

MaineDOT Commissioner David Cole

July, 2010

A Message from MaineDOT Commissioner David Cole:

When Governor Baldacci appointed me Commissioner of Transportation in 2003, he made it clear that I must not only “think out of the box,” but also think *regionally*. I think of transportation as being one of three legs on a stool — the other legs being the economy and environment. In order to meet the needs of the economy and maintain quality communities, we must achieve the appropriate balance. It is therefore critical that transportation, environmental, and economic development objectives are developed in relation to one another. If only one or two of the legs reach the desired results, Maine’s “quality of place,” and hence the quality of life of its citizens, will suffer. All of these elements are developed at the regional level through Maine’s 11 Regional Councils.



More than at any time in the recent past, MaineDOT worked with the Regional Councils over the last five years to conduct regional transportation, land-use and economic development planning. The culmination of this work, which included significant public participation, led to development of 38 Corridors of Regional Economic Significance for Transportation (CRESTs), and transportation, land-use and economic objectives of each CREST. MaineDOT also asked the Regional Councils to identify and prioritize transportation-related policy issues, planning study needs, and the capital investments that would be required to meet their CREST’s objectives. The strategic investments have been incorporated into the needs highlighted in this plan.

The Governor also charged me to ensure that Maine’s transportation system as a whole is managed and operated as efficiently as possible. Before we receive new resources, we must demonstrate to him and the Legislature that we are maximizing the benefits from every taxpayer dollar we already receive. For example, MaineDOT continues to implement the Maintenance and Operations Unit Review. That initiative achieved a number of ongoing efficiencies including the elimination of over 230 full-time-equivalent vacant positions over the last three budgets and the retiring of 53 trucks from our heavy fleet by readjusting plow routes, thereby saving the costs of vehicle maintenance, fuel and replacement costs. MaineDOT is also working with its transportation partners on evaluating ways we can work together to achieve more system savings and efficiencies in the future. Those efficiencies can yield savings that can be invested in the system, and are particularly important as we face difficult economic times and shrinking funding levels, while our investment needs are growing dramatically.

We must also think out of the box and rely on innovation to meet some of our future transportation needs. We are working with our engineering community, the University of Maine, the Maine Composites Alliance, and others on research and development of innovations that can boost our local economy and lessen our reliance on materials like steel, which are becoming increasingly expensive due to global economic forces.

Our ability to maintain and improve the transportation system will depend on long-term funding, and *Connecting Maine*, our long-range statewide transportation plan, discusses the level of resources needed to maintain and deliver the transportation system that we need to grow our economy and preserve our quality of life. *Connecting Maine*, which includes the goals and objectives set forth in Maine statute (P.L., ch. 470, 123rd Legislature, Second Session), will guide our future decision-making to the year 2030. We will monitor Maine’s transportation system through a biennial *Report on Progress* to the Governor, the Legislature and the public to ensure MaineDOT continues to contribute through innovation to Maine’s economy, prosperity and quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cole". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Cole
Commissioner, MaineDOT