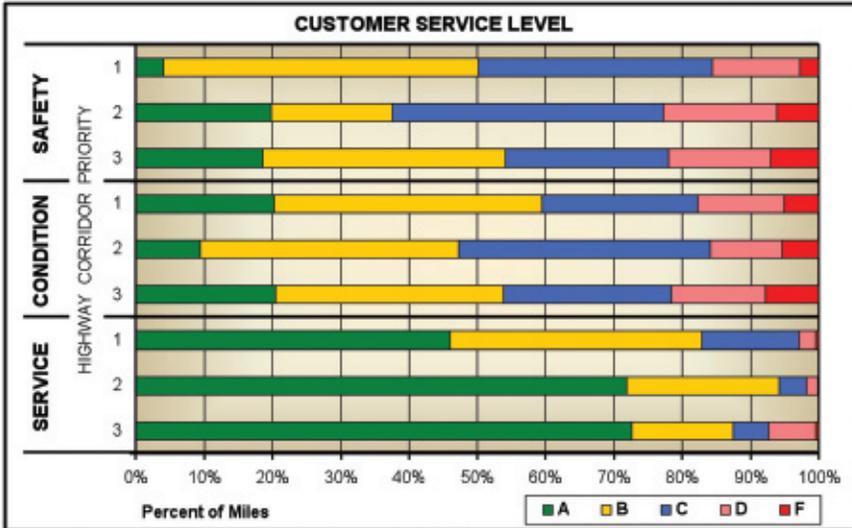




MaineDOT View

The Matrix: *Prioritizing like never before*

Highway Corridor Priority	CUSTOMER SERVICE LEVEL				
	Excellent A	Good B	Fair C	Poor D	Unacceptable F
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					



THE LAST MaineDOT columns in *Maine Trails* have examined two major initiatives underway at MaineDOT: Highway Corridor Priorities (HCP) and Customer Service Levels (CSL). Deputy Commissioner Bruce Van Note first outlined how MaineDOT has prioritized all public highways based on their relative contribution to Maine's economy and quality of life. Chief Engineer Kenneth Sweeney then described how technical performance measures regarding highway safety, condition and service have been translated into a simple, intuitive A through F grading scale.

The full power of these two metrics occurs when they are combined as shown in the table – of “The Matrix” – below. This structure allows MaineDOT to communicate the current state of the system with a customer focus; to provide a fair, structured framework to prioritize programs and projects; and to set goals that match priorities.

Another powerful aspect of this approach is that it transcends all of MaineDOT's business processes and organizational units. One set of HCP and CSL is being used for everything from Work Plan development to design standards and, ultimately, maintenance levels-of-service. It is the single “sheet of music” to which the entire department marches, and it is being integrated into our culture at a rapid pace. It is a major piece of the continuing transformation of MaineDOT into a customer-oriented agency whose decisions are understandable and trustworthy.

Two examples of the power of “The Matrix” are outlined below.

HIGHWAY CONDITION

At the time of this writing, CSLs are still being refined and “ground-truthed,” a process that will occur this year. Based on 2009 data, the breakdown of Priority 1 – 3 highways into their A – F CSLs is shown as follows:

As expected, Priority 1 highways are in the best condition (almost 60 percent are A plus B), and also rate well for safety (only 15.5 percent are D plus F). Priority 1 highways do not fare as well for service compared to Priority 2 and 3 highways, due primarily to congestion on interstate and arterial segments with high traffic volumes as compared to their capacity.

PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

Over the past 18 months, MaineDOT has been developing an improved project prioritization methodology, with HCP and CSL becoming an important backdrop in programming decisions. MaineDOT used HCP and CSL on a trial basis to develop the *FY2012/2013 Capital Work Plan* and intends further implementation for

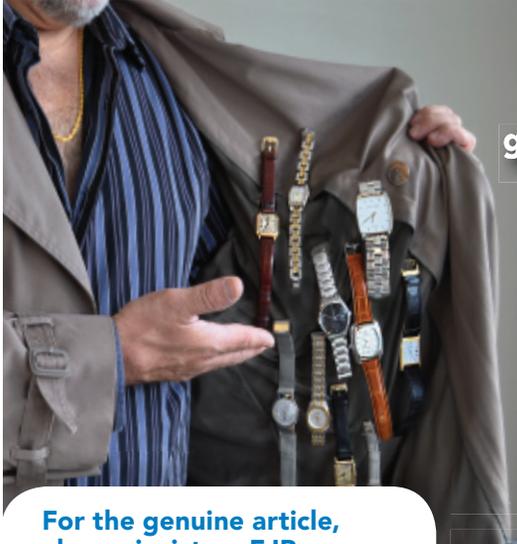
the FY 2014/2015 biennium. This process will enhance public accountability and transparency, as well as improve the work plan's ability to meet Maine's transportation needs under constrained resources.

A tool that compares current CSLs for a proposed project with average statewide CSLs for the same HCP is shown on page 54. This is an actual project, and the analysis below was factored into the decision to advance this project.

THE FUTURE

Regarding the highway system, "The Matrix" could be utilized to revise the capital transportation goals set by the Legislature (23 MRSA 73(6)) and estimate the cost to achieve them. Depending on the target CSLs by HCP selected, preliminary analysis indicates that a substantial reduction of the capital funding gap is achievable. This is made possible by changing the focus from national design standards and "what the road needs" to more pragmatic goals reflecting "what the customers need".

But it doesn't end there. MaineDOT expects to undertake a similar effort for all modes of transportation by developing asset priorities and CSLs for other hard assets such as airports, rail, and passenger transportation. Someday, direct comparison of CSLs across all modes will allow us to manage transportation assets in a more holistic way. ■



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