

MAINE RAILS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MAINE BETTER
TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION

74TH TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

Transportation is Connections

Solving the Puzzle Together



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Maine Better Transportation Association

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Long-Term Transportation Funding is Something Everyone Should Get Behind

By Erik Wiberg, President,
Maine Better Transportation Association

MAINE'S TRANSPORTATION system has always been built the same way: deliberately, collaboratively, and with an understanding that there is a delicate balance between long-term strength and short-term convenience. Much of that is determined by the funds that are available and what can be achieved. That perspective is as relevant today as it has ever been.

Year after year, transportation funding is a prominent player in the State's budget conversation. While the details are debated in the rooms and halls of Augusta, the underlying issue is familiar to everyone in our industry: how Maine pays for the system it relies on every single day. This is not a new question, and it is not a partisan one. It is a practical matter of stewardship.

Maine is continuously confronted with this challenge. In 2020, Maine's Blue-Ribbon Commission on Transportation found the system's unmet capital need to be \$330 million annually above and beyond the fuel tax revenue which generates approximately \$230 million per year. Fuel tax revenues provide two-thirds of state highway fund revenues and \$11 million in local road assistance. While other fees and costs have increased over the years, Maine's gas tax of 30 cents per gallon has not changed since 2011, when inflation indexing was terminated. The Commission's efforts in 2023 ultimately led to 40% of the sales tax generated from automobile and automobile parts sales being directed to the Highway Fund. That decision was not easy, but it was disciplined and data-driven. More importantly,

it's working to help narrow the funding gap. The resulting revenue became a critical, reliable and predictable component of MaineDOT's funding structure, helping stabilize planning, improve asset management, and maintain a system that had been in decline.

Our State's ability to narrow the funding gap is nonetheless under persistent pressure. In the dark of

night in April 2025 when most of us were without power (pun intended) and less than 9 months after sales tax revenue began contributing directly to the Highway Fund, the legislature attempted to essentially overhaul transportation funding by subjecting it to general fund budgeting processes that would annually subject transportation funding to the whims of the political wind. The effort failed because

night in April 2025 when most of us were without power (pun intended) and less than 9 months after sales tax revenue began contributing directly to the Highway Fund, the legislature attempted to essentially overhaul transportation funding by subjecting it to general fund budgeting processes that would annually subject transportation funding to the whims of the political wind. The effort failed because



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action was taken by MBTA and other stakeholders, negating inappropriate late night practices that have become all too common in Augusta.

Today, that lesson matters. At the federal level, transportation funding has become increasingly volatile. Short-term extensions, delayed authorizations, and uncertainty around discretionary programs make long-range planning difficult for states, contractors, and communities alike. Federal dollars remain essential, but they are no substitute for a stable state foundation. Maine cannot build and sustain a resilient transportation network in the face of unpredictability at the state or federal level. We must work together toward sustainable, durable transportation funding that can withstand the political winds.

Public sentiment reflects this reality. Historically, Mainers at the voting booth, along with recent polling, consistently show that voters understand the importance of maintaining safe roads, bridges, ports, transit systems, rail corridors, and aviation infrastructure, and recognize the value of dependable, state-level funding to do so. People may not

always follow the mechanics of transportation finance, but they understand results: smoother roads, safer ports and bridges, reliable freight movement, and access to jobs and services.

That understanding is well-placed, because transportation is the backbone of Maine's economy. From forestry and fishing to tourism, manufacturing, and healthcare delivery, every sector relies on the efficient movement of people and goods. When transportation works, Maine works. When it does not, costs rise, opportunities shrink, and citizens and communities feel the impact.

Investment in transportation does more than maintain pavement and steel. It generates economic activity that ripples outward: supporting good-paying jobs, strengthening local businesses, and expanding the tax base. That economic growth, in turn, allows Maine to invest in other priorities that matter just as deeply, including healthcare, education, and workforce development. Transportation funding is not in competition with these needs; it enables them.

Sustainable funding also means supporting all modes. Highways and bridges remain

vital, but so do transit systems, ports, rail, aviation, and active transportation. Maintenance and resilience must be at the center of every investment decision, particularly as Maine faces aging infrastructure and increasing climate-related challenges. A strong system is one that is maintained before it fails and designed to withstand what comes next.

Finally, none of this succeeds without a broad partnership. Contractors, municipalities, transit providers, freight operators, laborers, planners, and policymakers all have a stake in a well-funded transportation system. So does the public. Progress depends on a shared commitment across modes and sectors to speak clearly about what the system needs and why it matters.

Maine has made smart transportation decisions before by focusing on stability, responsibility, and long-term benefit. That same approach will be essential in the months ahead. The Maine Better Transportation Association remains committed to advancing that conversation: grounded in facts, guided by experience, and focused on the future of our State. 

2026 MBTA CALENDAR

Thursday, March 12

CUMBERLAND COUNTY MEETING

Portland Sheraton, South Portland
5:00 pm*

Thursday, May 7

ANNUAL MEETING

Augusta Civic Center, Augusta
3:00 pm* - panel discussion;
5:30 pm – dinner meeting

Thursday, June 11

DOWNEAST MEETING

Mason's Brewing, Machias
5:00 pm*

Thursday, July 9

INFRASTRUCTURE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Waterville Country Club, Oakland
9:00 am

Thursday, August 6

AROOSTOOK COUNTY MEETING

Northeastland Hotel, Presque Isle
5:00 pm*

Friday & Saturday, September 18-19

FALL GOLF & FALL CONVENTION/OUTING

Samoset Resort, Rockport

Saturday, September 19

DEMPSEY CHALLENGE

Lewiston

Friday, October 2

PDH TOUR

Location TBD

Thursday, December 3

MAINE TRANSPORTATION CONFERENCE

Augusta Civic Center, 8:00 am

Thursday, December 10

SCHOLARSHIP/ HOLIDAY MEETING,

Wells Conference Center,
UMaine, Orono, 5:00 pm*

**Board meeting prior to dinner meeting*

Please visit mbtaonline.org/Events for updates and registration links.

Transportation on Tap events will be scheduled for April, June, August & October



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ON RAMP

A digest of recent transportation news

Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

As the second session of the 132nd Legislature is underway, we want to remind MBTA members about who is on the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation and how you can contact them. 



Senator Tim Nangle of Cumberland, Chair
D - Senate District 26
Tim.Nangle@Legislature.Maine.gov



Senator Brad Farrin of Somerset
R - Senate District 3
Bradlee.Farrin@Legislature.Maine.gov



Senator Teresa Pierce of Cumberland
D - Senate District 25
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Representative Lydia Crafts of Newcastle, Chair
D - House District 46
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Representative Roger Albert of Madawaska
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Representative Dan Ankeles of Brunswick
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Representative Steven Bishop of Bucksport
R - House District 17
Steven.Bishop@Legislature.Maine.gov



Representative Holly Eaton of Deer Isle
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Representative Rick Mason of Lisbon
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Representative Karen Montell of Gardiner
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Representative Wayne Parry of Arundel
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Representative Mike Ray of Lincolnville
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David.Ray@Legislature.Maine.gov



Representative James White of Guilford
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74th Maine Transportation Conference

Transportation is Connections

Solving the
Puzzle Together

PLANNING, COLLABORATION, connection and safety were recurrent themes at the 74th Maine Transportation Conference, held December 4, 2025, at the Augusta Civic Center.

Organized under the banner “Transportation is Connections: Solving the Puzzle Together,” the conference attracted standing-room-only crowds for many of the presentations. In all, more than 840 people registered for the annual event presented by the Maine Department of Transportation, Maine Better Transportation Association, Maine Turnpike Authority, Maine Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers and WTS-Maine.

“Nothing in the transportation system works in isolation,” said MaineDOT Acting Commissioner Dale Doughty as he talked of looking at things in the aggregate both statewide and nationwide.

In welcoming attendees, he also spoke about governance at the federal level, saying that the pendulum swings back and forth and asking, “How do we manage and plan for it?” and

answering, “If we take a long-term view, we’re prepared when the pendulum swings back.”

Susan Binder, who has worked at the federal level and is currently vice president of Federal & Transportation Policy at Cambridge Systematics, Inc., delivered the keynote address. “Success is grounded in the power and strength we all bring together as evidenced by the attendance today,” she said, adding, “As civil servants, our job is to be aware, to understand what are all the options.”

“When transportation works, nobody notices us,” Binder said. But when the system breaks down, “Then the public becomes highly aware of how serious our job is and how important it is to them. Maine’s economy relies on safe and efficient transportation.”

She talked of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the \$1.2 trillion in overall spending for surface transportation funding. Then she went on to note that while funding for transportation in the past has been predictable, “Now we’re facing some real

problems. There’s not enough money in trust funds. We’ve gotten out over our skis.”

She pointed to Tennessee where the state is working to balance revenue with needs.

On May 6, 2025, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) announced that “for the first time in history, the state’s annual budget includes additional dedicated, recurring General Fund dollars for transportation. The \$80 million in recurring and \$1 billion in non-recurring dollars will allow TDOT to accelerate, leverage, and add new projects to the department’s fiscally constrained 10-Year Plan.”

Binder emphasized planning for the future. “Preparation means opportunity, personally, professionally and as an organization,” she said. “A sign of leadership is planning for the future. Planning helps us to evolve and adapt to what is going on.”

She also offered advice: “We need to be looking to and getting feedback from our customers – the traveling public and the businesses that use our facilities.”

Eric Landis, professor of civil engineering



By Betty Adams

at the University of Maine, recognized that a number of those in the audience were UMaine alumni. "Maine needs more engineers," he said to all. "Our job is to figure out how to meet that (demand)." He also noted, "Companies that are not hiring interns have a difficult time hiring graduates."

Landis pointed to Pew Research, saying, "Engineering and computing don't have to make a strong case that a degree in that has a return in investment."

In fact, the U.S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics say, "Overall employment in architecture and engineering occupations is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations from 2024 to 2034. About 186,500 openings are projected each year, on average, in these occupations due to employment growth and the need to replace workers who leave the occupations permanently."

The statistics also say, "The median annual wage for this group was \$97,310 in May 2024, which was higher than the median annual wage for all occupations of \$49,500." For

those engineers with a bachelor's degree, it listed the median pay for civil engineers at just under \$100,000 and for health and safety engineers at \$109,000.

Later six UMaine students presented projects, including two studies involving vehicles on the Orono campus – one aimed at making more parking available for commuter students and the other a UMaine Game Day Traffic Management Study seeking to accommodate the vehicles of the 5,000 fans exiting the Alfond Arena at once at the end of a sold-out hockey game.

One panel discussed the recently completed six-mile Interstate 395-Route 9 connector in southern Penobscot County aimed at reducing truck traffic through downtown Brewer and Eddington. It included personnel who had a hand in that project, a legislator from the region, Rep. Richard (Dick) Campbell, R-Orrington, and Glenn Adams, business development director at Sargent, which was the prime contractor.

In a MaineDOT video on the June 27, 2025, ribbon-cutting for the roadway, then-Commissioner Bruce Van Note describes it as "a missing link from a system perspective, from connections to Canada all the way through to get to (Interstate) 95."

Campbell talked about the length of time it took to get the project approved and funded.

"It's been a struggle – forward and back, but it is the most elegant two-lane road that I've ever been on. Back and forth on the east coast to Florida there's nothing any better." He praised the fluorescent signs that direct the wildlife to the crossings. "The connection to Route 9 is the most seamless; it's just incredible the work that's been done, and we're proud to finally have it done."

Nathan Howard, a planning project manager at MaineDOT, noted the record of decision for the project which came in 2016 from the Federal Highway Administration.

Laurie Rowe, MaineDOT senior project manager, told the group, "It was decided to keep the design in-house." She noted that the connector has 12-foot travel lanes, 8-foot shoulders, a speed limit of 55 mph, five bridges, two snowmobile crossings, seven wetland crossings, and two wildlife crossings. It affected 60 land parcels and the state acquired 10 homes.

MaineDOT Environmental Team Leader Danielle Tetreau recounted traversing the various alternative routes – along with the selected one – for years, "noting where there were tracks so we could place the wildlife crossings in the locations where the wildlife crossed naturally." The team put up seven cameras around the entrances and exits to monitor crossings at a large box culvert at



Opposite top: Keynote speaker Susan Binder addresses the audience.

Above left: Student presenters from UMaine.

Above right: Acting MaineDOT Commissioner Dale Doughty welcomes attendees.

Left: Andrew Gobeil of MaineDOT moderates a panel.

Felts Brook and developed a recipe for placing gravel over riprap to make the passage more attractive to deer.

Several MaineDOT folks, including Jeffery Coffin, a transportation engineer, and Joshua Hasbrouck, senior structural engineer, described the unique strata, glacial moraine and poor rock quality of the surface below the roadway route, issues affecting installation of bridge abutments.

Cody Russell, a MaineDOT senior geotechnical engineer, noted there were 250 test borings in one area. It was decided that the final design would use a combination of a lightweight fill and a surcharge in the Wilson Street Bridge area, allowing it to settle for nine months before building on it. As he described the material, Coffin brought out a bucket of the lightweight fill and distributed it among the audience.

“Feel it, don’t eat it,” Russell advised, noting that it was six times lighter than using soil.

The project used 91,000 cubic yards of that material, which, once consolidated (not compacted), lost 26% of its volume and represented about \$10 million worth of the project.

Adams said that Sargent “was lucky to be able to build this project, truly lucky. For most of our employees and most contractors in the state, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

The team effort involved 22 subcontractors and seven major material suppliers.

Among the latter was Aero Aggregates, the Eddystone, Pennsylvania-based firm that supplied the lightweight foamed glass fill. Adams said 1,035 truckloads of that material traveled 550 miles up the Interstate 95 corridor from basically downtown Philadelphia north to I-395, across the Penobscot River and onto the connector to deliver the product.

Maria Fuentes, who recently retired after 35 years as executive director of the Maine Better

Transportation Association, was recognized during the conference luncheon, and in a video, U.S. Sen. Susan Collins extolled Fuentes for her “decades of steady leadership.” Collins called Fuentes “the glue between us and the industry.”

Another session looked at “A Balanced Modal Strategy for Community Vision and Mobility Solutions West of Portland.” Acting Commissioner Doughty said MaineDOT is embarking on a new approach to solving the problems, including planning regionally and “seeking robust public involvement.”

Tom Poirier, director of community development for the Town of Gorham, talked about the history of transportation projects in that community and surrounding ones and said the town is looking at transportation regionally, including searching for the best corridor and whether there is a way to have rapid transit on it.

“A lot of Gorham’s challenges with growth have to do with transit and then sewer capacity,” he said.

Greater Portland Metro Executive Director Glenn Fenton spoke of “planning for innovation in the future” and noted, “Buses are effective in urban areas.” That not-for-profit, quasi-governmental organization’s website says it “operates a fixed-route bus service in the communities of Portland, Westbrook, Falmouth, Yarmouth, Freeport, Brunswick, and Gorham.”

On Dec. 1, 2025, the organization announced that it received almost \$4.25 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s FY25 Buses and Bus Facilities Program for replacement of aging buses and to expand transit service in the region.

Jaime Parker, special projects director for the nonprofit Portland Trails, advocated for active transportation and working in partnerships with developers and municipalities. “Partnerships are how we get things done,” he said adding, “The trail network has always been there but not seen as part of the transportation network.” Parker said he sees challenges and opportunities and that safety and mobility are primary concerns.

The organization says its trail network reaches “within a half mile of every home in Portland” and Parker said it aims to cut that distance in half.

Safety – in particular safety in highway work zones – was the theme of a panel discussion on “One Piece of the Safety Puzzle: Using Automation to Protect Maine’s Work Zones.”

The topic centered on LD 1457, a bill in





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Top left: MaineDOT employees Heath Cowan, Denis Lovely, and David Allen receiving pins.

Top right: Panelists from "Roads? Where We're Going We Don't Need Roads" session.

Second: Panelists from "One Piece of the Safety Puzzle: Using Automation to Protect Maine's Work Zones" session.

Third: Bridge-Breaking winners.

Bottom: Inaugural Transportation Trivia winners.

the Maine Legislature that was carried over to the second session. It is a resolution that would "allow the Maine Turnpike Authority to conduct a pilot program to implement automated speed control systems in highway work zones." The Turnpike Authority would work with MaineDOT and the Department of Public Safety on the project.

The system would use cameras to record the type of motor vehicle, plate number, time and the speed of vehicles that exceed the work zone speed limit, which is generally 45 mph, by 11 mph or more. A warning is issued for the first offense, with subsequent offenses involving fines.

Rep. Lydia Crafts, D-Newcastle, House chair of the Transportation Committee, served as moderator for the discussion.

Benjamin Snyder, a project manager at RK&K, a firm which "provides clients with innovative solutions to improve work zone safety and mobility" among other services, talked about other states, including Pennsylvania, Maryland, Indiana, and Washington State, which have had similar programs.

"Programs start with legislation," Snyder said, adding, "Each state is unique." He recommended lobbying to get the bill passed and offered a comeback for those who might consider it a money-grab: "Vendors are paid time and materials; the goal is not a revenue generator."

Pennsylvania saw a downward trend in crashes as did Indiana, he explained. According to Indiana Safe Zones: "In work zones where deployed, automated speed enforcement has been effective in slowing traffic, evidenced by the drop in violations issued at these work zones."

The Connecticut Department of Transportation launched its Automated Work Zone Speed Control Pilot Program in April 2023, and the department is now piloting automated flagging technology to keep flaggers safer by moving them farther from the traffic lanes.

Timothy Young, senior project manager at HDR, a design and engineering firm, served as project manager for Connecticut's Automated Work Zone Speed Control pilot program as well as the permanent one. He recommended an extensive communications and outreach program to get information out to the public and telling them "If you don't want to get a ticket..."

Andre Briere, executive director of the Maine Turnpike Authority, noted that 23 states have used similar pilot programs with automated work zone speed enforcement.

"We don't have to marry this program; we can date for a few years," he said, adding, "I've seen the devastation of work zone crashes to highway workers, state troopers, their families, their spouses."

A May 2025 news release from the MTA notes, "According to MaineDOT, there are approximately 550 work zone crashes each year in Maine. Data shows that many drivers fail to significantly reduce speed when passing through work zones. From 2011 to 2023, there were more than 7,000 crashes in Maine work zones – 56% of those occurred while workers were present."

Briere said the effort to decrease speeds by vehicles passing through work zones is ongoing. "The only thing that will slow them down is well-noticed enforcement that's persistent."

National Work Zone Awareness Week is set for April 21-24, 2026.

The conference included two "Technical Track" presentations, which were arranged by MaineDOT Assistant State Traffic Engineer Jeff Pulver.

"The Road Ahead: Maine Signals at Work" was moderated by MaineDOT Traffic Engineer III Curtis Thompson, who also participated in the discussion. Other presenters were Chris Bobay, senior project engineer at VHB, and Lynn Frazier, president of Frazier Signal Technologies.

"Maine has upgraded many signals

throughout the state over the last four years," Pulver said, citing those in Augusta, Waterville and Sanford in particular. The signal modernization projects included new, smart technology, in keeping with the "Transportation is Connections" theme of the conference.

The new signals can be monitored remotely at MaineDOT so problems can be fixed in real time, Pulver noted. New safety features include an "LPI" or Leading Pedestrian Interval, which provides a few seconds for the pedestrian to enter the crosswalk before a turning movement is allowed. "That way people see the pedestrians before they turn and they are less likely to hit them and have a pedestrian crash," he said.

Some corridors have adaptive signal control – including Civic Center Drive in Augusta, just outside the conference venue – which are able to adapt to real-time traffic conditions.

The other presentation, "Roads? Where We're Going We Don't Need Roads," moderated by MaineDOT Assistant Multimodal Program Manager Nate Benoit, focused on a new connection, the 1.6-mile "Close the Gap" project for the Eastern Trail in Scarborough and South Portland, which is under construction.

Tim Cote, HNTB Corporation senior project manager, who has been involved with the project for a number of years, discussed the intricacy of design, complications of multiple bridges, right-of-way challenges and navigating limitations presented by existing utilities while still meeting ADA standards for slopes and grades of the path.

Tex Haeuser, former planning director of the City of South Portland and current member of the city's Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee, spoke about the history and development of the Eastern Trail itself, which is built along the Eastern Railroad Corridor.

Patrick Conlon, trail manager for Eastern Trail Alliance & Management District, spoke about managing and providing maintenance for the trail as well as his experience riding it on nearly a daily basis. He said that people using the trail express excitement about having the new portion opened.

An e-newsletter from the Town of Scarborough notes that the construction project is to be performed in two phases, with the full project likely to be complete in October 2027. 

Links to presentation slides for conference tracks can be downloaded from the website: mbtaonline.org/74th-maine-transportation-conference-slides/



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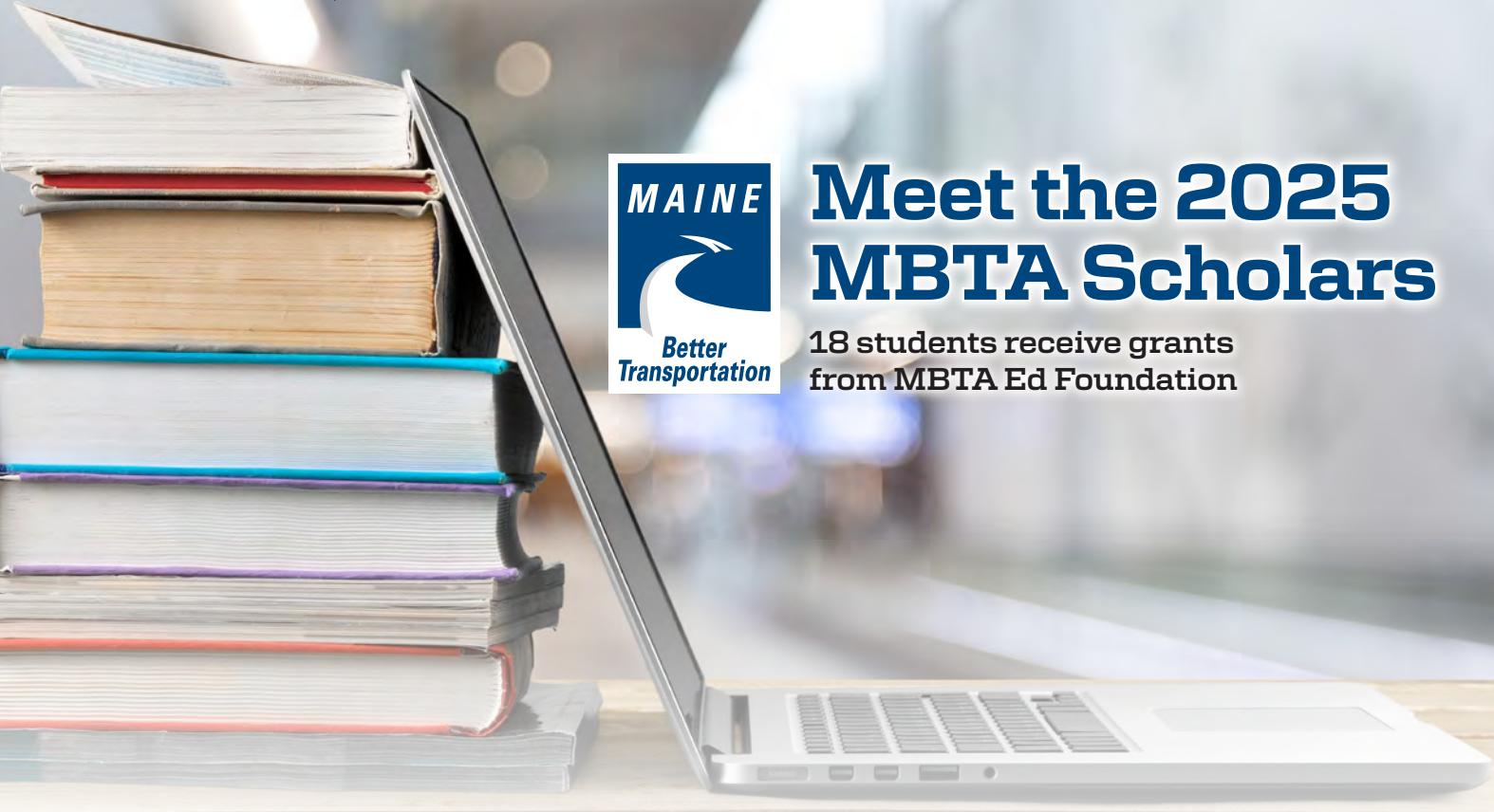
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Meet the 2025 MBTA Scholars

18 students receive grants from MBTA Ed Foundation

Abduljabaar (AJ) Abdi

*University of Maine
Transportation Trailblazer Scholarship*

Abduljabaar “AJ” Abdi grew up in Lewiston, Maine, where he developed a strong interest in how construction projects shape communities and create opportunities. He is currently studying construction engineering technology (CET) at the University of Maine, where he is building the skills to plan, manage, and deliver successful projects. AJ gained hands-on experience working with CCB, Inc. on the Bath Iron Works crane railway replacement project. He learned about construction safety, scheduling, and coordination, and saw firsthand how teamwork and preparation lead to successful results. This experience confirmed his passion for the construction industry and his goal to take on leadership roles in the field. After graduation, AJ plans to work as a project manager in Maine, helping build and improve structures that serve his community. He values learning from mentors, working hard, and being part of a team that brings projects from design to completion.



Owen Callaghan

*University of Maine
MBTA Scholarship*
Owen Callaghan is from Dedham, Massachusetts. He is a senior at the University of Maine (UMaine) studying

civil and environmental engineering. He recently completed a bachelor of science in business administration and management at UMaine this past May, graduating magna cum laude. Owen is also a student in The Honors College. He chose to pursue engineering and business because he plans to pursue a leadership role in solving environmental problems. Currently, Owen is working on an Honors thesis that reviews the rural food system in Maine with a focus on reducing and reallocating food waste. Other issues of concern to Owen include mitigating pollution and issues caused by projects done in the past, preventing these problems from occurring in the future, and reducing reliance on single-use plastics in packaging. He believes challenges and problems have faced every generation, and that it is the job of each generation to solve these problems in a way that allows for the continuation of the ongoing project of civilization. These challenges inspire

Owen to continue to work hard so that he can lead efforts to improve the country and the world in the present, and ensure it is a better place for future generations. “A society grows great when [people] plant trees in whose shade they will never sit.” — Greek Proverb.



Jacob Carroll

*University of Maine
MBTA Scholarship*
Jacob was born and raised in Mid-Coast Maine, where he graduated from Oceanside High School

in Rockland. He is now nearing the end of his senior year in civil and environmental engineering at the University of Maine. He is pursuing this degree because he sees a strong need for improved transportation infrastructure throughout the state. Efficiency, comfort, and safety are all key areas to be improved through transportation engineering, especially in an older-infrastructure state like Maine. Jacob hopes to use the skills and knowledge gained from his time at UMaine to have a successful engineering career and stay in Maine, ideally near the Mid-Coast region that he calls home. One area of particular interest for Jacob is bridge improvements in rural parts of the state. During

one of his summers while enrolled at UMaine, Jacob worked with the Maine Department of Transportation as a paving inspection intern. He learned about DOT testing procedures and assisted in data collection for state records. Since then, he has taken transportation engineering electives during his studies, learning about analyzing traffic flows, timing intersection lights, and designing safe roads. From his coursework and intern experiences, Jacob hopes to use his knowledge to improve the lives of Mainers through practical engineering solutions.



Reid Chamberlain

*University of Maine
MBTA Scholarship*

Reid Chamberlain, a native of Eliot, Maine, is a freshman at the University of Maine, majoring in construction engineering technology. His interest in the transportation industry began when he was young, sparked by hours spent traveling all around Maine and observing roadwork and construction from the window. He became curious about how the roads people travel on are shaped and how everything works. This curiosity grew stronger under the influence of his father, a civil engineer with extensive experience in the construction and transportation industries. Through his father's guidance and industry connections, Reid gained a solid understanding of what a career in transportation might look like. Reid is currently seeking an internship for the upcoming summer in the earthwork side of construction, including highway development, site preparation, and excavation. He hopes to gain hands-on experience and a deeper understanding of the field while applying what he has learned in the classroom to real-world situations. After graduation, he aspires to work as a project engineer for a construction company in Maine. His long-term goal is to contribute to infrastructure improvements in his home state, helping to shape the roads, bridges, and transportation systems that inspired his interest in the field.

yet realizing how important transportation and infrastructure would become in his life. As he grew older, a simple test in sixth grade confirmed his future path: becoming a civil engineer. Today, he has replaced a toy excavator with a real one. The transportation field compels Austin because of his passion for designing usable, efficient infrastructure, and the opportunity to positively impact the community he grew up in is deeply fulfilling. He enjoys problem-solving and the engineering challenges that come with it, particularly as society increasingly focuses on sustainable development. Austin hopes to be part of this movement by designing systems future generations can rely on. He finds it rewarding to see a finished project come to life, especially knowing it may improve a dangerous intersection or create something that benefits the public. After graduation, Austin plans to continue his engineering career in Maine to give back to the community that shaped him. He hopes to join a local firm where he can contribute to meaningful projects that improve transportation safety and accessibility. Over time, he plans to pursue his professional engineering license, grow his leadership skills, take on larger responsibilities, lead project teams, and mentor young engineers who are beginning their careers.



Samuel Dufresne

*University of Maine
Frank Healy Scholarship*

Samuel Dufresne grew up in Maine and has always cared about his community and the infrastructure people rely on every day, such as roads and bridges. He is drawn to transportation because it allows him to apply his strengths in math, science, and problem-solving to work that has a tangible impact. He finds it rewarding to be part of building infrastructure that people use daily. Over the past two summers, Samuel interned with Northeast Paving and gained hands-on experience in road construction. He saw firsthand how these projects impact communities and enjoyed the balance between planning and fieldwork. These experiences strengthened his interest in continuing to learn and contribute to projects that improve the places around him. After graduation, Samuel hopes to work for a Maine-based company, ideally Northeast Paving, where he can continue building his skills and take on increasing responsibility. Eventually, he aims to move into a leadership role and help manage projects that improve Maine's roads and bridges. Samuel plans to remain in Maine, not only

because it is home, but because he values the lifestyle and wants to make a positive impact in the state. He is working toward a bachelor of science in construction engineering technology and an associate of science in business administration, both expected in 2026.



Christian Ferrante

*University of Maine
Millard Pray Scholarship*

Christian Ferrante grew up, and still lives, in a rural part of southern Maine. He resides on a private

dirt road surrounded by forest, in a valley that frequently erodes and often requires additional fill. Christian chose to pursue a career in transportation after experiencing poorly constructed Maine roads and completing multiple transportation engineering courses. On the roads he has traveled, he and his car have often encountered potholes and bumps that highlight the need for better design and maintenance. Throughout his life, Christian has strived for perfection and values constant improvement. In transportation engineering, he appreciates the structured, step-by-step process that uses overarching formulas with multiple contributing factors—an approach he has not found in many other disciplines. After graduation, Christian hopes to begin his career with the same bridge-building company where he has worked as a laborer and intern for the past three years. This experience has allowed him to gain practical knowledge of the field and understand how to apply engineering concepts in real-world settings.



Ethan Handley

*University of Maine
MBTA Scholarship*

Ethan Handley grew up in the small, rural community of Monmouth, Maine, where he developed a keen interest in transportation and infrastructure. Participating in a Maine State House internship during his sophomore year of high school further strengthened his interest in public service. By the time he had completed high school, Ethan had set his sights on making an impact through a career in civil engineering. This goal inspired his enrollment in the University of Maine's civil engineering program, where he became involved in the student ASCE chapter as its treasurer and social media chair. He has also conducted work for both the Process Development



Austin Clark

*University of Maine
MBTA Scholarship*

Austin Clark was born in Ashland, Maine, and grew up in a small, rural community. From a young age, he had big dreams of seeing more of the world, not

Center and the Advanced Structures & Composites Center on campus, helping advance research in paper production and composite materials testing. During the summers of 2024 and 2025, Ethan completed an internship with HNTB Corporation in South Portland. Through this internship, he participated in a variety of projects and applied his education and passion for transportation engineering through design and field work. Ethan looks forward to continuing gaining valuable experience at the University of Maine and returning to HNTB after graduation to further his goal of advancing sustainable transportation solutions.



Andrew Keddy

*University of Maine
Transportation Trailblazer
Scholarship*

Andrew Keddy grew up in New Gloucester, Maine, and attended Gray-New

Gloucester High School before studying civil engineering at the University of Maine in Orono. He chose this field of study due to his interest in the inner workings of large cities and transportation networks. During the past summer, Andrew worked as an intern with Stantec's bridge and highway groups, where his interest in the transportation sector was further strengthened. He contributed to projects at various stages of development, ranging from load ratings of small culverts and roadway signing to the geometric layout of traffic circles and the final design of a five-bridge design-build project. Highlights of his experience included observing precast beam placement for the Western Avenue Bridge over I-95 and contributing to the final production of the Cony Circle project. Andrew is still deciding which concentration to pursue at the University of Maine, though his strongest interests are currently structural and transportation engineering. He plans to become a licensed professional engineer and hopes to work on large-scale infrastructure projects throughout Maine and the New England region.



Nicholas Koziell

*Rochester Institute of
Technology
MBTA & Paul Koziell Scholarships*

Nicholas Koziell is a Maine native and a freshman at the Rochester Institute

of Technology (RIT), where he is majoring in computing and information systems. He is also an active member of Nexthop, RIT's information technology club. Nicholas's interest in transportation and construction began at an early age, sparked by a childhood spent building with LEGO bricks. His father encouraged this passion, often taking him to job sites, where Nicholas developed vivid and lasting memories of staying up late to watch massive beam placements. As he grew older, his curiosity shifted toward technology, but his interest in infrastructure never faded. These passions converged when he joined his family's construction company, CPM Constructors, where he applied his technical knowledge to modernize operations by upgrading computer systems and network infrastructure. After graduation, Nicholas plans to return to Maine and leverage his combined expertise in construction and technology by launching a managed service provider that delivers specialized IT services exclusively to construction companies across the state.



Gabriel McKenney

*University of Maine
MBTA & Timothy Folster
Scholarships*

Gabriel McKenney spent his early years splitting time between southern Maine and coastal North Carolina before permanently returning to southern Maine during grade school. He is pursuing a career in transportation because he is fascinated by how infrastructure is conceived and constructed. Gabriel gained experience in the construction industry primarily through work with his father's small business, McKenney and Sons Construction, where he framed homes, additions, and bathrooms. More recently, he worked as an intern with Sargent, gaining experience operating heavy equipment such as skid steers, rollers, and water trucks, as well as learning skills including pipe fusing and water main installation. Gabriel has accepted a return internship with Sargent for the summer of 2026. He is also a proud member of the Maine Alpha Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon, which received the University of Maine's Chapter of the Year and Community Service Chapter of the Year awards this past semester. Gabriel believes his involvement in Sigma Phi Epsilon has strengthened his pride in his work both inside and outside of construction, reflected in his cumulative 3.89 GPA over four semesters. He is currently undecided about his post-graduation plans but

is considering pursuing a career as a professional engineer in the future.



Chase Morin

*University of Connecticut
MBTA Scholarship*

Chase Morin is a senior at the University of Connecticut majoring in civil engineering. Originally from Merrimack, New Hampshire, he has long been fascinated by the way transportation systems connect people and places. From a young age, Chase found excitement in observing how cars, trains, planes, airports, and boats operate together to keep the world moving. This curiosity developed into a passion for understanding systems and improving their safety, efficiency, and reliability. That passion led him to pursue civil engineering, where he could combine creativity and problem-solving to positively impact everyday life. During his college career, Chase discovered a particular interest in transportation infrastructure, especially aviation, airports, and rail systems. This past summer, he interned with HNTB Corporation in the northern New England office, gaining hands-on experience on projects throughout New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. After graduation, Chase hopes to work for an engineering firm focused on transportation infrastructure and continue contributing to projects that benefit local communities.



Luke Patterson

*University of Maine
Transportation Trailblazer
Scholarship*

Luke Patterson grew up in Brunswick, Maine, and graduated from Brunswick

High School in 2023. His passion for math, problem-solving, and environmental stewardship led him to the civil and environmental engineering program at the University of Maine. After graduation, Luke hopes to work for a civil engineering firm in Maine with the goal of reducing the environmental impact of human activity. He envisions a future where engineering helps communities become more sustainable while protecting the natural world. Luke believes that modernizing transportation systems can play a significant role in achieving these goals. During the summer of 2025, Luke interned with Colliers Engineering & Design, where he contributed to multiple bridge surveys



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for the Maine Department of Transportation. This experience deepened his understanding of the critical role surveying plays in construction projects, particularly in evaluating bridges for upgrades or replacement. Luke is a decathlete on the University of Maine Track and Field team and enjoys hiking, camping, and spending time with his dogs.



Andrew Ring

Northern Maine Community College

MBTA Scholarship

Andrew Ring grew up in Woodland, Maine, a small farming community in Aroostook County, where he developed a fascination with tractors and large equipment. He spent his summers haying and working harvest, which fueled his passion for agriculture. Andrew

is pursuing a career as a heavy diesel mechanic with a focus on transporting heavy equipment. His long-term goal is to start his own business operating a truck and lowbed trailer to transport large equipment throughout Maine and beyond. He plans to maintain his equipment using the mechanical skills he has developed through hands-on work. After high school, Andrew worked at Soderberg Construction during the summer, where he gained experience driving dump trucks and operating heavy equipment. During the school year, he worked as a diesel mechanic at Aroostook Trusses, learning hands-on mechanical skills as well as how to transport oversized trusses safely. Andrew plans to remain with Soderberg Construction until he turns 21 and can use his CDL across state lines. Looking ahead, he hopes to build a successful business supporting Maine's construction and agricultural industries.

from a friend, Sam, who also introduced him to the transportation field and CPM Constructors. Holden has spent two summers and one winter interning with CPM Constructors, where he has learned a wide range of skills, from the overall bridge construction process to the many detailed tasks involved. Holden plans to continue working with CPM Constructors after graduating in May, with the goal of becoming more involved in surveying and estimating while continuing to expand his knowledge across all aspects of the industry.



Gabrielle Sienko

University of Maine-Augusta

Paul Koziełl Scholarship

Gabrielle Sienko grew up in Sidney, Maine, with her parents and two sisters. From a young age, she demonstrated strong creativity, and her father, a civil engineer, helped her develop an interest in how buildings and infrastructure shape daily life.

This influence guided her toward architecture, where she discovered a passion for designing spaces that bring people together and serve communities. Gabrielle believes the relationship between architecture and transportation is often overlooked, despite both playing a critical role in how people experience the built environment. Now in her third year of the bachelor of architecture program at the University of Maine at Augusta, she hopes to gain additional experience through an internship with a local architecture firm. Looking ahead, Gabrielle plans to pursue a career in architecture, become a licensed architect, and focus on residential and community-centered design. She also intends to work toward her master's degree while remaining close to her family and the state that has shaped her creativity.

in the marine transportation operations program, which culminates in a bachelor's degree and a third mate unlimited license. During the summer of 2024, she spent two-and-a-half months aboard the academy's training ship, participating in summer sea term and learning the fundamentals of life as a mariner. This past summer, Julia spent three months aboard an oil-product tanker in the Gulf of Mexico, transporting diesel, gasoline, and jet fuel from Texas to Florida. This experience confirmed her aspirations and proved to be transformative. Through cargo operations, bridge watch, and vessel maintenance, Julia developed leadership and management skills, vessel familiarity, and a broad range of technical knowledge. After graduation, she hopes to return to the Gulf and continue working aboard tanker vessels, supporting the transportation of essential products that fuel the United States economy.



Nicholas Weiss

Thomas College

Kenneth Burrill Scholarship

Nicholas Weiss is from Winslow, Maine, and is a graduate student at Thomas College earning his MBA. During his time at Thomas College, he completed an internship at Northeast Charter in Lewiston, Maine, where he learned the day-to-day operations of the business, including dispatch, sales, and finance. He is pursuing a career in the transportation industry due to his long-standing interest in buses and the role they play in Maine's economy, particularly tourism. Nicholas plans to remain in Maine after graduating in the spring and hopes to eventually own a bus company serving residents and visitors throughout the state. Outside of work and school, he enjoys spending time with his family, especially relaxing on Salmon Lake in Belgrade.



Holden Rodzen

University of Maine

Millard Pray Scholarship

Holden Rodzen grew up in Norway, Maine, and attended Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. His interest in engineering and working with plans began after taking an engineering and architectural design class through the school's technical program. He decided to major in construction engineering technology after encouragement



Julia Strauss

Maine Maritime Academy

MBTA Scholarship

Julia Strauss grew up on Mount Desert Island, Maine, and has spent her life around the water. Working within island communities on ferries and tour boats inspired her to pursue a transportation-related career. In the fall of 2023, Julia began her studies at Maine Maritime Academy, enrolling

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MaineDOT

Briefs from the MaineDOT newsroom



MaineDOT to Start Work on Robbinston Mill Brook Bridge Replacement Project

WORK IS getting underway in Robbinston as the Maine Department of Transportation begins a long-term project to upgrade a key crossing along Route 1.

The project will replace an aging steel multi-plate culvert with a new 120-foot precast NEBT girder bridge. To keep traffic moving during construction, crews will first build a temporary detour bridge, allowing Route 1 to remain open while the permanent structure is constructed.

In addition to the bridge replacement, the project includes removing the existing concrete slab bridge, improving drainage, installing new guardrail, placing heavy riprap along the corridor, and completing final paving once construction wraps up.

Motorists traveling through the area should be prepared for traffic changes. During construction, vehicles will be shifted onto a single-lane detour controlled by portable traffic signals, with alternating one-way traffic. Drivers may experience periodic delays, and flaggers will be on site as needed to safely manage equipment movement and work activity.

Beyond improving the structural condition of the crossing, the project is designed to enhance stream flow and tidal connectivity in the area. It also supports MaineDOT's broader goal of creating a more consistent and resilient transportation corridor along historic coastal Route 1—benefiting drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists alike.

Construction is expected to continue through September 2027. The project is being carried out by Reed & Reed, Inc. of Woolwich, with a contract valued at \$7,396,995. 

PHOTOS: COURTESY MAINEDOT

MaineDOT Announces Little Tomah Bridge Culvert Replacement Project on Route 6 in Codyville

DRIVERS TRAVELING through Codyville should be prepared for traffic changes on Route 6 as work begins to replace the Little Tomah Bridge, a project that will bring lane closures and detours throughout much of 2026.

Starting January 6, 2026, the Maine Department of Transportation began replacing the existing corrugated steel pipe arch over Little Tomah Stream with a new single-span bridge. The



MaineDOT to Reduce Traffic on U.S. Route 302 in Casco and Naples for Bridge Work

THE MAINE Department of Transportation began slowing traffic along U.S. Route 302 at the Casco–Naples town line as work got underway on the Crooked River Bridge.

Beginning February 9, 2026, crews began replacing the bridge's wearing surface, a project that required traffic to be reduced to a single lane with alternating flow. Temporary traffic signals managed the work zone, and lane widths were narrowed to 12 feet. Drivers should plan for delays and use extra caution while traveling through the area.

Both lanes of Route 302 were expected to reopen by May 21, 2026, although the schedule could shift depending on weather or other unforeseen conditions. MaineDOT planned to share updates as the project progressed.

CPM Constructors of Freeport is the contractor overseeing the work. 

work is planned in phases to keep traffic moving while construction is underway.

During the first phase, which runs through February 2026, motorists can expect daytime lane closures on Route 6. Traffic will be managed by flaggers or temporary traffic signals, and brief delays are likely during active work hours.

Construction will pause for the spring, with the second phase resuming in May 2026 and continuing through October 2026. During this period, traffic will be routed onto a one-lane detour controlled by temporary traffic signals.

The project is expected to be completed by Fall 2026. CPM Constructors of Freeport is the contractor for the \$3.6 million project, which will deliver a safer, more durable crossing for drivers traveling through the area. 

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Thank you to all who served on the MBTA 2025 Membership Committee, and congratulations to our 2025 Campaign winners!

- **First place:** Glenn Adams (Sargent)
- **Second place:** Jim Wentworth, Chair (Reed & Reed)
- **Third place:** James Anderson (WSP)

James Bryce (TIDC – UMaine)
 John Cronan (Preti Flaherty)
 Jason Gallant (Wright-Pierce)
 Sam Grande (All States Materials Group)
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2025 Scholarship Banquet at UMaine

MBTA honors future transportation leaders at 2025 Holiday / Scholarship Banquet

HERE IS something time-tested and important about gathering in person to recognize hard work, commitment, and the next generation coming up. That spirit was on full display at the Maine Better Transportation Association's 2025 Scholarship Banquet, held at the University of Maine in Orono. The annual event brought together students, educators, industry leaders, and association members with one clear purpose: investing in Maine's transportation future.

Held at the Wells Center on campus and hosted by the MBTA Educational Foundation, the banquet celebrated 18 scholarship recipients who collectively received \$43,500 in support. These scholarships reflect MBTA's long-standing belief that the strength of Maine's transportation system depends on well-prepared, well-supported young professionals entering the field.

HONORING EDUCATION AND MENTORSHIP

A highlight of the evening was recognition of Phil Dunn, recently retired faculty member from the University of Maine's Construction Engineering Technology program. Dunn has long served as a bridge between students and the industry, encouraging engagement with MBTA and helping students take advantage of scholarships and professional opportunities. His work with the Maine Transportation Conference and student paper presentations has left a lasting mark, and the acknowledgment served as a reminder that strong educators are essential to building a strong workforce.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The centerpiece of the banquet was the introduction of scholarship recipients who were present, many

of whom are pursuing degrees directly tied to Maine's transportation and construction sectors. Students shared where they grew up, what they are studying, and where they hope their careers will take them. It was a powerful reminder of why these scholarships matter.

Transportation Trailblazer scholarship recipients present were Andrew Keddy and Luke Patterson. These scholarships are MBTA's multi-year sustaining awards and were increased to \$5,000, reinforcing MBTA's commitment to long-term student success.

Students present who received named scholarships awarded included: Gabriel McEnney (Timothy Folster scholarship); Gabrielle Sienko (Paul Koziell scholarship); Samuel Dufresne (Frank Healy scholarship); and Christian Ferrante and Holden Rodzen (Millard Pray scholarships), both University of Maine students working with CPM Constructors.

Other scholarship recipients present and recognized during the evening included Owen Callaghan, Jacob Carroll, Reid Chamberlain, Austin Clark, and Ethan Handley. Past scholarship recipients Sam Bloniasz and Matt Eager were also in attendance, now working in the industry for MBTA member companies, offering clear proof that the program delivers real, lasting results.

MEMBERSHIP AND ASSOCIATION STRENGTH

In addition to our scholars, the banquet highlighted the results of MBTA's annual



Opposite page: MBTA 2025 Scholarship Recipients at Holiday/Scholarship dinner.

Top left: Chris Bales, Sebastian Bennage.

Top right: Pete Parizo, Phil Dunn.

Left: Student Christian Ferrante.

Bottom: CPM representatives with students.





Above: Student scholar Jacob Carroll.

Right: Matt Carey, Cory Nutting, Spencer Mishoe, Ursula Bernier.



membership campaign. The effort brought in new corporate, association, and individual members, strengthening the association's voice and reach. The campaign raised more than \$12,500 in new member dues, reinforcing the importance of broad participation across the transportation community.

Top recruiters were recognized for their efforts, reflecting the practical reality that a strong association depends on members willing to roll up their sleeves and help grow it. First place for the Membership Campaign was Glenn Adams of Sargent who won a \$300 LL Bean gift card, followed by our Membership Committee Chair Jim Wentworth of Reed & Reed who took home a \$250 LL Bean gift card, and third place was awarded to Jim Anderson of WSP, netting a \$150 LL Bean gift card.

Three scholarship students' names were drawn in a random drawing, each receiving a \$50 LL Bean gift card donated by sponsors: Ethan Handley, Reid Chamberlain, and Jacob Carroll. Student Sam Dusfresne also won \$180 in the 50/50 raffle drawing, with the other half going into the Scholarship program.

SUPER RAFFLE SUPPORTS SCHOLARSHIPS

The evening concluded with the MBTA Educational Foundation's Super Raffle, the organization's primary scholarship fundraiser. With all 500 tickets sold, the raffle once again demonstrated the generosity of MBTA members and supporters. Prizes included a \$7,000 grand prize, along with LL Bean gift cards, with proceeds directly supporting future scholarships. MBTA Educational Foundation Chair Tim Folster announced the 2025 winners:

- **1st place (\$7,000 check):**
Dante Guzzi, HNTB
- **2nd place (\$500 LL Bean gift card):**
Bill Sanborn, Ranger Construction
- **3rd place (\$250 LL Bean gift card):**
Bill Sanborn, Ranger Construction

A NIGHT WITH PURPOSE

The 2025 Scholarship Banquet was about recognizing achievement, reinforcing tradition, and making clear that Maine's transportation industry takes its responsibility to the next generation seriously. By supporting students today, MBTA continues to ensure that Maine's roads, bridges, and infrastructure will be in capable hands tomorrow. We want to thank everyone in attendance and be sure to share our 2026 scholarship opportunities when they become available! 

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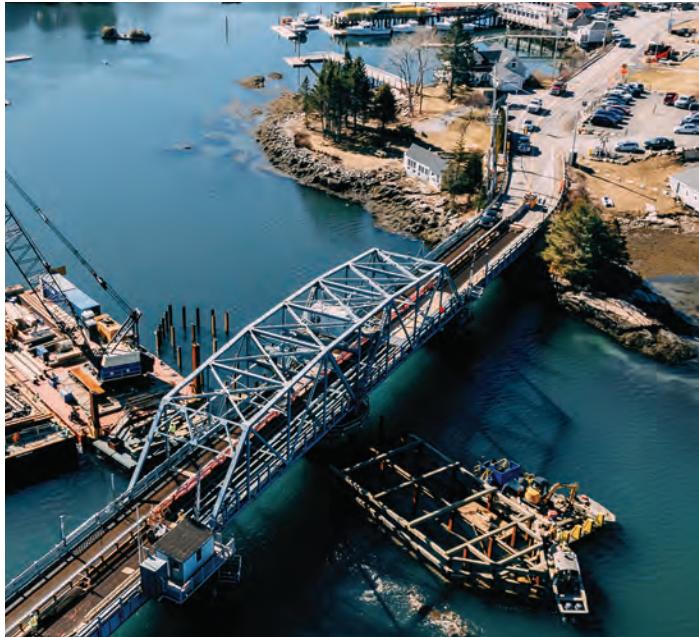
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Hard Hats, High Stakes: Protecting Lives in Maine's Work Zones

Transportation professionals across Maine have the power to shape safer roads. LD 1457 is the next step—and here's how you can help.

By Andre Briere, Executive Director, Maine Turnpike Authority

WHEN YOU DRIVE past an active work zone on the Maine Turnpike, just feet from fast-moving traffic, is someone's parent, child, or friend doing their job. These men and women stand inches from danger every day to keep our infrastructure safe and reliable. Often, their only protection is a hard hat and reflective clothing. They have families waiting for them at home—and they deserve to get there safely, every single day.

Despite reduced speed signage, orange cones, and flashing lights, too many drivers speed through active work zones. In fact, when the Maine Turnpike Authority reviewed data from last summer, we found that 77% of drivers in active work zones were exceeding the posted speed limit—and in most zones, there were instances of drivers going more than 100 miles per hour. A moment of inattention or a few extra miles per hour can mean the difference between life and death—not only for those working along the roadway, but for drivers as well. The impact of a work zone crash extends far beyond the scene; it's not just a statistic; it's a family forever changed. As a father, I think about my own children driving on our roads and our people working just feet away from speeding traffic—and their children waiting at home, just like mine. It hits home. Every crash statistic I see represents a family, a loved one, lives that matter. That's why this effort isn't about speed cameras; it's about people.

The priority at the Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) is straightforward: ensure everyone gets home safely. That goal is shared by engineers, contractors, Maine State Police, maintenance crews and everyone who works across Maine's transportation system. Improving safety requires thoughtful action and a willingness to step forward and test new approaches. LD 1457 would authorize a three-year pilot program focused on work zone safety, allowing MTA to collect meaningful data and learn what works. Maine is not

alone in this effort—more than 20 states have already passed similar legislation, and those programs have reduced crashes by up to 40 percent. If the data shows how the program saves lives, it will help inform future discussions about work zone safety across Maine. For today, our focus is on saving lives through education and utilizing the pilot for the data collection.

The proposed program would use an automated speed enforcement system that is narrowly scoped and temporary. Enforcement would occur only when workers are present and at their most vulnerable. Cameras will never operate in inactive work zones or when no workers are at risk.

Under the proposal, the system will log a license plate only if a vehicle exceeds the posted speed limit by more than 11 miles per hour in an active work zone with workers present. Every flagged image will be manually reviewed before a notice is issued to ensure accuracy. The system does not capture faces or personal details—only the license plate—and images are used solely for enforcing work zone safety. Drivers are never photographed. All images must be deleted within 30 days, and an independent auditor will verify compliance with strict privacy protections. This program reflects thoughtful collaboration—with safety advocates, partner organizations, and insights from states already using this approach—to make sure it is open, fair, and focused on education. At its heart, this is about prevention, not punishment.

The pilot would be limited to no more than three locations and would be clearly signposted on-site and online. Advance signage will also be posted before the last exit prior to any monitored zone, giving drivers the option to leave the Turnpike before entering an enforcement area. It would begin with a pre-enforcement grace period, during which drivers exceeding the speed threshold will receive mailed notices explaining the safety reasons behind the program. No fines will be

issued during this phase, and the first violation can only occur 30 days after the initial notice. For repeat violations, a flat \$100 fine would apply. This fine is intended to deter dangerous behavior—not punish drivers—and 100 percent of the revenue would go to the State's General Fund. No state tax dollars will fund this program; the Maine Turnpike Authority will cover all costs.

The program would run for three years and then conclude, with the Maine Turnpike Authority reporting back to the Legislature on its effectiveness.

Transparency is central to the program's design. Transparency is central to the program's approach. All work zones already include clear signage to alert drivers, but when automated speed enforcement is in use, additional, highly visible signs will be posted throughout the zone—far more than usual—so drivers know speed is being monitored. Active locations will also be shared through Maine Turnpike Authority communication channels.

This program is about responsibility. Every driver who slows down in a work zone helps protect the people who maintain the roads Maine depends on. Many of you know those workers personally. They're your colleagues, your friends, and in some cases, your own family members. Like me, you think about your kids driving on these roads and the parents working just feet away from speeding traffic. As someone who stepped into the role of Executive Director just nine months ago, I've spent every day listening, learning, and working alongside you to make safety MTA's top priority.

Each one of you reading this is a leader in Maine's transportation community. People look to you as experts—not just on roads and infrastructure, but on safety. You have the power to shape behavior and save lives. By sharing this message and reminding drivers that when they see hard hats on the highway, they need to slow down, you're setting the standard. Someone's life depends on it. 



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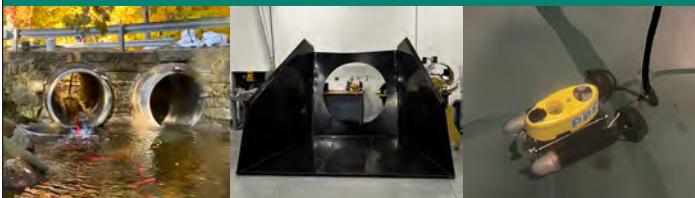
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A Guide to Maine Employment Laws in 2026

By Jon Portanova, Marketing Director, Paper Trails

RUNNING A SMALL or midsize business in Maine is a full-time balancing act. You're managing your employees, taking care of your customers, and worrying about finances. On top of that, employment laws seem to change constantly. Just when you feel like you've wrapped your head around one requirement, a new update rolls in.

And for Maine businesses, in 2026, it is no different. Between wage increases, new leave benefits becoming available, federal tax changes, and evolving reporting rules, many business owners and managers are wondering: "What do I actually need to know right now?"

This article is meant to help answer that. We'll walk through the most important Maine labor law changes and federal employment law updates that affect Maine businesses in 2026. By the time you're done reading, you should feel more informed, more prepared, and a little less overwhelmed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS ARTICLE

- Maine's minimum wage, tipped wage, and exempt salary threshold all increase in 2026 and must be reflected in payroll starting January 1.
- Paid Family & Medical Leave benefits become available to employees in 2026, even though contributions started earlier.
- Maine's Earned Paid Leave law has been updated to now allow carryover and accrual to stack, meaning employees can have more time available.
- Several federal updates, including IRS contribution limits and tax treatment of tips and overtime, impact payroll and reporting.
- Staying compliant in 2026 is less about learning everything at once and more about knowing where changes affect your business.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO MAINE LABOR LAWS IN 2026?

Each year brings a mix of brand-new laws, updates to existing rules, and reminders about requirements that are easy to forget. Below are the Maine-specific labor laws that employers should be paying close attention to in 2026.

Maine Minimum Wage

Beginning January 1, 2026, Maine's minimum wage increases to \$15.10 per hour. This is up from \$14.65 in 2025 and reflects the state's annual cost-of-living adjustment requirement. Tipped

workers must be paid at least \$7.55 per hour.

This change applies to nearly all hourly employees in Maine. Employers need to ensure payroll systems are updated so that any hours worked on or after January 1, 2026, are paid at the new rate – even if the pay period started in December.

Some municipalities, like Portland and Rockland, have higher local minimum wages. If you operate in places like these, it's important to watch for local guidance and confirm you're paying the correct rate based on where the work is performed.

Salary Threshold Increase

Starting January 1, 2026, Maine's salary threshold for exempt employees increases to \$871.16 per week, or \$45,300.32 annually.

This threshold is only one part of the exemption test. To classify an employee as exempt from overtime, they must meet both the salary requirement and the duties test under the executive, administrative, or professional (EAP) exemptions. Simply paying someone above the threshold does not automatically make them exempt.

For employers, this is a good time to review exempt classifications, especially for employees whose salaries are close to the new threshold.

Maine Earned Paid Leave Updates

Maine's Earned Paid Leave law continues to evolve, and a recent amendment significantly impacts how leave carries over and accrues.

Under this law, businesses with more than 10 employees must allow employees to earn one hour of paid leave for every 40 hours worked, up to 40 hours per year. This earned time can be used for any reason, including illness, vacation, personal needs, or emergencies.

The new change is how carryover works. Employees may now carry over up to 40 unused hours into the next year and still accrue up to 40 new hours. This means an employee could have as much as 80 hours available in a given year, depending on usage.

For employers, this change means reviewing time-off policies, payroll tracking, and employee handbooks to make sure they reflect the updated rules. Consistency is critical – how time is earned, used, carried over, and tracked should be clearly defined and applied evenly.

Maine's Paid Family & Medical Leave

Maine's Paid Family & Medical Leave program has been in place since the beginning of 2025, and 2026 is a major milestone:



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employees will become eligible to begin receiving PFML benefits in May of 2026.

Eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks of paid leave per year for qualifying reasons, including their own serious health condition, caring for a family member, bonding with a new child, certain military-related needs, or safe leave.

Employers should be prepared for employee questions in 2026. Even if you already offer paid leave or short-term disability, PFML operates separately unless you have an approved private plan. Employers are still required to file quarterly wage reports and remit contributions, even if they opt out through a private plan.

Maine's Report to Work Law

Maine's new "Report to Work" law adds another compliance item for certain employers. This law applies to businesses with at least 10 employees that are open more than 120 days per year.

If an employee reports to work for a scheduled shift and that shift is canceled or shortened, the employer must pay the lesser of two hours at the employee's regular rate or the total amount the employee was scheduled to earn for that shift.

For tipped employees, this pay must be calculated using the full minimum wage — not the tipped wage.

There are limited exceptions, such as weather-related closures or emergencies, and the law allows flexibility if the employer makes a documented, good-faith effort to notify the employee before they report to work. Still, this law reinforces the importance of accurate scheduling, communication, and documentation.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES TO FEDERAL LAWS IN 2026?

In addition to Maine-specific laws, several federal changes affect how employers manage payroll, benefits, and reporting in 2026.

IRS Contribution Limits

The IRS adjusts retirement plan contribution limits each year, and 2026 brings several increases.

For 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) plans, the employee contribution limit increases, with additional catch-up contributions available depending on age. SECURE Act 2.0 also introduced age-banded

Age Range	401(k), 403(b), & 457(b)	SIMPLE IRA (<25 EE)	SIMPLE IRA (26-100 EE)
<50 years old	\$24,500	\$18,100	\$17,000
50-59 years old	\$32,500 (\$8,000 catch-up)	\$22,100 (\$4,000 catch-up)	\$21,000 (\$4,000 catch-up)
60-63 years old	\$35,750 (\$11,250 catch-up)	\$23,350 (\$5,250 catch-up)	\$22,250 (\$5,250 catch-up)
64+ years old	\$32,500 (\$8,000 catch-up)	\$22,100 (\$4,000 catch-up)	\$21,000 (\$4,000 catch-up)

catch-up limits, with enhanced contributions for employees ages 60 to 63.

There is also an important payroll-related change: starting in 2026, certain higher earners must make catch-up contributions on a Roth (after-tax) basis. This affects how contributions are withheld, reported, and communicated to employees.

SIMPLE IRA limits differ based on employer size, and IRA income phase-out ranges have also increased. While these changes are generally positive for employees, they require payroll systems to be configured correctly and benefits information to be communicated clearly.

Changes to Payroll Taxes Under the OBBBA

One of the most talked-about federal changes affecting employers comes from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act and how it treats tips and overtime for federal income tax purposes. While it's often described as "no tax on tips or overtime," the reality is more specific.

Starting with wages earned in 2025, eligible employees can claim a federal income tax credit when they file their tax return for:

- up to \$12,500 in overtime pay (only the OT premium rate is exempt from federal income tax, not the full overtime amount).
- up to \$25,000 in tip income each year.
- These limits double for married couples filing jointly and apply only to employees earning under \$150,000 per year (\$300,000 for couples).

This change applies only to federal income tax and is currently set to run through 2028.

For employers, it's important to know that nothing changes about withholding right now. Federal income tax must still be withheld on all wages, including tips and overtime, and those wages remain subject to Social Security, Medicare (FICA), and state income taxes. The benefit to employees happens later, when they file their tax return and claim the credit. Not all tipped employees qualify, and certain professions — such as healthcare, legal, accounting, financial services, and consulting — are excluded.

From a payroll standpoint, this change increases the need for accurate tracking. Employers should continue to track tips and overtime separately and be aware that the IRS has introduced new W-2 reporting codes for 2026:

- **Box 12, Code TT:** This new code will be used by employers to report the total amount of "qualified overtime" compensation paid to the employee.
- **Box 12, Code TP:** This new code will be used by employers to report the total amount of "qualified tips" received by the employee.
- **Box 14 or 14a:** A new box/code in this area may be used for the Treasury Tipped Occupation Code, which specifies the employee's eligible occupation.

Businesses with tipped workers or frequent overtime may want to review their payroll and timekeeping setup to ensure



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these amounts are being captured correctly as guidance continues to evolve.

FAQs ON EMPLOYMENT LAW CHANGES IN 2026

Are breaks required by law in Maine?

Maine requires employers to give their employees rest breaks. Most employees are only permitted to work for six consecutive hours at a time unless given the opportunity to take at least 30 consecutive minutes of rest.

The rest break requirement doesn't apply in emergency situations when there is danger to property, life, public safety, or public health. Additionally, this requirement doesn't apply to places of employment where fewer than three employees are on duty at one time and the nature of the work allows them frequent breaks during their work day.

Does Maine have Child Labor Laws?

Child labor laws are designed to protect young workers. In Maine, strong restrictions are in place to protect the health, safety, and educational opportunities of minors in the workplace. These laws cover working hours, prohibited occupations, and permits. Some of these include:

Minors under 16 years old

Work Hours (may work)

- Between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. during the school year
- Between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. during summer vacations only
- Not during school hours

Minors 16 and 17 years old

Work hours (may work)

- After 7 a.m. on a school day
- After 5 a.m. on a non-school day
- Until 10:15 p.m. on a day before a school day
- Until midnight if no school the next day
- Minors under 17 may NOT work during school hours

Are there overtime laws in Maine?

For employees who are classified as non-exempt, federal law requires that they be paid overtime for any hours worked over 40 in a single workweek. Overtime must be paid at a rate of one-and-a-half times the employee's regular rate of pay.

Things can get a little more complicated when an employee works multiple roles with different rates of pay during the same workweek. In those situations, employers generally cannot simply apply overtime based on the employee's highest or lowest hourly rate. Instead, overtime must be calculated using what's called the blended overtime method.

CONCLUSION

Employment laws in Maine don't stand still—and 2026 is a good example of how changes can build on one another. Wage increases, new leave benefits becoming available, federal tax updates, and expanded reporting requirements all impact small businesses this year.

It's important to understand which changes apply to your business, update systems and policies where needed, and ask questions before small issues turn into big problems. 

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Reed & Reed Announces Leadership Promotions

REED & Reed is pleased to announce several leadership promotions that reflect the company's continued growth, commitment to excellence, and dedication to developing talent from within the organization.

Gardiner Parker has been promoted to the newly established role of **Chief Development Officer**, paving the way for his future role as President. Gardiner joined Reed & Reed full-time in 2009 after earning a bachelor's degree from Colby College and later completing his MBA at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He previously served as a Project Superintendent before advancing to a Project Manager role. In his new position, Gardiner will lead business development strategy, focusing on revenue growth, market expansion, and long-term business objectives.

Jake Hall, P.E. has been promoted to the newly created position of **Chief Engineer**. Jake joined Reed & Reed in 2019 as a Project Manager and has played a key role in delivering several high-profile infrastructure projects, including the International Bridge in Madawaska and the Woolwich Route 1 Bridge replacements. In his new role, Jake will provide strategic engineering leadership across the organization, support project delivery, innovation, and technical excellence. He is a

graduate of the University of Maine at Orono with a bachelor's degree in engineering.

Chris Clark has been promoted to **Co-Chief Operating Officer**. Chris joined Reed & Reed in 2009 as an Electrical Project Manager and has been instrumental in leading complex energy and infrastructure projects throughout his tenure. Most recently, he managed the Downeast Wind Project Substation. As Co-OO, Chris will continue to guide operational strategy, project performance, and team development across the company. He is also a graduate of the University of Maine at Orono with a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

Jackson Parker, Jr. has been promoted to **Director of Logistics and Equipment**. In this role, he will oversee transportation, shop operations, and materials distribution while integrating equipment strategy. He will pursue operational excellence, process optimization, vendor negotiations, DOT regulatory compliance, and continuous data-driven improvement. Jackson joined the Reed & Reed team in 1999 and holds a bachelor's degree from Colby College and a master's degree from Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston.

John Phillips and **Dustin Littlefield** have both been promoted to **Senior Project Manager**. John joined Reed & Reed in 2003, and

Dustin joined the company in 2004. Throughout their careers, they have demonstrated consistent leadership, technical expertise, and dedication to project excellence. Both are graduates of the University of Maine at Orono with bachelor's degrees in construction management.

"These promotions reflect the exceptional leadership, dedication, and expertise our team members bring to Reed & Reed," said Jackson Parker, Chief Executive Officer. "Their combined experience and commitment to our values position our company strongly for the future." We expect the various transitions to take some time while each of these outstanding individuals develop to their full potential. Art Cavanagh and I are fully committed to supporting their individual and collective growth. As Reed & Reed approaches our 100th anniversary in 2028, we are pleased and fortunate to have such a fine group of future leaders dedicated to our continued success as a 100% Employee-Owned Maine company."

"Reed & Reed congratulates all of these individuals on their well-deserved promotions and looks forward to their continued leadership and impact across the organization." 

REED & REED

Crooker Construction is 100% Employee Owned!

Crooker Construction, LLC Transitions to Employee Ownership Through ESOP

CROOKER CONSTRUCTION, LLC, a Topsham, Maine-based general construction contractor with a 90-year history of family and private ownership, has announced its transition to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), making all 175 current employees owners of the company.

The company was founded in 1935, by Harry Crooker with a shovel and a dump truck. His sons Franklin and Theodore Crooker later joined their father, and it became a true

family-run business. Upon retiring, Franklin and Theodore took over operations and in 2014 long-term employee and Chief Engineer at the time, Thomas Sturgeon, P.E., purchased the business with a group of partners. In 2016, Crooker Construction, LLC purchased Precast of Maine making the company even stronger. With a goal of continuing the legacy set-in place by Harry at the beginning, the current owners decided the best future for all employees was to reward them for their daily contributions to the company's success by selling directly to them. This transition reflects the company's belief that the people who built Crooker Construction and Precast of Maine should also share in its future.

For 90 years the company has built a reputation in the Midcoast area of being family focused, completing jobs with a high level of quality and safety, offering industry-leading benefits, and more. The establishment of an ESOP ensures the company will remain locally rooted and will be able to continue on this

path and work to grow even stronger by honoring current traditions, fostering relationships, and relying on the dedicated employees who are now owners.

An ESOP transition protects the culture and creates a long-term path for the company to thrive while remaining independent and based in Maine. Employee ownership also supports stability for clients and partners while strengthening the investment in workforce, equipment, and local communities.

As part of this milestone, Crooker Construction has announced a leadership evolution designed to support continuity and long-term growth. Thomas Sturgeon, P.E., who has served as President and Chief Executive Officer since 2014, will move solely into the role of Chief Executive Officer. Ian Messier, P.E., previously Chief Engineer, will step into the role of President. Ian has been an integral part of the company for over a dozen years and the team is confident he will successfully lead the ESOP into this next chapter. 



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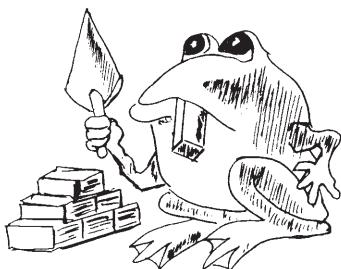
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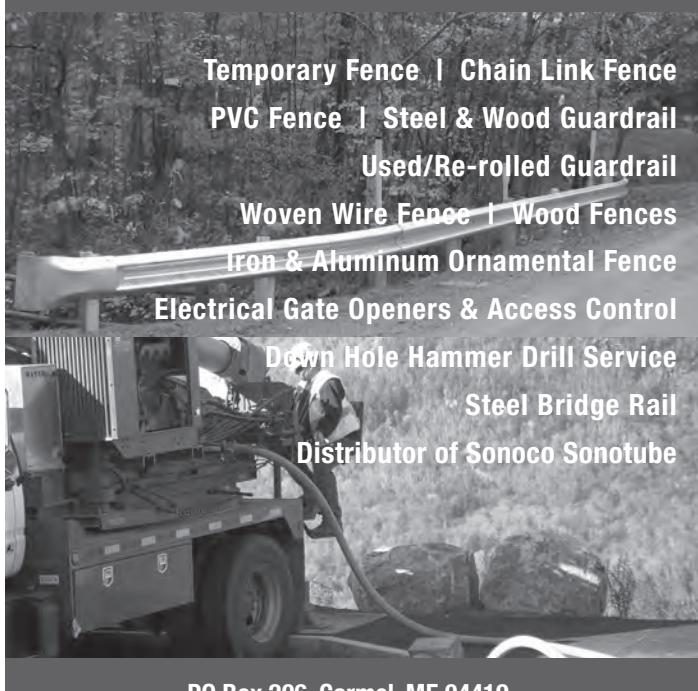
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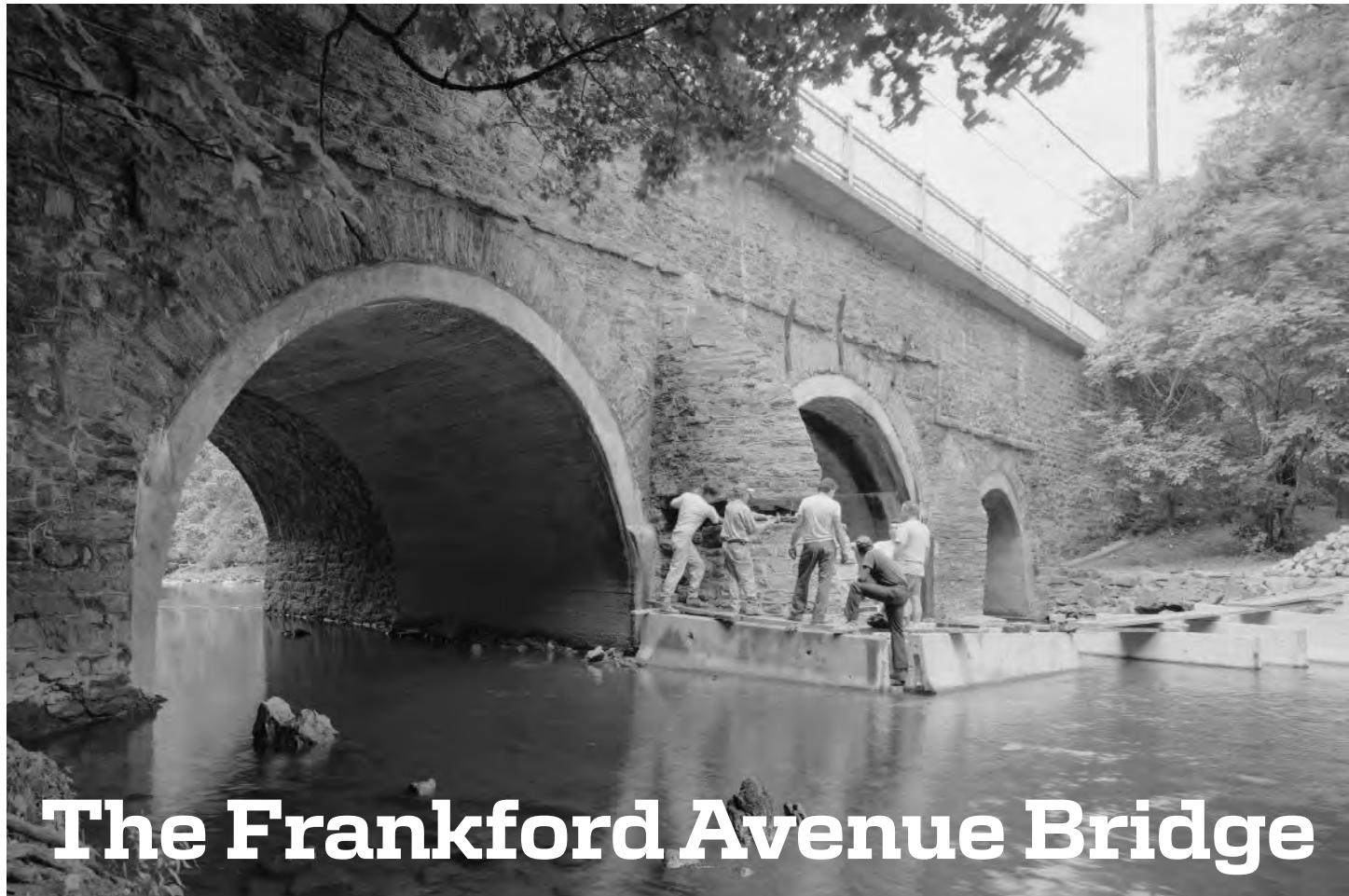
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EXIT RAMP



The Frankford Avenue Bridge

First Stone Arch in the Country

THE FRANKFORD Avenue Bridge is widely recognized as the first stone arch bridge built in the United States and is very likely the oldest bridge in the country still carrying regular traffic.

For over 270 years, the modest three-span structure has safely carried travelers over Pennypack Creek. As one newspaper contributor, Gerald McKelvey, observed in 1970, "For 273 years, the little stone bridge that carries Frankford Ave. across Pennypack Creek has been doing its humble job with a minimum of attention". Yet its history stretches back to the earliest days of the nation, built more than a century before Napoleon's reign and originally constructed to support one of America's first highways linking Philadelphia and New York, the King's Road.

When the bridge first opened, it measured just 18 feet wide, barely enough room for two horse-drawn teams to pass one another. Over

time, it adapted to changing transportation needs, first widening in 1893 for trolley service and again in 1950 to accommodate automobiles. Below, Pennypack Creek still winds through what is now Pennypack Park, where trout are stocked each year downstream of the bridge.

The bridge has also witnessed defining moments in American history. In April 1775, an express rider reportedly crossed it carrying the news of the Battle of Lexington. Stagecoaches later rumbled over its stones, including an early service that once took three days to reach New York, but eventually shortened to just one day. A toll booth stood at its southern end in the 1900s, a reminder of its role in early turnpike travel.

While dozens of other historic bridges in Philadelphia have closed or disappeared, the Frankford Avenue Bridge is a rare, working piece of living infrastructure history. 



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