



June 25, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA), I am writing in support of the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) Bridge Investment Program Planning Grant application and request for federal funding to create the Off-System Bridge Investment Program necessary to replace deteriorated local bridges.

This grant funding will create a bridge bundling program necessary to prioritize the replacement of nearly one-third of the 239 poor and critical-condition bridges over the next four-year work plan. The development of a program that extends community investment opportunities to municipalities of varying sizes in every corner of Maine is important to MMA, as it supports our mission to represent the interests of our 486 member cities, towns, and plantations.

Federal investment in the program will fund initiatives to create standard designs, use innovative materials and construction techniques, and support critical access points in our underserved rural communities. By creating a more reliable process around the replacement of these structures, both MaineDOT and municipal leaders will be positioned to better plan for needed safety improvements, as well as increase travel time reliability for residents, workers, and businesses to help address state and local workforce attraction and retention challenges.

By establishing consistent criteria developed in coordination with communities, construction experts, and resource agencies, and simultaneously keeping an eye on efficiency, innovation, and habitat protection, the replacement of these bridges also lends support to Maine's climate adaptability, accessibility and equity goals and policies.

Because Maine transports 90% of products via its road and bridge network, this investment is one of the limited ways to access rural populations and promote local level

economic efforts. Every improvement to these poor and critical-condition structures will help maintain essential connections and move goods, services, and people across safer and more resilient infrastructure.

Considering the above-average deterioration in transportation networks that comes with harsh winters and spring thaws and the resulting need for communities statewide to raise \$200 million annually to maintain local roads and bridges, federal infrastructure investments are vitally important to Maine's property taxpayers.

It is for these improved community vitality, public safety, and economic development reasons that MMA strongly urges federal support for MaineDOT's proposed Off-System Bridge Investment Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine M. Conlow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine Conlow
Executive Director
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