



Group identifies 50 Maine road, bridge priorities

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River Road in Westbrook and Windham, Route 302 in Bridgton and Fryeburg, and the Pine Point Crossing Bridge in Scarborough were among the biggest transportation challenges in Maine outlined in a report released Thursday by a national research group.

The 24-page report released by TRIP, a transportation nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., identified 50 of Maine's most pressing road and bridge projects and suggested that addressing many or all would provide an economic boost.

Twelve of the 50 priorities are major roads or highways that need significant rebuilding; 19 are major bridges that have significant deficiencies; 18 are sections of road throughout the state that need improvements to address safety or access concerns; and one is an improvement to a maritime facility – specifically, increasing capacity at the International Marine Terminal in Portland.

Frank Moretti, director of policy research for TRIP, said transportation infrastructure is the state's backbone.

"But that backbone is increasingly bending under the weight of inadequate funding," he said Thursday morning at an event in Portland.

The top 50 transportation challenges were identified using a scoring formula that factored in traffic volume, the importance of the road or bridge to regional or interstate traffic patterns, the importance of the road or bridge to the regional economy and the cost to repair the deficiency.

The top-rated priority in Maine, according to TRIP, was Route 3 in Bar Harbor, one of the most heavily traveled roads in the summer months because it is the gateway to Acadia National Park. Other high-priority projects include replacement of the Bar Mills Bridge at the Buxton-Hollis town line and replacement of the Durham Bridge between Durham and Lisbon.

Also on the list in Cumberland County were: improvements to the Woodfords Corner intersection in Portland; improvements to on- and off-ramps from Forest Avenue to Interstate 295; replacement of the



One high-priority project is the Bar Mills Bridge carrying Route 4A over the Saco River at the Buxton-Hollis line.

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North Elm Bridge in Yarmouth; and replacement of the Bridge Street Bridge in Westbrook.

Dana Connors, president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and former state transportation commissioner, said the challenges outlined in the report should be viewed as economic opportunities. An economy thrives when there is safe movement of people and efficient movement of products, he said.

"It costs a lot to build and maintain a good transportation system, but it costs a lot more not to," Connors said.

The TRIP list was generated in part by contacting the Maine Department of Transportation. Many of the projects already are on the MDOT's work plan and are scheduled to be completed within the next two years. Connors said a yes vote on next week's transportation bond question, which would authorize Maine to borrow \$100 million for transportation-related projects, would help complete those projects quickly.

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