



# New TRIP Report Identifies Maine’s 50 Most Needed Transportation Projects For Economic Growth; Projects Would Improve, Modernize And Expand Road And Transit Systems To Support And Grow The State’s Economy

Published on December 15, 2011 in [Daily Dirt](#) and [New England Construction](#).



In order to adequately support Maine’s existing industries and provide for additional economic growth, the state will need to make numerous improvements to its surface transportation system. This is according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation research organization.

TRIP’s report, “[The Top 50 Surface Transportation Projects to Support Economic Growth and Quality of Life in Maine](#),” identifies and ranks the projects needed to provide Maine with a transportation system that can support the increased movement of people, goods and resources throughout the state. The most needed surface transportation improvements in Maine include 35 projects to build, expand or modernize highways or bridges, five projects to improve rail or public transportation, five maritime or port projects, three multi-modal projects, one aviation project and one project to improve the state’s trail system. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities throughout the state by increasing mobility and freight movement, easing congestion, and making Maine an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

According to the TRIP report, the most needed projects for the state’s economic growth are as follows:

Rank	Project
1	New controlled access highway between I-395 and Route 9 in Penobscot County
2	Rehabilitating the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge in York County
3	Construction of a new East-West route from near Calais to near Coburn
4	Reconstruction and rehabilitation of Route 3 in Hancock County
5	Development of a cargo port at Sears Island
6	Replacement of the Martins Point Bridge in Portland
7	Rehabilitating the West Approach Bridge in Bath
8	Construction of an East-West connector in Gorham
9	Replacing the Kennebec River Bridge between Richmond and Dresden
10	Constructin of an intermodal facility and Acadia National Park Welcome Center in Trenton

A full list of needed projects, descriptions and their impact on economic development can be found in the [appendix](#) of the report.

“Among the most significant challenges going forward will be to change a culture of complacency as it relates to lives lost on our roadways. AAA envisions a transportation system with a comprehensive approach to safety which includes solutions that lead to safer drivers driving safer vehicles on

safer roads,” said Pat Moody, public affairs manager at AAA Northern New England.

Enhancing critical segments of Maine’s surface transportation system will boost the state’s economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth, improving the quality of life for the state’s residents and visitors.

Sustaining Maine’s long-term economic growth and maintaining the state’s high quality of life will require increased investment in expanding the capacity of the state’s surface transportation system, which will enhance business productivity and support short- and long-term job creation in the state.

“Maine can’t get where it wants to go – in both a literal and an economic sense – without an efficient transportation system,” said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. “It is critical that Maine’s transportation system is adequately funded at the local, state and federal level. Congress can take an important first step by passing adequately funded federal surface transportation legislation, which has been delayed far too long. Thousands of jobs and the state’s economic well-being are riding on it.”

TRIP ranked each transportation project based on a rating system that considered the following: short-term economic benefits, including job creation; the level of improvement in the condition of the transportation facility, including safety improvements; the degree of improvement in access and mobility; and the long-term improvement provided in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.

## Executive Summary

Maine's transportation system has played a significant role in the state's development, providing mobility and access for residents, visitors, businesses and industry. The state's roads, highways, rails, ports and public transit systems remain the backbone of the Pine Tree State's economy. Maine's transportation system also provides for a high quality of life and makes the state a desirable place to live and visit. The condition and quality of its transportation system will play a critical role in Maine's ability to continue to recover from the recession, capitalize on its economic advantages and meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

To achieve sustainable economic growth, Maine must proceed with numerous projects to improve key roads, bridges, ports and public transit systems. Enhancing critical segments of Maine's transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long-term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life for the state's residents and visitors by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

In this report, TRIP examines recent transportation and economic trends in Maine and provides information on the transportation projects in the state that are most needed to support economic growth. Sources of data include the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.

**TRIP has identified and ranked the 50 transportation projects that are most needed to support Maine's economic growth. These projects are located throughout the state.**

- The most needed transportation improvements in Maine include 35 projects to build, expand or modernize highways or bridges, five projects to improve rail or public transportation, five maritime or port projects, three multi-modal projects, one aviation project and one project to improve the state's trail system. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities throughout the state by increasing mobility and freight movement, easing congestion, and making Maine an attractive place to live, visit and do business.
- TRIP ranked each transportation project based on a rating system that considered the following: short-term economic benefits, including job creation; the level of improvement in the condition of the transportation facility, including safety improvements; the degree of improvement in access and mobility; and the long-term improvement provided in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.
- Maine's 10 most needed transportation projects to support economic development in the state as determined by TRIP follow. Additional details on these and the other projects that make up the 50 most needed projects in Maine for economic recovery and growth are included in the report's [Appendix](#).

**1. New Controlled Access Highway between I-395 and Route 9 in Penobscot County** This \$70-100 million project will facilitate East-West traffic and alleviate congestion, serving as the primary route for moving people and goods throughout the entire state. It will also reduce travel time and fuel costs for Maine shippers, citizens and visitors.

**2. Rehabilitating the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge in York County** This \$105-115 million project would rehabilitate one of three critical bridges connecting Maine and New Hampshire at Kittery-Portsmouth. The Sarah Mildred Long Bridge also provides the only rail crossing in the vicinity of the Portsmouth Naval Ship Yard in Kittery. Without these improvements, the bridge will only be open to bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The bridge improvements will maintain businesses on both sides of the river that rely on passerby traffic, in addition to strengthening efforts by both communities to improve their downtown areas and attract more visitors.

**3. Construction of New East-West Route.** Stretching from near Calais to near Coburn, this new route would expand Maine's economic activity and accelerate recession recovery. It would link Halifax, Nova Scotia to mid-US markets via Maine. This major construction project, unrivaled since Interstate construction in Maine, would provide long-term opportunities for expanded markets and more efficient delivery of goods. The state legislature will consider a bill to fund an initial study for the road in the 2012 session. Cost of the study is \$300,000, while construction would likely top \$1 billion.

**4. Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Route 3 in Hancock County** Stretching from near Sand Point Road to Route 233, this \$5-10 million project would improve 4.3 miles of roadway, which is currently inadequate given the vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic it carries. Route 3 serves as the gateway to Acadia National Park and is one of the most important highways in Maine. The project would improve safety, potentially leverage private investments and enhance the visitor experience in Acadia.

**5. Development of a Cargo Port at Sears Island** This \$225-250 million project would improve international freight connections to the North American freight infrastructure, making it critical for freight movement, both locally and internationally. It would reduce the costs of local freight movement by piggybacking onto international freight movements and would also add construction jobs. A portion of the island, which is owned by the State of Maine, has been set aside to develop the port.

**6. Replacement of the Martins Point Bridge in Portland** This \$30-35 million project would replace the Martins Point Bridge between Portland and Falmouth. This bridge carries coastal US Route 1, which carries significant local and tourist

traffic. Completion of this project would add construction jobs, facilitate regional tourism and alleviate congestion on the Portland peninsula.

**7. Rehabilitating the West Approach Bridge in Bath** This \$15 million project will rehabilitate the bridge, which is reaching the end of its useful life. Route 1 in the mid-coast is one of Maine's most important highways for both commerce and tourism. It is also adjacent to Bath Iron Works, one of Maine's largest employers

**8. East-West Facility in Gorham** A planning study is currently underway to design a project to relieve congestion and improve safety west of I-95 in Cumberland County (the fastest growing area of Maine). The project would create jobs during the construction phase and allow for improved access to I-95, which will position the area for increased economic development and efficiencies in transporting goods and people.

**9. Replacing the Kennebec River Bridge between Richmond and Dresden** This \$20-30 million project would replace the bridge, which is rapidly approaching the end of its useful life and can no longer be rehabilitated. This bridge provides a significant regional crossing of the Kennebec River. Closing or posting the bridge would result in traveler delays in excess of 45 minutes each way. Completion of the project would create or sustain construction jobs while improving safety and connectivity

**10. Intermodal Facility and Acadia National Park Welcome Center in Trenton** This \$12 million project at the Gateway Center was designed to improve safety and to reduce traffic congestion and the demand for parking at Acadia National Park. The facility will be constructed on Route 3, the only highway leading to Acadia National Park, and will encourage the use of an alternative mode both at the site, and for future travel, to and from the park. Following completion, the Town of Trenton will become a destination as a site to learn more about Acadia National Park and the region. The bus system will also create improved transportation options for Trenton residents.

**Transportation projects that improve the efficiency, condition or safety of a highway or transit route provide significant economic benefits by reducing transportation delays and costs associated with a deficient transportation system. Some benefits of transportation improvements include the following.**

- Improved business competitiveness due to reduced production and distribution costs as a result of increased travel speeds and fewer mobility barriers.
- Improvements in household welfare resulting from better access to higher-paying jobs, a wider selection of competitively priced consumer goods, additional housing and healthcare options, and improved mobility for residents without access to private vehicles.
- Gains in local, regional and state economies due to improved regional economic competitiveness, which stimulates population and job growth.
- Increased leisure/tourism and business travel resulting from the enhanced condition and reliability of a region's transportation system.
- A reduction in economic losses from vehicle crashes, traffic congestion and vehicle maintenance costs associated with driving on deficient roads.
- The creation of both short-term and long-term jobs.
- Transportation projects that expand roadway or transit capacity produce significant economic benefits by reducing congestion and improving access, thus speeding the flow of people and goods while reducing fuel consumption.
- Transportation projects that maintain and preserve existing transportation infrastructure also provide significant economic benefits by improving travel speeds, capacity, load-carry abilities and safety, and reducing operating costs for people and businesses. Such projects also extend the service life of a road, bridge or transit vehicle or facility, which saves money by either postponing or eliminating the need for more expensive future repairs.
- [Site Selection magazine's 2010 survey](#) of corporate real estate executives found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and state and local taxes.
- A [2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration](#) found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,500 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.
- The [Federal Highway Administration estimates](#) that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of \$5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs, and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.

**While Maine's diverse economy has been impacted by the recession, the state's transportation system will need to accommodate projected future growth.**

- From 1990 to 2010, Maine's population increased by seven percent, from approximately 1.2 million to approximately 1.3 million. Maine's population is expected to increase to 1.4 million by 2030.
- From 1990 to 2009, annual vehicle-miles-of-travel (VMT) in the state increased by 22 percent, from approximately 11.9 billion VMT to 14.5 billion VMT. Based on travel and population trends, TRIP estimates that vehicle travel in Maine will increase another 25 percent by 2030, reaching approximately 18.1 billion VMT.
- Maine's unemployment rate rose from 4.9 percent in October 2007 to 7.3 percent in October 2011. The national unemployment rate was 9.0 percent in October 2011.
- In 2011, Maine is projected to experience a 1.8 percent increase in real gross state product (GSP), which is factored for price changes, less than the forecast national average of 2.1 percent.
- In 2012, Maine is projected to have a 3.3 percent rate of economic growth, measured in real GSP, which is factored for price changes. This rate of growth is lower than the forecast 3.4 percent increase in national real GSP in 2012.
- Maine has benefited from a diverse economy, which includes significant employment in the following sectors: agriculture, forest products, manufacturing, commercial fishing, bio-technology, naval ship building and construction, tourism and outdoor recreation.

**Maine's economy is served by an extensive surface transportation system that has some deficiencies and experiences severe congestion in key areas. Roads carry the majority of freight shipped in the state.**

- Maine's system of 22,839 miles of roads and 2,393 bridges, maintained by local, state and federal governments, carry 14.5 billion vehicle miles of travel annually.
- Twenty-seven percent of Maine's major roads are deficient, with 10 percent rated in poor condition and an additional 17 percent rated mediocre in 2008. An additional 17 percent of the state's major roads were rated in fair condition and 55 percent were rated in good condition.
- Fifteen percent of Maine's bridges were rated structurally deficient in 2010. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.
- Every year, approximately \$30.9 billion in goods are shipped annually from sites in Maine and another \$41.1 billion in goods are shipped annually to sites in Maine, mostly by truck.
- In 2010, 17 percent of Maine's bridges were rated as functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.
- Eighty-one percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Maine are carried by trucks and another 10 percent are carried by parcel, U.S. Postal Service or courier services, which use trucks for part of the deliveries.

*Sources of data for this report include the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.*