

New transportation bond and continued budgetary shortfalls:

A \$61 million project will soon be added to MaineDOT's work plan for a connector that does not meet the original Purpose and Needs of the I-395/Route 9 Transportation Study. The original (and still valid per MaineDOT documentation) system linkage need for a direct limited-access facility from I-395 in Brewer to the east of Route 46 in Clifton was "punted" into the future without any mention how to satisfy that need twenty years from now. The selection of 2B-2 was based solely on MaineDOT's Sept2010 "hard look at Route 9", a "hard look" that has been revisited twice and subsequently changed when necessary to make their analysis fit the conversation at the time: from the original 20 year design of 2030 in Sept2010, to 2035 in Jan2012 for inclusion in the DEIS/FEIS and to 2040 in Mar2015 when it was pointed out to FHWA HDQ that their FEIS-stated 2035 design year analysis would not satisfy short-term and/or long-term system linkage needs for the project's complete 20 year design life.

[Maine's \\$100 million questions: Ballot borrowing proposals explained](#)

By Michael Shepherd, BDN Staff

Posted Oct. 22, 2015, at 6:21 a.m.

(Excerpt of original article)

The transportation bond would cut a shortfall in the maintenance of state infrastructure.

Republican Gov. Paul LePage has been criticized for [holding back other types of voter-approved bonds](#), but he [signed the bill](#) that put Question 3 on the ballot and his Department of Transportation is behind it.

This bond would dedicate \$68 million to construct, replace or rehabilitate bridges and roads and \$17 million to ports, harbors, marine transport, aviation, transit and rail, according to the LePage administration. It would be matched by \$121.5 million in federal and local funds.

Maine's roads and bridges have gotten poor marks in recent years, with the state chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers [giving them respective grades of D and C-](#) in 2013. The MaineDOT's [three-year work plan](#) has identified a \$119 million annual gap between funding of roads and bridges and what is needed to maintain that network.

Department spokeswoman Nina Fisher said that plan was developed assuming a bond issue that would allocate \$32 million to roads and bridges, so Question 3 would reduce the shortfall to \$83 million.

 **Department spokeswoman Nina Fisher said that plan was developed assuming a bond issue that would allocate \$32 million to roads and bridges, so Question 3 would reduce the shortfall to \$83 million.**

LePage administration flip-flops on transportation bonding:

Official testimony by Commissioner Bernhardt, during his own confirmation hearing, stating the administration's opposition to transportation bonding:

- In a Feb2011 Portland Press Herald article: During his hearing, [Bernhardt said the administration would oppose raising the gas tax and any new bonding initiatives to raise money](#). “We have to leave no stone unturned,” he said, responding to questions from Democrats on the Legislature’s Transportation Committee. “We need to be able to tell the people, the department is as efficient and cost-effective as it can be, I believe, before we can go out and ask for more...funding than we already receive.”
- In an August 2011 Portland Press Herald article: Bernhardt, a 26-year veteran of the MDOT, was chosen to become commissioner by Gov. Paul LePage in January. Before being confirmed by the Legislature, he told the Transportation Committee that [he would oppose any new bond initiatives](#).”

The following chart and description is from the [current three-year work plan](#) identified in this BDN article; note how **the \$119 million shortfall is described as including yet to be proposed and approved bonding**:

These goals are not overreaching but, rather, were developed to address just the basic needs of the existing system. For instance, the reader can infer from the fourth goal above that for about 4,200 miles, approximately half of all state-jurisdiction highway miles, the department currently has no plans for improvement other than Light Capital Paving to protect the road and provide customers with acceptable rideability. The following table provides an update of the status of the highway and bridge system as measured against the statutory goals. Again this year, and even with the funding assumptions in this *Work Plan*, (which include bonding that has yet to be proposed or approved), the department’s highway and bridge programs will experience a shortfall, now estimated at approximately \$119 million per year.

Core Highway and Bridge Programs CY 2015-2016-2017 <i>Work Plan</i> vs. Need (\$ Millions)				
Work Group	Average Annual \$ from 2015-2016-2017 <i>Work Plan</i>	Annual \$ Needed to Meet Basic Statutory Goals	Average Annual \$ Shortfall	Dollar % Shortfall*
Bridge Capital & Preservation	\$70	\$140	(\$70)	(50%)
Highway Reconstruction/Rehab	\$93	\$100	(\$7)	(7%)
Pavement Preservation	\$78	\$120	(\$42)	(35%)
Light Capital Paving	\$28	\$28	\$0	0%
Total - Core Programs	\$269	\$388	(\$119)	(31%)

In summary—the need for sustainable, predictable capital funding will continue to be the major transportation policy challenge facing the nation and our state for the foreseeable future.



“The following table provides an update of the status of the highway and bridge system as measured against the statutory goals. Again this year, and even with the funding assumptions in this Work Plan, (which include bonding that has yet to be proposed or approved), the department’s highway and bridge programs will experience a shortfall, now estimated at approximately \$119 million per year.”

Whether you want to believe the shortfall is \$119 per year as described in the current official [MaineDOT Work Plan](#) or believe the shortfall will be \$83 million as described by a [MaineDOT official promoting the transportation bond](#), why add another \$61 million shortfall to our failed transportation budget at a time when we cannot even afford to maintain the roads and bridges we already have?

The fact is Maine voters will approve this bond believing that it will solve all Maine’s transportation woes and it doesn’t—it doesn’t even come close.

What is needed is a “hard look” at our state’s transportation priorities and efficiencies in this state as Commissioner Bernhardt testified to in Feb2001. We must break this agency’s bypass mentality. Did we need the Caribou Bypass? Do we need the Presque Isle Bypass? Do we really need a North Brewer Bypass (2B-2)? In my opinion—the answer to all three bypass projects is NO.

I plan to vote against this bond because the MaineDOT has not demonstrated the ability to prioritize our state’s transportation needs. All new projects should take a back seat to the maintenance and repair of our current failed infrastructure.

When your current work plan incorporates \$70 million of unmet bridge needs per year—one should not add another \$61 million to the equation!!

Wouldn’t that \$61 million be better spent on the unmet transportation needs of the state of Maine?

—Larry Adams—