

To: Larry Adams;

Good afternoon Mr. Adams,

Your below email was sent to Commissioner Van Note by Representative O'Connell and Commissioner Van Note asked that I respond on his behalf.

As you point out in your email, in March of 2020 the Blue Ribbon Commission to Study and Recommend Funding Solutions for the State's Transportation System issued their final report. This report outlined that Maine's unmet transportation funding need is more than \$230 million. The finding in their report is consistent with previous estimates made by MaineDOT. It is true those numbers were identified prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying decrease in traffic volumes and Highway Fund revenues we have experienced. However, as stated in the Work Plan, there are a number of funding and revenue relief scenarios in discussion and possible, such as the late December federal Covid relief package that will see \$46M coming to Maine for transportation uses. With so much in flux, we have determined it is prudent to hold the current unmet need figure as is for now.

With that being said, MaineDOT's intention to move forward with the I-395 Connector project is based on the regional benefits that completion of this project will have to this area. There are several reasons for proceeding, the most important being the need to improve this connection along Maine's National Highway System. The I-395 connector, once built, will serve as a vital link for freight transportation between the interstate system in Bangor to areas reached by Route 9 and beyond.

Any delay or suspension of work will have serious financial implications. The State of Maine received a \$25 million federal discretionary INFRA grant for the I-395 connector project. The grant is specifically for this project, which requires that bids be solicited by the end of September 2021. We are currently on schedule to meet that timeframe, however, any suspension of the project would jeopardize that schedule and the \$25 million. MaineDOT has a reputation of delivering all projects with federal grants of this type and failure to do so could put future MaineDOT applications for federal discretionary funding at risk.

New highway alignments like this are expensive, but MaineDOT has found a way to fully fund the project and we stand by its purpose and need. This is the only project of this caliber that MaineDOT has undertaken in many years. Once completed, the I-395 Connector will have multiple positive impacts on this major freight corridor.

Thank you, please let me know any additional questions you might have.

Best,
Meghan

Meghan M. Russo
Manager of Legislative and Constituent Services
MaineDOT
16 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
207-624-3002



----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Larry Adams** <lgradams@roadrunner.com>

Date: Mon, Jan 25, 2021, 11:34 AM

Subject: New DOT Work Plan

To: Representative Kevin O'Connell <kevinocconnell1978@gmail.com>, Steve Bost <sbost@brewermaine.gov>

Good morning gentleman – hope you're doing good and you and your family remains healthy. My wife and I were one of the 1,000 people that got their first dose of vaccine this weekend at the EMMC.

The new [DOT work plan](#) came out today; been following these work plans and shortfalls since 2012 and it seems the DOT is now using a new tactic. They are using the same \$232 million per year shortfall as the DOT presented to the Blue Ribbon Commission in October 2019.

Not only is this \$232 million per year unmet transportation need shortfall outdated by over a year – it is pre-pandemic by several months.

DOT's explanation on page xxi is precious and the Blue Ribbon Commission date of March 2020, that they cite on page xx, is misleading. That shortfall was given to the Commission in a briefing by the DOT on October 2019 – not the other way around.

This raises two questions: does the DOT really not know how bad the shortfall is or do they know how bad it is and are keeping that a secret so they can continue unchecked? Don't you wish you could run your household like that?

The connector appears to be fully funded at \$90.3 million for 2021 (I'm guessing the \$10.7 million for the Wilson Street bridge is not included in that figure). This would put them on track for a bid this fall as previously announced.

So – once again – the DOT has no money and they continue to go ahead with this boondoggle...

Amazing!!

Larry