



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Janet T. Mills
GOVERNOR

Bruce A. Van Note
COMMISSIONER

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Dear MaineDOT Customers and Partners,

On behalf of the 1,600 dedicated team members at the Maine Department of Transportation, I am privileged to present the 2024 Edition of MaineDOT's three-year Work Plan for calendar years 2024, 2025, and 2026. This Work Plan contains 2,672 work items with a total value of \$4.74 billion. It includes capital projects and programs, maintenance and operations activities, planning initiatives, and administrative functions delivered by or coordinated through MaineDOT as well as funding and work by other transportation partners, including airports and transit agencies. Maine DOT's Work Plan is the primary way that we deliver on our mission *to support economic opportunity and quality of life by responsibly providing our customers with the safest and most reliable transportation system possible, given available resources.*

Transportation will always be a big job in Maine. Our state is large, yet our population is small. We are the least densely populated state east of the Mississippi River. Our natural features and weather – while varied and beautiful – present challenges from an infrastructure perspective, as we have recently been reminded. Maine has a vast, multimodal transportation system. Simply put, we have more transportation infrastructure per capita than most other states do.

For decades, transportation needs in Maine have far outpaced available resources. In response, MaineDOT became proficient operating in what we call “MacGyver mode” – holding things together in an improvised or inventive way and making use of whatever resources were at hand. While such dollar-stretching ingenuity will always be part of managing a transportation system like ours, it can't be the only approach if we want to move forward. In fact, we risk losing ground. Accordingly, the cover letter to the 2020 Edition of MaineDOT's Work Plan read, “*the fiscal reality is that we are now competently managing a slow decline of our transportation system until bipartisan funding solutions materialize.*” One year later, as a global pandemic dragged on, it read that “*the scope of the chronic shortfall is daunting,*” which meant hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Add a more-than-50-percent increase in construction costs to the mix, and the transportation outlook was challenging to say the least.

Today, I am pleased to report that due to bipartisan wisdom and compromise exhibited by policymakers at the federal and state levels, MaineDOT can continue a pivot from *making do* to *making real progress*. This Work Plan includes more bridge projects, more durable highway projects, more village and downtown projects, more transit and active transportation investments, more port improvements, and more adaptation to climate impacts.

This progress was made possible by recently enhanced transportation funding at both the federal and state levels.

At the federal level, the five-year Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of November 2021 has allowed MaineDOT to compete for special funding in the form of competitive discretionary grant programs and Congressionally Directed Spending. With thoughtful grant applications and the continued support of our Congressional delegation, federal transportation funding coming to Maine should more than double from pre-BIL levels.

At the state level, Governor Mills and lawmakers demonstrated bipartisan wisdom when they unanimously supported a state Highway Fund (HF) budget in June 2023 that took a significant step toward addressing the chronic underfunding of transportation. First, a long-standing small allocation of liquor proceeds for transportation was substantially increased and dedicated to the basic operating needs of all HF agencies. Second, this budget provided about half of the state capital funding needed for the current biennium by allocating 40 percent of automotives sales and use taxes to the HF. These expanded and new ongoing funding sources could not have come at a better time, given reduced fuel tax revenue projections, opportunities to use state funding to increase federal funding, and the need for state-funded capital projects.

Looking forward to future budget cycles, there will be more work to do given the annual capital funding needs, personnel and construction cost increases, continued reliance on one-time capital funding measures, and expectations for new transportation spending of all sorts. We will cross those bridges when we come to them. The fact remains that policymakers came together, recognized that transportation benefits every Maine person every day, and delivered a significant step forward for transportation.

Now, it's time for MaineDOT and our partners to ramp up and deliver. There will be challenges, including continuing workforce shortages and extreme weather events, but we don't have to act solely in "MacGyver mode" and tread water. We can now proactively find better solutions using strategic, long-term plans and build infrastructure that *improves* safety, economic prosperity, and quality of life in Maine. In sum, *we can make a real difference with this Work Plan*. That is both invigorating and uplifting.

Transportation will always be a big job in Maine. Challenges will always exist, but with continued bipartisan funding support, I am confident that MaineDOT – *the team that keeps Maine moving* – and our partners will deliver real progress for everyone who lives, works, or visits our great state.

Respectfully,



Bruce A. Van Note