

Maine passes road and bridge borrowing for 5th straight year

By [Michael Shepherd](#), BDN Staff · November 5, 2019 9:07 pm

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AUGUSTA, Maine — A \$105 million transportation **bond passed easily** in Maine's Tuesday election, marking the **fifth straight year** that road and bridge borrowing has passed as lawmakers consider overhauling the funding system.

Question 1 was sailing to passage, according to unofficial returns collected by the Bangor Daily News as of 9 p.m., when the yes side had 76.4 percent of votes to the no side's 23.6 percent with 31 percent of precincts reporting. It will be matched by \$137 million in federal funds.

Voters have never rejected this kind of borrowing package, which has been backed by lawmakers of both parties along with Democratic Gov. Janet Mills and Paul LePage, her Republican predecessor. The state [has counted on the annual funding for years](#).

On the state side, \$85 million will go to road and bridge construction and maintenance. The rest will go to other transportation modes, culverts and a renovation to a wharf and bulkhead at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland.

Maine has relied on borrowing as higher-efficiency vehicles make it harder to rely on the gas tax. The state's Highway Fund [had more money in 2006](#) than it did in 2017 as registration and other fees have accounted for a bigger share of the fund.

Even with the funding, the Maine Department of Transportation estimated it would face a \$140 million shortfall in road and bridge maintenance as [a state commission considers overhauling Maine's funding system](#) aiming to propose legislation by 2020.

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