

# THE BRIDGTON NEWS

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## Route 302 project priority ranking 3rd of 50

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A study released Oct. 31 ranked the Route 302 reconstruction project from West Bridgton to Fryeburg third among Maine's top 50 transportation challenges.

The study was conducted for the state Department of Transportation by **TRIP, a national transportation research group**, which used traffic volume, repair costs and the importance of the road or bridge to the regional economy in its rankings.

The report noted that Maine's population has grown eight percent from 1990 to 2012, from 1.2 million to about 1.3 million. During that same span of years, vehicle travel in the state has increased 20 percent, and is projected to increase another 15 percent by 2030, the report said. The report noted that Maine's system of 22,874 miles of roads and 2,408 bridges carries 14.2 billion vehicle miles of travel annually.

Because of its lack of proper shoulders and tendency toward "crowning" at the center of the roadway, the stretch of Route 302 from Stack Em Inn Road in Bridgton extending 5.19-miles into Fryeburg is seen to have a serious deficiency that the state has estimated can be corrected for \$7.4 million — not cheap, but manageable within the state's current transportation budget. At the same time, the benefit of such improvements in terms of safety and boosting the regional economy is seen as significant.

The Route 302 project is one of many that made the list that is already on MDOT's work plan, and is scheduled to be completed within the next two years. A final public hearing on the project was held earlier this fall. State officials note that the yes vote Tuesday on the \$100 bond issue for transportation-related projects will help them complete these projects more quickly.

In the notes explaining its rankings, the TRIP report has this to say about the project: "Route 302 is the major highway from Portland to Fryeburg and Conway, N.H. It is a major route for commerce, supplying raw products and finished goods to the market, as well as a significant commuter route for the labor force in the Greater Portland labor market. This route also serves the tourist-rich area of Conway, N. H. There are no practicable alternative routes without adding substantial time and cost."

The Route 302 project was the only one of the 50 listed by the TRIP report in northern Cumberland County. It was listed as one of 18 sections of the state's transportation system needing improvements to address multiple challenges. Also included were 19 major bridges, including one in Oxford, that have significant deficiencies and need to be rebuilt or reconstructed; a recommendation to increase capacity at the International Marine Terminal in Portland, improvement to a maritime facility, and 12 sections of major roads or highways that need significant repairs or reconstruction.

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