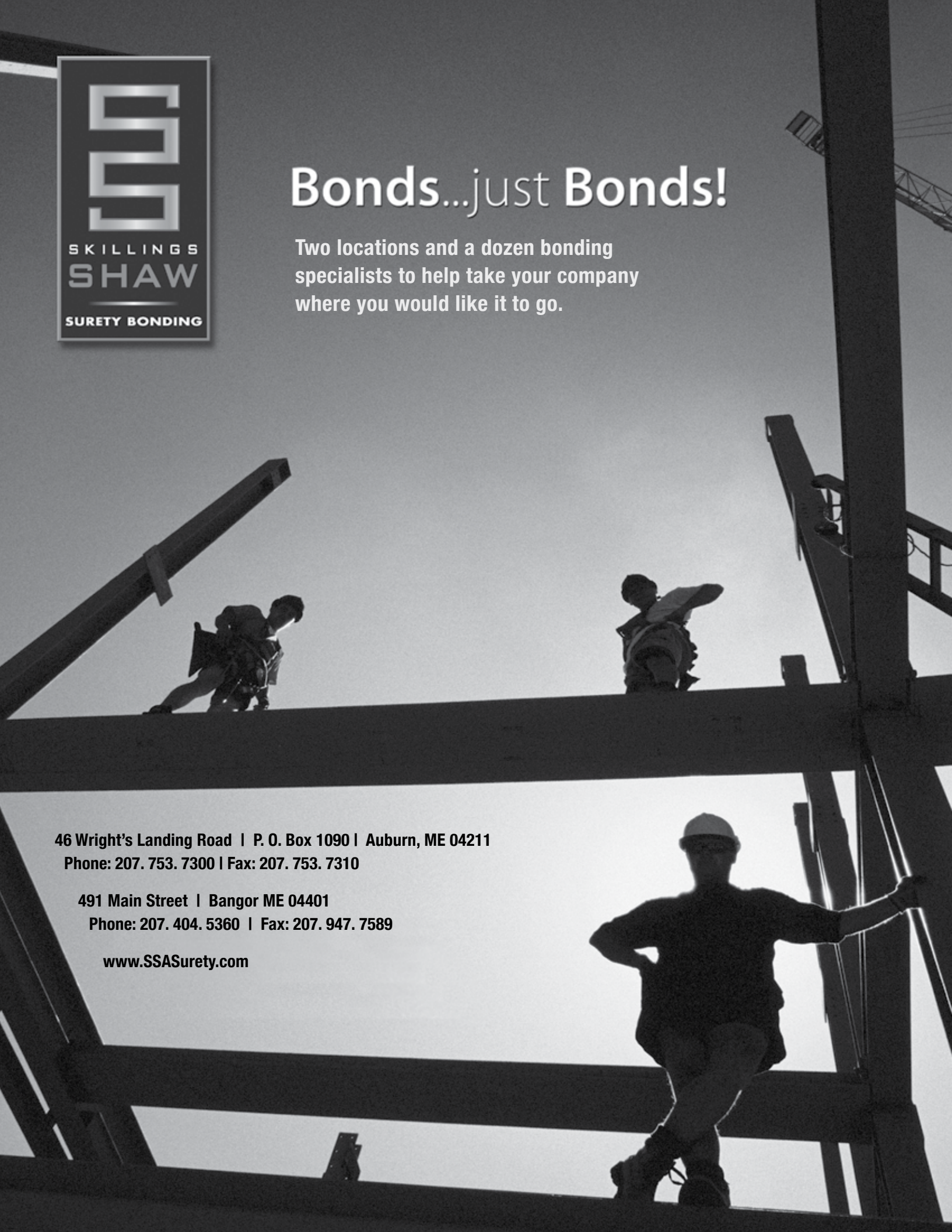
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# Smart investments, strong infrastructure

72nd Maine Transportation Conference covers topics of the day – from outer space and climate change to village revitalization and emergency repairs



MaineDOT Commissioner Van Note

**F**OUNDED IN the mid-1900s, the Maine Transportation Conference has become the one place every year where planners, constructors and community leaders in the state meet to talk about the transportation topics of the day.

The 72nd iteration of the conference held on December 7, 2023, *Smart Investments, Strong Infrastructure: Advancing Maine's Transportation Landscape*, stayed true to form. The conference addressed a wide-range of topics, from climate change, renewable energy, and the revitalization of Maine's village centers to the U.S. Space Force.

## OUT OF THIS WORLD

After a warm welcome from MaineDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note before an audience of more than 650 transportation professionals, keynote speaker Master Sergeant Kyle Duley from United States Space Force (USSF) offered a snapshot of the newest branch of the U. S. Armed Forces and the role it has in the country's civilian and military life.

Founded just two years ago, the USSF em-



Master Sergeant Duley of the U.S. Space Force

loys more than 14,000 “guardians,” including 8,600 in active duty and 7,000 in civilian roles. Duley explained that the USSF mission is to “preserve freedom of action in the space domain, enable joint lethality and effectiveness, and provide independent options in, from, and to space.”

## CRAFTING LEGISLATION

The rest of the day's panel discussions were centered on more down-to-earth topics that followed two tracks: policy and technical discussions of state and national advancements in transportation. The morning policy discussion featured a panel discussion moderated by Maine Turnpike Authority Public Outreach Manager Erin Courtney on the bipartisan effort to establish sustaining General Fund support for Maine's Highway Fund. Panelists included Commissioner Van Note and members of the Transportation Committee – House Chair Representative Lydia Crafts, Senator Brad Farrin, and Representative Wayne Parry – and Taxation Committee member Representative Tavis Hasenfus.



MAINEDOT PHOTOS

Theresa Andrejack Loux of Aero Aggregates

They spoke about their work crafting and passing the Highway Fund budget (LD 259) that dedicates 40 percent of the sales and use tax on vehicle purchases to the Highway Fund – an achievement that has helped fill a gap in the state's transportation funding that in past years has been addressed in a series of voter approved \$100 million transportation bonds.

## 'IT TAKES A VILLAGE'

The morning technical session featured a discussion of MaineDOT's Village Partnership program, which in recent years has provided matching grants to Maine municipalities looking to revitalize their downtowns. This session was moderated by MaineDOT Director of Planning Dale Doughty and included presentations by State Traffic Engineer Stephen Landry and Senior Project Manager Ernest Martin who spoke about the background and administration of the program.

Landry offered a look at the history of how speed zone limits have been set in Maine (and nationally), and planners are rethinking them as more communities are looking to recreate



Representative Wayne Parry speaks during the morning policy session on the Maine Legislature successful work to pass new Highway Fund funding. Left to right: MaineDOT Commissioner Van Note, Taxation Committee Member Tavis Hasenfus, Representative Wayne Parry, Senator Brad Farrin and House Transportation Chair Lydia Crafts. Maine Turnpike Public Outreach Manager Erin Courtney moderated the session.

more vibrant village centers that safely accommodate a variety of modes, including pedestrians. The impetus to rethink urban and village speed zones comes as vehicle-pedestrian accidents have been on the rise in Maine, and two recent pieces of legislation – LD 527 and LD 1674 – have sought to create safer, more efficient transportation infrastructure in the state’s urban and village areas.

For his presentation, Martin walked through the process of applying for a Village Partnership grant from MaineDOT, and he urged applicants to consider all of the elements that could be in play: from the businesses and residents that stand to benefit; to the nitty gritty of project design, including emergency services, parking, access management, utilities, drainage, transit, traffic calming, historical reviews, environmental regula-

tions, and right-of-way constraints. Martin also offered up advice on who to reach out to for help in the pre-grant planning, as well as the all-important public information process to keep residents and businesses informed about traffic disruptions and other aspects of construction.

**A CHANCE TO SHINE**

Also during the morning, there was a joint policy-technical session with student presenters from the University of Maine, traditionally one of the most popular sessions for the annual conference. This year was no different, with audience members not only getting a glimpse of the rising young talents from the University of Maine’s School of Engineering and Computing, but also a chance to meet the school’s new dean, Giovanna Guidoboni, the

first woman to hold the post. (Dean Guidoboni was featured on the cover of the October-November 2023 *Maine Trails*.) The presentations were lively and diverse, covering a broad range of topics: *I-295 Yarmouth Bridge Project* (Sam Bloniasz); *Logistical Problems in an Industrial Environment* (Cody Holman); *Road Construction* (William Embach); and *The Madawaska Bridge: My Summer as an Intern* (Sydney Gamage).

After a break for lunch, there was a presentation of awards. Maine Better Transportation Association Past President Tony Grande presented prizes for student papers: first was Cody Holman; Sydney Gamage was second; Sam Bloniasz was third; and William Embach was fourth. Grande also presented the Transportation Infrastructure Durability Center (TIDC) Student of the Year award to



MaineDOT Bureau of Planning Director Dale Doughty (left) moderated the morning technical session, *It Takes a Village: A Technical Guide to the Village Partnership Initiative*, which included presentations by MaineDOT State Traffic Engineer Stephen Landry (middle) and MaineDOT Senior Project Manager Ernest Martin.

MAINE DOT PHOTOS

Jon Pinkham.

Other awards presented during the noon session included the AASHTO President's Transportation Award for Environment and Planning presented to MaineDOT's Director of Planning Dale Doughty. The session wrapped up with the David H. Stevens Award presented by Commissioner Van Note to Nate Moulton, director of MaineDOT's Office of Freight and Passenger Services (see the accompanying story about Nate's contributions to Maine transportation on page 31). The David H. Stevens Award is the most prestigious of MaineDOT awards.

**CLIMATE AND LIGHTS**

The afternoon technical sessions featured lively discussions of technical issues that have been top of mind for many in the transpor-

tation community. The technical track, titled *Water, Water, Everywhere: Adapting Infrastructure to the Changing Climate*, featured presentations addressing Maine's efforts to anticipate and prepare for climate change. Lisa Churchill of the firm Climate Advisory discussed Maine's work to identify vulnerabilities in its transportation infrastructure; MaineDOT Surface Water Resources Division Manager Charles Hebson detailed how the department is managing the maintenance and reconstruction of failing culverts; and Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) Deputy Chief Engineer Erin Sisson talked about the challenges her state faced after catastrophic rains and flooding hit the state in July 2023.

The second afternoon technical session, *Avoiding the Light: Innovative Intersection*



MaineDOT Senior Environmental Manager Eric Ham (top right) moderated the panel discussion on climate change, *Water, Water Everywhere*. Presenters included: Lisa Churchill from Climate Advisory (above left); MaineDOT Surface Water Resources Division Manager Charles Hebson (above center); and VTTrans Deputy Chief Engineer Erin Sisson (top right).



University of Maine students presented papers at the conference and not only received prizes, but also the traditional Maine Transportation Conference Mug, 2023 edition. Left to right: William Embach (runner up); MaineDOT's Lindsey Merrifield; Sydney Gamage (second); UMaine College of Engineering and Computing Dean Giovanna Guidoboni; Cody Holman (first) and Sam Bloniasz (runner up).

MAINEDOT PHOTOS



MaineDOT Office of Safety and Mobility Director Robert Skehan moderated the session *Avoiding the Light: Innovative Intersection Designs*. Speakers were Director of Engineering for Carmel, Indiana Jeremy Kashman, and NCDOT Safety Evaluation Engineer Carrie Simpson.



*Designs*, tackled the topic of roundabouts. Robert Skehan, director of MaineDOT's Office of Safety and Mobility, moderated the panel. Jeremy Kashman, director of engineering for Carmel, Indiana, spoke about his city's work to reduce traffic-related injuries even as the city's population has exploded over the past two decades. The city has built 144 roundabouts in recent years – hence its fame as the “roundabout capital of the U.S.” – and seen traffic-related injuries decline dramatically.

Carrie Simpson, safety evaluation engineer for NCDOT, spoke about how her state is using “high-speed” roundabouts in rural areas to help reduce frontal impact crashes. North Carolina is one of only seven states with more

than 600 roundabouts. The state has seen a 41 percent reduction in total crashes, a 78 percent decrease in fatal and injury crashes, and a 62 percent reduction in frontal impact crashes in rural areas where roundabouts have been placed.

### ROADMAPS AND WIND PORTS

The afternoon policy session, *Roadmap to Progress: Investing in Transportation Infrastructure for Thriving Communities*, was moderated by MaineDOT Deputy Director of Planning Jennifer Grant and addressed MaineDOT's role in community and economic development. Three presenters discussed different aspects of that work: Robert Burns,



MaineDOT Deputy Director of Planning Jennifer Grant (above left) moderated *Roadmap to Progress: Investing in Transportation Infrastructure for Thriving Communities*. Presenters were: Fort Kent Town Manager Suzie Paradis (left); Maine Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Heather Johnson; and Windham Town Manager Robert Burns.

MAINEDOT PHOTOS



MAINEDOT PHOTOS

MaineDOT Office of Freight & Passenger Services Director Nate Moulton (left) moderated *Wind Port Potential in Maine*. Presenters were: Maine Port Authority Executive Director Matthew Burns (center) and Maine Offshore Wind Program Manager Stephanie Watson (right).

Windham assistant town manager, spoke about North Windham Moves, a \$25 million federally funded project to improve mobility in his town; Fort Kent Town Manager Suzie Paradis discussed the Fort Kent Village Planning Study: America's First Mile – Connecting People and Places, a MaineDOT Village Partnership project to improve safety to reduce congestion, improve pedestrian and traffic safety, complement long-range land use planning goals, and align with economic goals for the city; and Maine Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner Heather Johnson spoke about her department's efforts to incorporate transportation into the statewide community development plan.

The second afternoon policy session – *Wind Port Potential in Maine* – featured presentations by Maine Port Authority Executive Director Matthew Burns and Maine Offshore

Wind Program Manager Stephanie Watson. That session was moderated by MaineDOT's Nate Moulton, and offered another perspective on Maine's efforts to explore new technologies to reduce climate impacts. Watson gave the birds-eye view of the state's wind energy policy, and how renewable wind energy "is good for Maine's climate and economy." She also detailed the efforts Maine has undertaken to responsibly advance an off-shore wind industry. Watson walked through the timeline for development of the initial research and development of a demonstration project over the next two years.

Burns discussed the recent history of wind power and the advances in technology that have made offshore wind power a viable renewable energy source. He laid out Maine's work to study and identify the most advantageous location for a wind port – a facility where the components for offshore wind

structures can be gathered, stored and managed throughout the construction process. (The state has since announced Sears Island is its preferred wind port site.) Building the port, depending on the site finally selected, is estimated to cost between \$479 million and \$985 million. He laid out a timeline that showed construction beginning sometime in 2027.

**BRIDGES AND REBUILDS**

The evening reception included judging for two bridge-breaking competitions. The team from VHB won the traditional competition with their 194 gram popsicle stick bridge outperforming the competition bearing a maximum weight of 1,710 pounds of pressure. The other Bridge Breaking winners were: second place TYLin; and third place, Maine Turnpike Authority. The three winners of the Accelerated Bridge Competition were: Most Creative



The bridge breaking team from VHB reacts to the news that they had won (left). Tony Grande (right) presents Jon Pinkham with the TIDC 2023 Outstanding Student of the Year award.

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## TRANSIT







Commissioner Van Note presented Nate Moulton with the 2023 David H. Stevens Award.

Bridge, The Dirt Guys; Lightest Bridge, AIT Composites; and Most Weight, a tie between TYLin and HNTB. They were among several teams of four who constructed their bridges over 30 minutes during the conference lunch break.

Congratulations to all those intrepid bridge designers who put their bridge building talents on the line!

The conference wrapped up with dinner followed by an evening presentation titled *Interstate 95 Philadelphia Emergency Rebuild – A Creative Partnership*. The evening moderator was Ethan Shell, UMaine Student Chapter ASCE president, and the presenter was Dr. Theresa Andrejack Loux of Aero Aggregates of North America LLC. She told of the emergency repair of a short section of I-95 in Philadelphia that collapsed after a tragic vehicle fire in June 2023 and killed a truck driver and shut down one of the busiest highway cor-

ridors in the country, prompting U.S. President Joe Biden to call the emergency repair the “highest priority infrastructure project in the U.S.” Loux’s company Aero Aggregates provided the lightweight fill of foamed recycled glass that was held in place by nesting geogrid wire baskets. The use of the innovative lightweight fill enabled the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to protect the utilities running underneath the highway and speed up completion of the temporary bridge, so that the highway could reopen 12 days after the collapse. Loux also mentioned that the foamed glass has been used successfully on several projects throughout the northeast, including on construction of the new I-395 / Route 9 Connector in Brewer. ■

**FMI:** To learn more about the presentations at the 72nd Maine Transportation Conference, visit [mbtaonline.org/72nd-maine-transportation-conference-slides](http://mbtaonline.org/72nd-maine-transportation-conference-slides).

MAINEDOT PHOTOS

## Congratulations, Nate

### Nate Moulton receives 2023 David H. Stevens Award

**M**AINEDOT DIRECTOR of the Office of Freight and Passenger Services Nate Moulton was honored with the David H. Stevens Award at the Maine Transportation Conference in Augusta on December 7. In presenting the department’s most prestigious award, Commissioner Bruce Van Note praised Moulton for his long and varied career with MaineDOT and his instrumental role in managing key programs at the state, including passenger and freight rail, aviation, marine and transit operations.

Moulton began his career with state government in 1989 as an auditor and has worked for MaineDOT for most of the years since. He was promoted to manager of rail transportation in 2005 and again in 2006 to transportation planning division director. He held that job until 2017, when he was named director of freight transportation.

“During his time at the department, Nate has continuously taken on new areas of responsibility,” said Commissioner Van Note at the awards presentation. “He plays a key role in discussions that involve passenger rail, aviation, marine, and transit operations. Nate works to ensure that these modes of transportation are represented on an equitable playing field within a department that had previously focused on highways for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”

Intelligent, modest and hardworking, Moulton received high praise from his co-workers as “one of the very best,” “a true professional,” and “a class act.”

Patricia Quinn, executive director of the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, stated, “Nate Moulton was instrumental in establishing and initiating the Amtrak Downeaster and has remained a resource of information and guidance for me and for NNEPRA for many years. He is a proven problem solver who is able to get things done as efficiently and effectively as possible, always looking out for



Nate’s family surprised him at the Transportation Conference announcement of the award.

the best interest of the public and the department, while setting the standard for others to do the same.”

Moulton also played a key role in the revival of freight rail service in northern Maine and helped usher through a \$20 million deal to purchase a 233-mile section of rail line formerly owned by Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway. Since then, the state has worked with a private operator to revitalize the line, a key transportation link connecting Penobscot and Aroostook counties. Said Van Note: “Nate is MaineDOT’s subject matter expert on rail issues. He speaks frequently to lawmakers and reporters. He has the respect of many inside and outside our department and has been instrumental in elevating multimodal issues into the department’s routine business.”

MBTA’s Board of Directors and membership offer our congratulations, Nate. We appreciate all you have done for rail and multimodal transportation in Maine! ■

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# MBTA urges continued investment in transportation

## Reinvigorated 'Fix It Now' campaign advocates for sustained infrastructure investment

By Matt Marks

**T**HE Fix It Now campaign is back in full force with a new effort to educate Mainers and advocate for continued investment in Maine's vital transportation infrastructure.

"It is a priority to protect the sustainable investment made during the first session of the 131<sup>st</sup> Legislature. But we also need to address the generational backlog of repairs to our roads and bridges," said MBTA Executive Director Maria Fuentes.

The Joint Standing Committee on Transportation recognized the opportunity as Maine's budget debate heated up in the final month of the last session. While the funding is considered "sustainable" the legislature can change transportation funding through many programs.

Sustainable funding is a landmark achievement in transportation policy. However, since Maine has many decades of deferred maintenance it's commonly understood that additional funding will be needed to make a dent in the repairs.

MaineDOT has been a champion for additional funding, spending countless time and energy securing federal and state dollars. With more than 300 bridges in Maine rated structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, the current work plan and future work plans depend on sustainable funding to address this backlog.

MBTA recognized the potential risks that come with dedicated revenue and opted for an education campaign that highlights the need for continued investment. Fix it Now will host links to transportation resources and reports and share community stories that show the real-life importance of getting from home to work for Mainers.

"Maine might be the most forested state in the continental United States, but we also have ~8,800 miles of state-jurisdiction highways and ~ 2,800 state-jurisdiction bridges and minor spans to ensure people can travel from place to place. Between our weather and the rural nature of our terrain, we need to take repairs seriously, residents deserve safe roads and bridges," said Fuentes.



The West Buxton Bridge crosses the Saco River and connects the towns of Buxton and Hollis. The bridge is included in the MaineDOT work plan with construction planned for 2026 and is one of more than 300 structurally deficient bridges in the state.

**FIX IT NOW**  
--- MAINE ---

Fix It Now will kick off by focusing on Maine's bridge inventory. MaineDOT has 309 bridges in the current work plan that are rated structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. A total of 59 percent of the state's bridges are at least 50 years old, an age when many bridges require significant rehabilitation or replacement.

"How can we pass this problem on to our kids and grandkids? We know fixing this problem will only become more expensive, and transportation needs to be a priority," Fuentes remarked.

Following the bridge education initiative, Fix It Now will transition to roads. Maine has approximately 8,800 miles of state-jurisdiction highways. To put that number of miles into perspective, the diameter of the earth through its center is 7,926 miles! MaineDOT manages nearly 40 percent of all road miles in Maine that carry almost 90 percent of the total vehicle miles traveled in the state. During the campaign, MBTA will leverage existing and past

projects including the re-introduction of the Worst Road Contest and external reports.

As Maine approaches a new election cycle, elevating the awareness of transportation's role in Maine's economy will benefit discussions in the new legislature. Fix It Now is designed to share information, reports, and historical funding challenges into the mix as candidates determine what is important to their districts.

Fix It Now can be found at [www.fixitnow-maine.org](http://www.fixitnow-maine.org) with links to social media, transportation reports, and a petition for Maine residents to sign that encourages lawmakers to support investment. ■

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Matt Marks is a principal with Cornerstone Government Affairs, a bipartisan, employee-owned consulting firm specializing in federal and state government relations, public affairs and strategic communications, political consulting, grant consulting, and advisory services.

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# ‘Never say no!’

## Rod Cummings was the consummate entrepreneur who, with his family, founded the largest supplier of ready-mix concrete in Maine

**R**ODNEY ALAN Cummings of Auburn, Maine, and Venice, Florida passed away peacefully in Las Vegas on November 19, 2023, with Charlene, his wife, by his side.

Rod Cummings was a lot of things: humble, smart, driven, and hardworking. He founded his first business – R.A. Cummings, Inc. – just four years out of high school in 1972 and with two years at the University of Maine under his belt. The year before he had constructed a set of foundation panels in his parents’ basement, and he discovered he had a knack for working with concrete. For start-up capital, he had a \$2,500 loan from his parents. The new business was based in Alton, Maine, and specialized in foundations. According to family lore, it didn’t take him long to pay back that loan with interest.

Cummings earned a reputation for quality and service. He eventually moved the company headquarters to Old Town, and in the 1980s, he added a crushing operation and his first ready-mix concrete plant.

### NEVER NOT AN ENTREPRENEUR

Cummings was a born entrepreneur with an affinity for concrete and the ability to run figures in his head. He was born in Bangor on October 10, 1950, the son of Charles (Pud) and Melissa (Mim) Cummings. He grew up on Windy Ridge Farm in LaGrange and attended Old Town High School where he was a three-sport athlete graduating in 1968.

“It’s funny because I don’t think dad ever considered working for anyone else,” recalled daughter Lori Gile, who recounted a story she heard from her grandmother about taking him and his two siblings school shopping at Goldsmith’s department store in Old Town. “Mr. Goldsmith could guess their sizes and immediately pull out just what they needed to start the school year, and he would always take the time to talk to the kids,” said Gile.

“This particular year he asked them all what they wanted to be when they grew up. My dad’s response was simply, ‘a millionaire,’ quite to my grandmother’s embarrassment.”

Gile said her dad “loved a project whether it was green-fielding a new concrete plant, redeveloping the quarry, building his dream home, or even planning the annual dock day when the family would arrive in Greenville to help put the docks in or out for the season.”

### A GROWING CONCERN

Cummings threw himself into establishing his business, transitioning to a ready-mix concrete and aggregate enterprise serving the greater Bangor area community until the mid-1990s. He briefly considered retirement, but he instead built a new concrete plant in Greenville – an area that a college roommate introduced him to and of which he was particularly fond.

He took another step back from retirement in 1998, when he founded Auburn Concrete with his daughter Lori Gile. The new company adopted one of Rod’s favorite sayings as its mantra: “Never say no! Hang up the phone and we’ll figure it out,” and the company grew quickly.

“Dad’s wit and intellect were unmatched, and he was a master at ciphering on the fly,” said Gile. “I remember the early days of Auburn Concrete when I was batch-

ing and he was running the loader and driving a mixer and he’d always ask, ‘How many yards today, Peanut [Cummings’ nickname for his daughter]?’ The kicker was he already knew ... he would sit in the loader and count buckets of sand that he put up and he knew.”

He was known to vendors and customers as honorable and down-to-earth, two characteristics that, no doubt, contributed to his success. Through his own hard work and commitment, he inspired loyalty in his employees, “Dad was that guy who you wanted to make proud,” said Gile. “That’s what continues to drive us all today. We know still he’s watching, and we



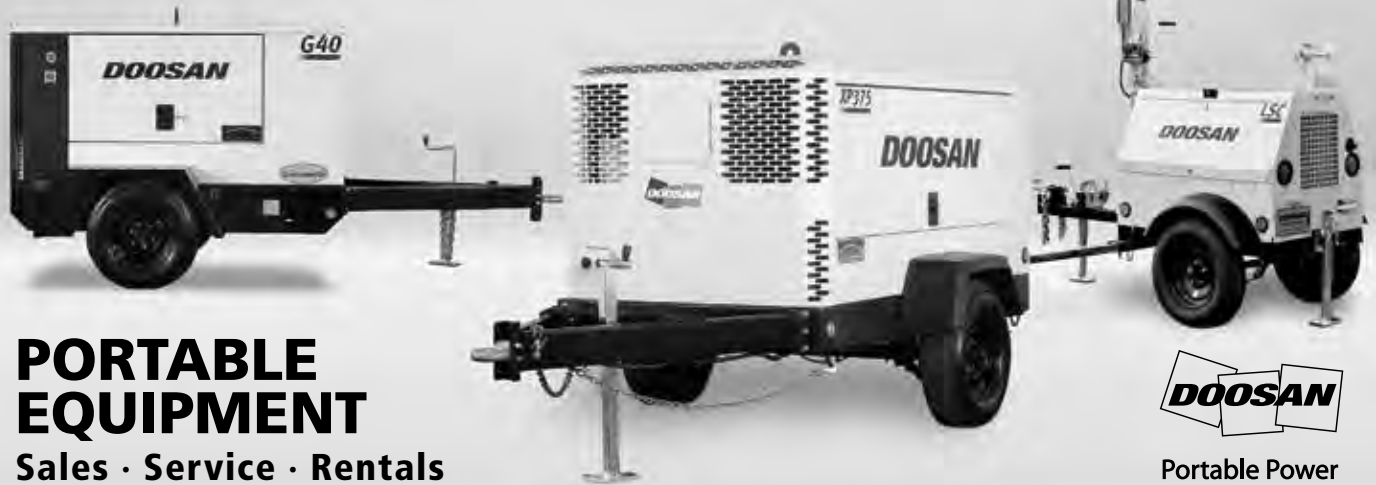
Rod Cummings in 2016 with a new mixer. Cummings founded Auburn Concrete, which grew to be the largest ready-mix concrete supplier in Maine.



Rod with daughter Lori Gile and son Joel Cummings at the Auburn Aggregates quarry.



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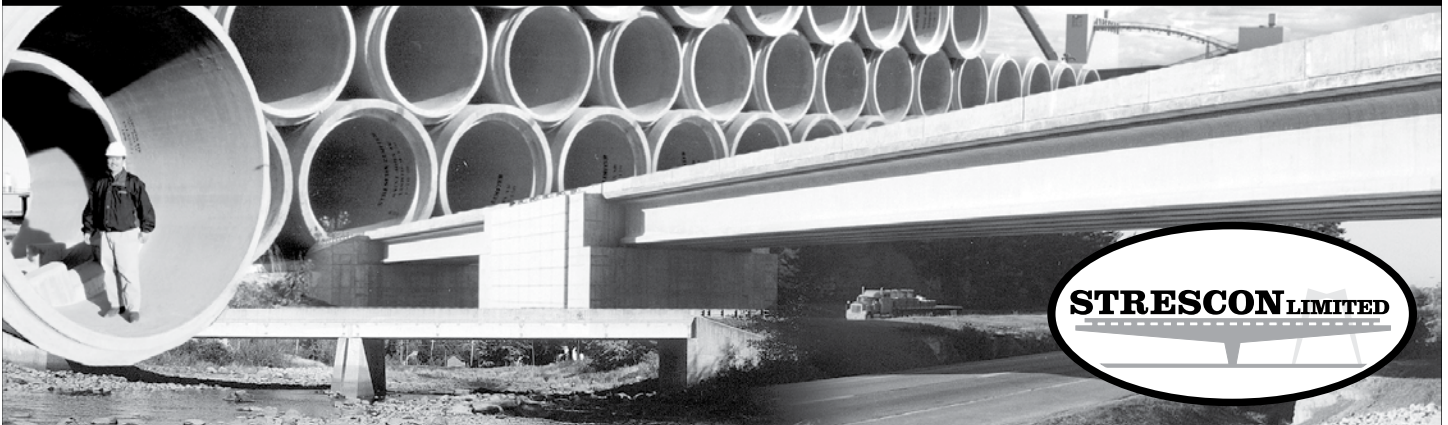
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won't let him down."

### 'GENTLEMAN STYLE'

Cummings' humble style often caught those doing business with him off guard.

Gile told the story of sitting with her father in the conference room of a Portland bank as they finalized the paperwork for a loan for the new plant in Auburn. They had worked for three months to get their application in order.

"We were asking a bank to give us a little seed money to finish building the Auburn plant and buy four used concrete mixers," recounted Gile. "They were, indeed, well-used mixers, but they had new chutes and that was something. As we sat at that table across from a young lender handing us one piece of paper after another, we were interrupted as the head of commercial lending popped in for the customary handshake. He looked at Dad's torn plaid shirt and dirty work boots and then he did it. He challenged Dad and, in the process, provided one of Dad's favorite punchlines of all time. He asked Dad, 'What makes you think you can compete with the likes of Dragon and Blue Rock?'"

Gile recalled being amazed that anyone would speak to her father like that. "But I was also quite anxious to hear the response as I thought it was a valid question. Instead of answering it however, Dad returned to the banker without hesitation and asked him, 'What color are my trucks?' The banker couldn't answer that question. Dad explained that if he was truly committed to this partnership, you'd think he'd want to be able to recognize the trucks out on the road during his morning commute."

Gile continued: "The banker got more frustrated with Dad, and in perfect 'gentleman style,' Dad got up from the table, tore up that check, and walked out. . . Just before we crawled up into the dirty old pickup, we made eye contact across the truck bed and Dad said, 'Well Peanut, I guess we're gonna need a new banker.'"

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### THINKING BIGGER

Cummings' son Joel joined the business in 2001, and with his kids by his side, Cummings saw the business grow to be the largest ready-mix concrete supplier in the state. The Cummings family built a second location in Westbrook and bought the Christian Hill Quarry in 2016. The quarry supplies Auburn Concrete's plants with aggregate and also sells



Rod and son Joel in the late 1970s.



Auburn Concrete trucks deliver concrete to the Portland Back Cove CSO Project for N.S. Gile.

aggregate to the trade.

Twenty-seven years after Rod and Lori walked out of that Portland bank, the company boasts eight strategic locations in south and central Maine – Auburn, Westbrook, West Bath, Augusta, Topsham, Damariscotta, and Biddeford – and a fleet of 56 crimson red mixers that can be seen delivering concrete throughout the region. The company has supplied concrete to major projects including at Colby and Bowdoin colleges and the Portland International Jetport, the Yarmouth Public Safety Building, Cancer Care Center at Central Maine Medical Center, and the Back Cove CSO project.

The Cummings, Gile and Auburn Concrete have been active members of Maine Better Transportation Association and have sponsored MBTA events including the MBTA Annual Meeting and Fall Convention. Rod also was a member

and past master of the Composite Lodge No. 168 in LaGrange.

While he kept his hand in the business and frequently could be found operating a dump truck at the Christian Hill Quarry, he also enjoyed time relaxing with family and friends at Moosehead Lake and, in recent years, wintering in Venice, Florida,

making new friends and spending time with old friends that also started to "snowbird" in the Sunshine State.

Cummings is survived by his wife Charlene; his sister Peg and her husband Darrell Luce of Alton; his brother Doug and his wife Lori of Bowerbank; as well as the mother of his children and lifelong friend, Harriet Cummings of Auburn.

He is also survived by his immediate family of whom he was extremely proud: son Joel and his wife Michelle of Auburn; and his daughter Lori Anne Gile and her husband David Gile of North Monmouth; his two granddaughters, Kayla and husband Greg Caldwell, and Jordan. He was especially proud of his great-granddaughter Makenna Ann Caldwell.

Additionally, he is survived by his second family, Charlene's three children: son Jeff and his wife Ann Poulin; son Jason Poulin; and daughter Ingrid and her partner Vonya, along with Charlene's grandchildren, Walker, Brighton, and Phoenix. He is also survived by countless friends, business associates, and employees – both past and present – on whom he left an indelible mark upon. He was predeceased by his parents, Pud and Melissa Cummings of LaGrange. ■



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# Ritchie elected president of Sargent

Herb Sargent to continue as CEO of the employee-owned corporation

**T**HE SARGENT Corporation Board of Directors has elected Chief Operations Officer (COO) Eric Ritchie to serve as president. He will replace Herb Sargent, who has led the company in that role since 1992. Ritchie will be the fifth president in the company's 98-year history. Sargent will continue as the chief executive officer and board chairman of Sargent Corporation.

Eric Ritchie will assume the position of president in addition to his role as COO at the company's annual meeting in early May.

"It has been a joy to watch Eric and his team drive the company's growth in recent years. Eric's leadership has made Sargent stronger, both in operational and financial terms. He's a proven leader I feel privileged to work with, and I know our employee-owners feel the same," said Herb Sargent.

Sargent, who is the grandson of H.E. Sargent founder Herbert E. Sargent, will retain the position as Sargent Corporation's CEO.

According to a statement announcing the leadership change, the transition within the company is "part of a larger vision to ensure employee-owners continue to own and operate the company in perpetuity - an extension of Herb's desire when Sargent & Sargent acquired H.E. Sargent, Inc. in 2005."

Said Sargent: "We are making this transition with great intention and at a measured pace in service of consistency and resilience for our employee-owners and customers."

As president, Eric Ritchie will oversee operations of the entire company, which includes offices throughout northern New England and



Eric Ritchie and Herb Sargent at Sargent Corporation headquarters.

the mid-Atlantic/Southeast regions. Ritchie joined Sargent Corporation in 2018 and has managed the business operations as COO over the past four years. Ritchie was instrumental in the company's strategic planning and visioning processes in both 2018 and 2021 and will continue to lead the implementation of those strategies.

Ritchie is serving as MBTA president for the 2023-2024 term, and has been an active board member and has chaired and volunteered on several key committees, including Membership, Events, and the MBTA Educational Foundation board. He also has served as an officer on the Associated General Contractors of Maine Board.

After May 9, Herb Sargent, as chief executive officer, will continue to oversee strategy, vision, and long-term leadership and succession development for the company.

Ritchie expressed his gratitude at being

elected president of Sargent Corporation, and said he was "committed to the core values of this organization and will work diligently to continue to achieve success in the field and for our employee-owners."

H. E. Sargent, Inc. was founded in 1926 and was acquired by a company from Paris, France in 1988. Sargent Corporation was born in 2005 when Sargent & Sargent of Hampden, Maine, bought H.E. Sargent, Inc. of Stillwater, Maine. The two workforces were combined under the Sargent Corporation banner and serve throughout Northern New England and the Mid-Atlantic/Southeast regions. The company enjoys a team of over 475 employee-owners and specializes in infrastructure projects in the transportation, energy, landfill, and municipal sectors.

MBTA Board of Directors and staff congratulate Eric and Sargent Corporation on the company's new leadership. ■

## GOING PLACES?

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# S.W. Cole advances O'Sullivan and Chaput

**S**.W. COLE recently announced the promotions of Kaylie O'Sullivan and Brandon Chaput. O'Sullivan is now assistant construction services manager in the firm's Easton, Massachusetts office. Chaput has been promoted to construction services manager in the company's Sidney, Maine office.

O'Sullivan joined S.W. Cole in 2020. She has previous experience in the service industry and served in the U.S. Army as a combat engineer. Since joining S.W. Cole, she has earned multiple certifications in construction materials testing and special inspections. Prior to her promotion, Kaylie was working as a construction services technician, grade II. She is a 2023 graduate of the Stephen W. Cole Emerging Leaders program. She is also attending the civil engineering technology program at Bristol Community College in Fall River, Massachusetts.



**Kaylie O'Sullivan**

Chaput attended Central Maine Community College where he took coursework in electrical technology and building construction. He has about 12 years of experience, working most recently as an assistant construction services manager. He holds multiple certifications in construction materials testing and special inspections. He graduated from the Stephen W. Cole Emerging Leaders program in 2022.



**Brandon Chaput**

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

S. W. Cole Engineering, Inc. was founded in 1979 by Stephen W. Cole and Wendy Cole. The firm employs more than 130 professionals, including engineers and technicians who provide geotechnical engineering, construction materials testing (including field and

laboratory services), special inspections, and test boring explorations. ■



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# Ted 'Rooster' Purington Sr., 1933 - 2023

**T**HEODORE ALLEN Purington Sr., known to family and friends as "Pappy" and "Rooster," passed peacefully in mid-December, surrounded by his family at Maine General Medical Center in Augusta, after complications from surgery.

Ted Purington was born on April 27, 1933, the second of seven children to Leo A. and Marion A. (Spear) Purington in Gardiner. He grew up in Randolph and South Gardiner, then lived in Gardiner for the rest of his life. He loved playing basketball and baseball throughout his youth and young adult years and had a "hook" nose to show the incidentals. He attended the Gardiner school system until his junior year then completed his education in the "school of hard knocks." As a teenager, he worked on the family farm which had 24,000 broiler chickens and cows. He also worked stacking lumber in the South Gardiner Lumber Company. Ted started driving a truck for Bridge Construction during one Christmas vacation and never returned to school. He was a laborer, operating heavy equipment, driving a dump-truck and then a bulldozer.

He joined the U.S. Army and the National Guard, serving in the Korean Conflict from 1953 to 1955. Later he drove a tractor trailer truck for St. Johnsbury Trucking from 1955 to 1957. Eventually, he began working on blasting projects through Bridge Construction then joined his brother Dick and father Leo Sr. in their company Leo Purington & Sons.

Ted married his high school sweetheart Judith Hutchings in 1957, and they had five children: Theodore, William, James, Thomas, and Theresa. Together, Ted and his wife started Maine Drilling and Blasting in 1966. Ted said, "I think I had more courage than brains." He was a risk taker and never afraid of a challenge, developing the company with his strong work ethic. Most of his early business was started and sealed with a solid handshake. He said, "I've always believed in hard work and honesty. Do what you say you'll do and do better than that."

As owner and president of MD&B he contributed greatly to his community as a



**Ted Purington**

local employer and his company's work on infrastructure projects. Among his noteworthy jobs: blasting for the Bush family tennis courts in Kennebunkport; demolition of the Gardiner-Randolph bridge; breaking up Kennebec River ice jams; and blasting for numerous highway developments including I-295 and the Maine Turnpike. With the help of his four sons, Ted developed Maine Drilling & Blasting into the largest drilling and blasting company in the country. He retired in 1998 and continued to enjoy following MD&B's progress.

He belonged to AGC Maine (Associated General Contractors), Maine Better Transportation Association, Fraternal Order of Eagles, Disabled Veterans, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and was a life member of Elks Lodge No. 1293, American Legion Post No. 4, and Gardiner High School Alumni Class of 1953.

Ted was predeceased by his mother and father, brothers Robert and Richard, and sister Rita Spear Quimby. He is survived by brothers Gary, Leo, and John with wife Catherine, along with many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Ted also is survived by his wife Judith of 67 years, as well as their children, spouses

and their families: Theodore Jr. and wife Natalie of Dover, New Hampshire, and Naples, Florida, and their children Theodore III and (Jennifer) Purington and daughter Sienna; Kristianna and (Michael) Robertson, and Gabrielle Purington; William and wife Katherine of Manchester, Maine, and Stuart, Florida, with children William II and (Ashley) Purington and son William III, Monica and (Brady) Grohne; James and (Kelly) Purington of West Gardiner, Maine, with Jim's children Christopher and (Melissa) Purington, Sarah and (Matthew) Swimelar and sons Landon and Brody; Kelly's children Karen and (Ross) Littlefield and daughter Zia, Daniel and (Seana) Allen and daughters Sophie and Gabrielle; Thomas Purington Sr. of Rockwood, Maine, with children Serena and (Ryan) Gosselin and children Max and Laila Valcanas and Charlotte Gosselin, and Thomas Purington Jr.; Theresa and (Paul) Freeman of Falmouth with their children Benjamin and Jack.

Ted was an avid sports fan and could be found most evenings and weekends watching college basketball, football and his Boston sports teams: Celtics, Red Sox and Patriots.

He enjoyed following his grandchildren in their activities and found a new interest in hockey later in life when his grandson advanced in the ECHL. He loved staying connected to his family, talking to his kids and his grandkids and later developed an interest and skill in technology with his iPad to stay current on sports, the stock market and Facebook.

"Pappy" will be remembered for his sharp thinking and an ability to manage and figure lots of numbers in his head. This contributed to his ability to figure jobs easily, play cribbage and some serious Black Jack. He was quick witted and maintained his sense of humor throughout his life. Those close to him say he will always be remembered for his positivity and love of family and admired for his ability to forgive and, in turn, be forgiven. He is remembered by his children as "a brave and sometimes brassy man who softened with age." He will be missed by many, and will live on in all who knew him. ■

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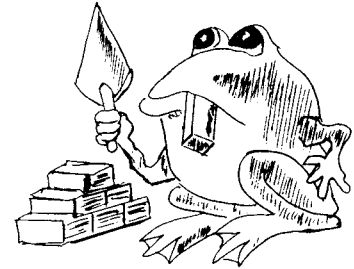
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# Scott Babbidge, 1957 - 2024

**S**COTT COURTNEY Babbidge, 66, of Acton, Maine, passed away at his home on February 11, 2024, surrounded by family.

Scott was born December 25, 1957 in Portland, the son of Eben Courtney and Thelma Emmagene (Perry) Babbidge. He was the first baby born on Christmas that year at Maine Medical Center. He graduated from Deering High School in 1976 and attended St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia for two years. He later completed his engineering degree, graduating from the University of Lowell in June 1984. Scott met his future wife at a dance at Westbrook College in the fall of 1978. Scott and Debra were married on October 18, 1980. Together, they had a son Jason, born March 30, 1982.

Scott worked at Blue Rock Industries and San-Vel before accepting a job with W.R. Grace in May 1984. He started as a service technician and was quickly promoted to sales representative in southern New Jersey. In 1991, he moved the family back to Maine with the offer of a sales representative position for the entire state. Scott excelled in his career and won the highest honor of Sales Master two times, in 1987 and again in 1996. While at W.R. Grace, Scott was active in MBTA, attending and sponsoring events, and participating at golf events with Joe Rollins and other MBTA members. He retired from W.R. Grace in July 2022 after 38 years of dedicated service to the company.

Scott was an avid golfer. He was a member at Val Halla Golf Course in Cumberland for more than 20 years. He was very active in the Val Halla Golf Association as treasurer, vice president and then, president. Many times, you would see Scott and his son Jason playing out on the course as it was one of their favorite activities to do together. Scott also enjoyed archery, attending numerous tournaments, target, and 3-D as



Scott Babbidge

well as bowhunting. Bowling was another hobby he enjoyed with his wife, bowling in a couples' league for many years. In recent years, he had been bowling on the team, "Grumpy Old Men." He enjoyed all the guys and was always working on perfecting his game.

While golf, bowling and archery dominated Scott's leisure time for years he was forever in pursuit of new hobbies, activities, and adventures. He enjoyed woodworking, fishing, cycling, snow shoeing, and riding his motorcycle. Scott and Debra took their first snowmobile adventure in February 2023. Scott even took flying lessons in the early 2000s. In 2020, Scott and Debra purchased a 32-foot travel trailer, taking many camping trips throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Some of his favorite trips were when his son and family would join them. After retirement, Scott bought a 17-foot StarCraft Boat. He enjoyed taking family and friends on boating excursions on Mousam and Great East Lakes.

Scott was a loving and dedicated husband, father, and grandfather. He would light up the room with his personality and could get a laugh out of most anyone! Even with Scott's failing health, he was able to enjoy a family trip to Disney World and Universal Studios for Thanksgiving 2023. This trip was something he wanted to do for his two grandchildren, Zoey and Isaac.

Scott leaves behind his wife of 43 years, Debra (Sagar) Babbidge; his son, Jason Courtney Babbidge and his wife Jamie (Locke) Babbidge; grandchildren, Zoey and Isaac; his sister, Lynn Babbidge DiPierro of Gorham; nephew, Adam Haste; his brothers and sister in laws, Douglas and Vicky Sagar of Hudson, Massachusetts; and Leif and Lynne (Sagar) Carlson of Ashburnham, Massachusetts; several nieces and nephews and his beloved fur babies, Maizie, Rudy, and Pepper. ■

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# How safe are Maine roads for biking and walking?

**I**n 2023, overall traffic fatalities declined in Maine, however, for vulnerable road users like pedestrians and bicyclists, the numbers remain high. Twenty-one pedestrians died on Maine roads after being hit by a vehicle, another 234 injury crashes were reported. One cyclist was killed and another 140 injury crashes were reported.

Maine can and should do better. Taking a walk or going on a bike ride on a roadway should not be a life-threatening activity.

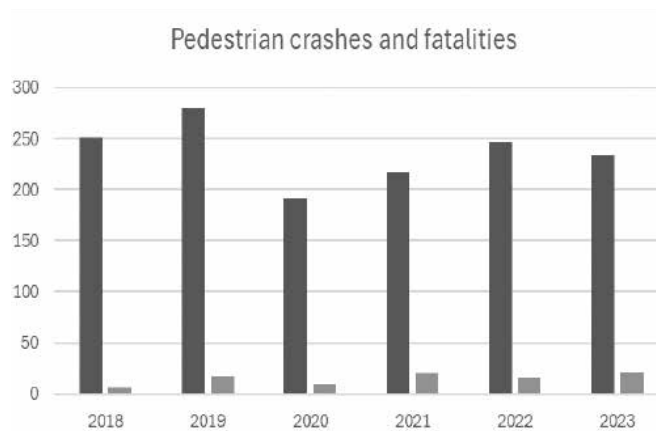
Sadly, 2023 appears to be in line with other recent years. For the past six years, we have seen similar numbers of injuries and fatalities, with a slight dip in 2020 when fewer people were driving. These incidents happened all across Maine, in rural and urban communities, during the day and at night, but nearly all were caused by passenger vehicles. The causes of the crashes are also varied and because there is no one cause, there is no one solution.

## WE CAN DO TO DO BETTER

There are two primary ways we can make our roads safer for all users. The first is behavior. Every single one of us can take action to improve the safety of our roads. Drivers should slow down and pay attention, respecting the community they are driving through by obeying neighborhood speed limits. Watch for people outside of a vehicle, especially in neighborhoods, downtowns, or places where there are no sidewalks. Most importantly, never drive distracted or impaired under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

People walking can also take simple measures to improve their safety. Use sidewalks and crosswalks when available, and if no sidewalk is present, walk against traffic. Do your best to be visible (day or night) – wear lights, reflective materials, or bright colors. Cyclists should ride with traffic and do their best to be visible, by using a red rear light and white front light. Wear a helmet, signal intentions, and obey traffic lights and stop signs.

The second way to make our roads safer is infrastructure, namely road design and dedicated facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. We need to shift our transportation approach from moving vehicles quickly to moving people safely and efficiently. We need to design our roads with all users in mind, especially in village centers. Slowing down traffic is the



Pedestrian and bicycle crashes and fatalities have remained high.



Diamond Street in Portland. One way to curb pedestrian and bicycle crashes and fatalities is through road design.

users in village centers. The goal is to help communities “reclaim” their downtowns as human-scale places, not just pass-through zones on state roads. Installing temporary or permanent infrastructure to slow traffic, creating safe crossings for pedestrians, adding bike lanes, or installing other materials such as vertical delineators makes it safer for people biking, walking, or using mobility aids.

While 2023 was a grim year for pedestrians in Maine, there is always an opportunity to do better in 2024, and beyond. Together, we can make 2024 a safer year for people biking and walking! If you care about this issue, we invite you to become more involved with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine ([www.bikemaine.org](http://www.bikemaine.org)). ■

**ABOUT THE BICYCLE COALITION OF MAINE:** The Bicycle Coalition of Maine works to make Maine a better and safer place to bike and walk. The Coalition believes all Mainers should have access to bikes and bike education, and we envision a future where Maine’s roads, public ways, and trails are safe and accessible, resulting in cleaner travel options, improved health, and stronger economic benefits for Maine communities.

most effective way to improve safety for everyone on the road, but is vital in areas where there are likely to be people walking or biking. A pedestrian has a 90 percent chance of survival if hit by a car going 20 mph, but that drops to a 20 percent chance of survival with a car going 40 mph.

We need to provide sidewalks and bikeways and well-marked and lit crossings, so there are designated and safe places for people to walk or bike.

## BRIGHT SPOTS FOR BIKING AND WALKING

Although the high number of pedestrian fatalities in 2023 is disturbing, there are signs of hope that some of the changes mentioned above may be adopted. According to the U.S. Census, the number of people biking to work increased by 26 percent in Maine over the period 2019-2022. Maine had the third highest increase. For walking, Maine saw a 3 percent decline over the same period, but only nine states saw an increase. The increase in people using active transportation is the incentive we need to drive the bigger changes in Maine’s transportation system.

Last year the MaineDOT launched its Village Partnership Initiative that seeks to address road safety for all

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# Opportunity at our doorstep

**R**IGHT NOW, Maine has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help strengthen both our economy and our climate. By leveraging our North Atlantic winds, our maritime and manufacturing skills, and land reserved for port development, we can responsibly bring the multi-billion-dollar floating offshore wind industry to our doorstep. If we seize this opportunity and are successful in our endeavors, future generations of Mainers will benefit both economically and environmentally.

Four years ago, shortly before the pandemic gripped our nation, I stood with Governor Mills in Searsport. She had just returned from Scotland, where she had observed an offshore wind farm that generates power for thousands of homes. She wondered what role Maine could play in this growing industry: we have deepwater ports, strong offshore winds, and proximity to key markets. Governor Mills asked the Maine Department of Transportation to study the feasibility of constructing port infrastructure supporting the evolving offshore wind industry in the Port of Searsport.

An active seaport since the 1700s, Searsport is one of the most versatile ports on the East Coast. A feasibility study delivered to MaineDOT in November 2021 evaluated several sites in Searsport: these sites included Mack Point, which is privately owned and already industrialized, and part of Sears Island, which is owned by the state of Maine. In 2009, Sears Island was divided into two parcels: about two thirds of the island (approximately 601 acres) was placed in a permanent conservation easement while the other third (approximately 330 acres) was reserved for future development by MaineDOT. The study delivered in 2021 recommended further evaluation of the portion of Sears Island that was reserved for development.

In March 2022, MaineDOT announced the creation of a 19-member Offshore Wind Port Advisory Group (OSWPAG). The goal of the OSWPAG was to engage in robust discussions with a broad spectrum of

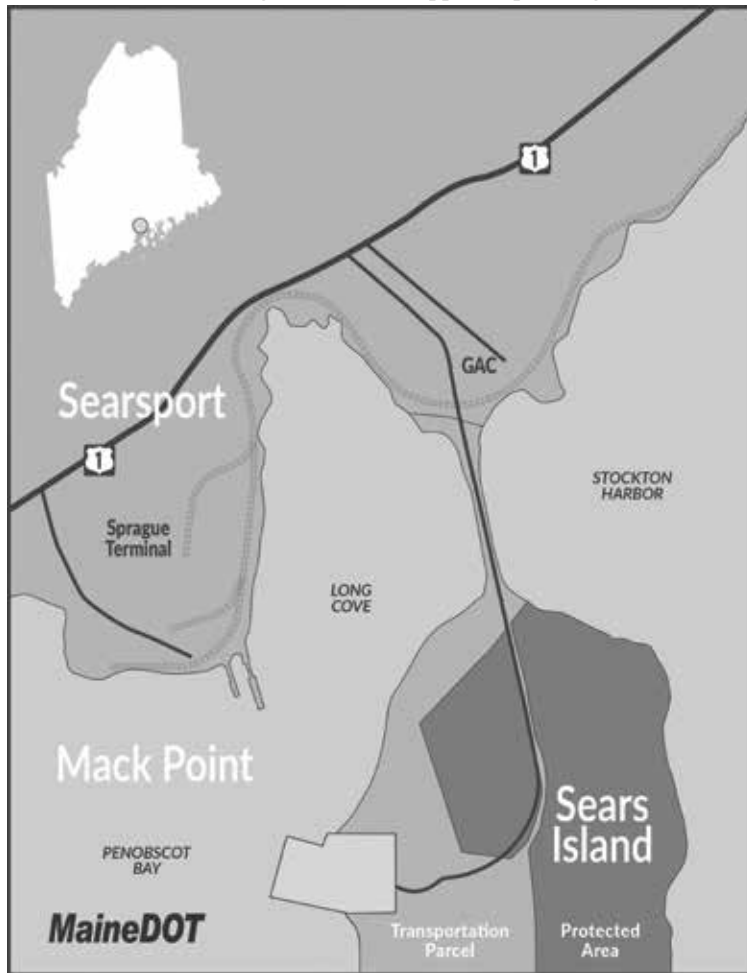
stakeholders. Group members took part in six public meetings in 2022 and 2023. They also toured port sites in both Eastport and Searsport. The OSWPAG concluded its work in July 2023. There were varying opinions, but a plurality of the members who submitted final comments supported pursuing offshore wind port construction on Sears Island.

Portland and Eastport (Maine's other two deepwater ports) were considered, including during the OSWPAG progress. Offshore wind port development would require about 100 acres of land. Portland was not studied further because there are no available 100-acre parcels of land with all-tide access to deep water. Eastport was also removed from consideration due to the large amount of rock and earth removal necessary to level the surface of the existing Estes Head facility and create a flat and contiguous 100-acre site.

On February 20th, Governor Mills announced the state's preference to pursue construction of an offshore wind port on Sears Island. She acknowledged that her decision was a difficult one that came after years of hard work and public engagement. Phased construction on Sears Island would use approximately 100 acres of the 330-acre parcel that has been reserved for development. About 600 acres of Sears Island are and will remain in conservation. The

port's proposed footprint would take up about one tenth of the island. We understand there are those who do not want to see any development on Sears Island and would prefer that the state use Mack Point instead. Mack Point would not work for a purpose-built port facility to support the offshore wind industry: its irregular shape, competing uses, need for large amounts of dredging, high cost, and limited expansion potential make it impracticable for the site of a marshalling port.

The Sears Island site offers a large, level area with deepwater access – two characteristics that make it well-suited for building a port facility at the scale required to support floating offshore wind port operations. Development on Sears Island would also avoid impacts on existing

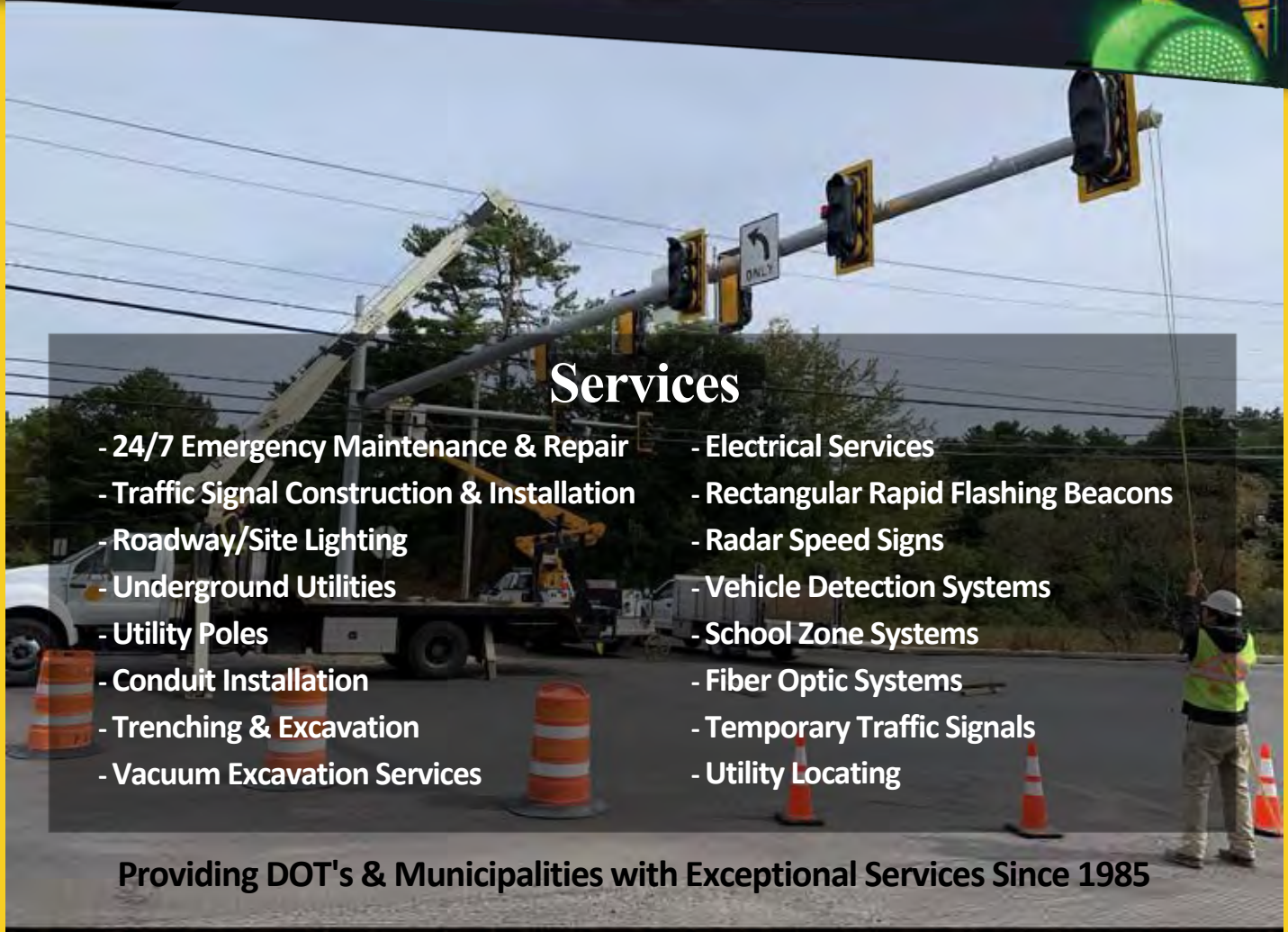


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commercial and industrial activities in the Port of Searsport. Mack Point is also privately owned. State development there would require lease payments to the private landowner. The State of Maine already owns Sears Island and would potentially be able to collect lease payments from commercial tenants in the future. Finally, port development on Sears Island is not expected to require dredging. Development at Mack Point would require significant dredging, which would present environmental and financial challenges.

There is much more analysis to be done, and there will be more opportunities for public engagement. MaineDOT is seeking funding opportunities and will be applying for permits later this year. Based upon the analysis done to date, we anticipate the regulatory agencies that will issue permits for port development will find that Sears Island is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) – a key hurdle to clear for any project like this one.

The decision to pursue port development on Sears Island is in the best interest of our state's economy and our climate.

The construction of a purpose-built port facility will establish Maine's place in the growing offshore wind industry and become a hub for job creation and economic development. Some opposition is not surprising. Long-time advocates against any development on Sears Island remain passionate.

What is noteworthy is the broad range of support: policymakers, local officials, maritime experts, environmental groups, union officials, and business interests support the use of Sears Island. It will not be easy. Change is always hard. Transformational change is even harder. I hope Maine seizes this opportunity. ■



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# EXITRAMP



Scenes from Thomas DiCenzo's Route 90 reconstruction in 1969.

## Getting the kink out

**I**N THE June 1969 issue of *Maine Trails*, we reported on a Thomas DiCenzo rebuild, continuing the modernization of a section of Route 90 in Rockport near the junction of Route 17.

The line of construction extended southerly for about 1.2 miles and featured a cut-off midway to eliminate hazardous curves and grades. The job was awarded to the Calais contractor by the State Highway Commission six months earlier on its lowest of four bids at \$263,587 received. Resident engineer for the state was David Osier. Superintendent of operations for the contractor was Louis LaFratta.

In the article, we noted that earth moving chores involved two Caterpillar DW 15 scrapers and two Cat

D8 dozers. Digging into the old roadbed and excavating for underdrain the company required a Northwest 25D backhoe and a Northwest 80D shovel. Additionally, nine Mack 10-wheeler dump trucks teamed up with a Cat 988 loader with a six-yard bucket. Also, they used a Cat 14 dozer, a Cat 12 grader and various utility vehicles.

The relocation extended for about a thousand feet in the vicinity of West Street and removed a kink – or a curving section – of the old highway. A temporary surface was used until the final pavement could be laid.

Osier estimated the new road would be ready to serve traffic by fall of that year. The completed highway was expected to have 24 feet of pavement spanning two lanes and two eight-foot gravel shoulders. ■

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