

# Portland Press Herald

[Letter to the editor](#): Road, bridge fixes should become a Maine priority  
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We can't keep borrowing money to fund maintenance – we need to raise the gas tax.

Maine's highways and bridges are a mess. It's so bad that Harpswell Neck Fire Department ambulance drivers detour off Route 123 to Mountain Road and continue on Route 24 to Brunswick medical facilities instead of taking a direct path on Route 123.

More than half of Maine's roads are "in poor or mediocre condition," [according to](#) CNBC's 2018 look at "The 10 states with the worst infrastructure."

Maine ranked sixth in the percentage of structurally deficient bridges (followed by Louisiana and Puerto Rico) in [an April 1 report](#) by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association.

It doesn't stop there. Our infrastructure "Report Card" grade is C-minus, according to [an American Society of Civil Engineers analysis in 2016](#), its latest report. The worse grade? D for roads. (Dams, wastewater and transportation all received D-plus grades. The highest grades? Drinking water and parks, which each got a C.)

Our roads never fare well after a harsh winter, but they've been neglected for so long by budget shortfalls that we are jolted and jarred as we maneuver our vehicles around cavernous potholes and ragged patches-on-top-of-patches.

Gov. Mills and the Legislature are working to bring the state out of the previous administration's eight-year slide. Even though nearly \$200 million in general obligation bonds and federal funds were approved at the end of 2018, it will take years to catch up.

It's unconscionable to borrow annually to pay for regular maintenance. The highway account is mostly funded through the state's tax on gasoline, which hasn't been raised in nearly a decade. That means raising taxes at the pumps, but borrowing adds interest — so we would pay even more.

Improving our crumbling roads and bridges (as well as providing broadband to rural areas) **needs to be a priority**. Otherwise, be prepared for years of teeth-rattling driving on Maine's roads.

Connie Conner | *Harpswell*