

# New Report On NH Transportation Infrastructure Needs Fuels Sen. Watters' Bill

By [PAULA TRACY, InDepthNH.org](#) | Monday, March 30, 2026



Paula Tracy photo  
Sen. David Watters, D-Dover, is pictured Thursday at last week's session.

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To keep New Hampshire driving its economy forward, its 16,269 miles of local and state roads and 2,549 bridges need to be improved and maintained.

But there is a lack of available funding on the horizon and the state could fall behind without future investment, according to a national research study released Monday.

A virtual press conference was held to outline the report by the nonprofit research group TRIP. The data gave an opportunity for state Sen. David Watters, D-Dover, to advocate for his bill which would ask out-of-state drivers to pay toll increases to support the future work needed. He was a speaker on the webinar.

Senate Bill

27 [https://gc.nh.gov/bill\\_status/billinfo.aspx?id=1312&inflect=2](https://gc.nh.gov/bill_status/billinfo.aspx?id=1312&inflect=2) passed the Senate and is on to the House where the Public Works and Highways Committee will hold a hearing Tuesday at 10 a.m. at 1 Granite Place in Concord, the temporary House legislative office building.

This would be a \$1 increase for those who have out-of-state plates going through the tolls at Hooksett, Hampton and Bedford, a 75-cent hike for those taking Hampton's Exit 2 and on the Spaulding Turnpike at Rochester, and a 50-cent hike for those taking the exit off I-93 to Hooksett.

An analysis in the bill shows that this would increase toll revenue by \$53.3 million in fiscal year 2027 and go up each year to generate \$81.4 million a year in 2036.

There would be no increase for all New Hampshire license plates.

"This is what other states do to us," Watters said. "Fair is fair...we have a path forward to increase the toll rates," he said, and for the 15 percent of New Hampshire vehicles that don't have an EZ Pass, the bill would offer transponders for free under the bill, Watters said.

Watters said Republican Gov. Kelly Ayotte (who has said she would

not support toll increases in general) has made positive comments toward amended changes in the bill.

"...We just can't drop further behind," Watters said. "The money would be limited to highway use."

The full report, "Keeping NH Mobile" is here: [https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/TRIP\\_Keeping\\_New\\_Hampshire\\_Mobile\\_Report\\_March\\_2026.pdf](https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/TRIP_Keeping_New_Hampshire_Mobile_Report_March_2026.pdf)

It is a 24-page analysis.

TRIP is a non-profit, non-partisan group whose work is paid for by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, safety organizations and others who advocate for safe and efficient roads.

Rocky Moretti, director of policy and research for TRIP, said that 34 percent of major state roads and locally owned roads across New Hampshire are in poor to mediocre condition, compared to 40 percent nationally.

Eight percent of bridges (192 of the 2,549 bridges) are in poor to structurally deficient condition while 51 percent are in good condition.

The roads and bridges are paid for based on a variety of funding sources from local taxes, toll revenue to the gas tax and federal funds.

With more vehicles having higher efficiency and more electric cars, fewer gas tax dollars are being collected while cost for projects due to inflation have skyrocketed since 2022 to increase by 52 percent, the report reads. The state has also not had an increase in toll rates in 19 years.

Fatalities have increased on state roads and are higher by 42 percent from one decade ago and road conditions have played a contributing factor in one third of all cases, the report says, while freight transportation is growing and congestion on roads are said to drive up costs by \$600 million a year in lost wages and wasted fuel.

"The quality of life in New Hampshire and the pace of the state's economic growth are directly tied to the condition, efficiency, safety and resilience of its transportation system," the TRIP report says.

The state Department of Transportation has an ambitious new 10-year highway plan but it is short \$400 million and 22 projects from the past 10-year plan have not been completed. There are estimates that 50 or more projects will not be able to be completed in the next 10 years.

The state is also hampered by the fact that the future federal funding levels look bleak and the \$200 million loaned to NH in 2015 to do work on I-93 had annual repayments of \$2.5 million until now but have gone up to \$23.4 million a year in 2026 and that will be maintained that level through 2034, the report says.

One way to deal with roads in bad shape is to limit the tonnage of the vehicle weight but there can be long term economic impacts if the roads and bridges are limited by tonnage, Moretti said.

By 2050, freight traffic is expected to increase by 50 percent, the report reads.

Watters called it a "terrific report" that helps outline the need for passage of his bill.

"It clearly outlines the issues, 'It's about safety and our economy as well,'" Watters said.