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## Report: Maine roads going downhill

### Major funding shortfall to blame for lag in improving roads, highways, bridges

Maine faces a \$3.3 billion gap over the next 10 years in needed funding to allow the state to significantly improve road and bridge conditions, enhance economic development opportunities, improve mobility and enhance traffic safety, found a new report from TRIP, a nonprofit national transportation research group.

The report, "Falling Behind: The Condition and Funding of Maine's Roads, Highways & Bridges," found that, at current funding levels, numerous needed highway projects will not proceed; pavement conditions on the state's major roads will worsen; and the miles of Maine highways restricted to lighter vehicles will increase.

These projects include the completion of the northeast portion of the bypass on state Rte. 25 in Gorham, the widening of a 2-mile section of U.S. 202 from Augusta to Manchester and the modernization of a 26-mile section of Rte. 161 from Caribou to Cross Lake Township.

The report also found that, at current funding levels, the share of deficient roads in Maine is expected to increase from 18% in need of significant repairs currently to 24% in 2014.

The share of the state's major roads in poor and mediocre condition is increasing, the report also found. About a quarter of Maine's major roads are rated in poor or mediocre condition, with 13% in poor condition and 12% in mediocre condition. In 2005, 20% of the state's major roads were rated in poor or mediocre condition.

"As Maine looks to bounce back from a serious economic downturn, we will need to increase our investment in our highway system, which is the backbone of the state economy," said Timothy Ouellette, chief financial officer of CPM Constructors.

"Moving forward with projects to improve our roads, highways and bridges will boost Maine's economy by creating construction-related jobs in the short term and by providing numerous jobs in the long term as a result of economic opportunities created by improved regional mobility."

The report also found that the approval earlier this year of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act gave a helpful boost to the state's transportation system, providing about \$131 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$13 million for public transit improvements in Maine.

This funding can serve as a down payment on needed improvements, but it is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to enhance its surface transportation system, TRIP said.

Finally, the report found that 14% of Maine's bridges are rated structurally deficient, and 19% of the state's bridges are rated functionally obsolete.

Source: *TRIP*