

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

April 2008 Newsletter

Review of New Hampshire's 10-Year Highway Plan

Back in 2007, in February, Governor John Lynch asked former Department of Transportation Commissioner Charles O'Leary to come back to the DOT and be interim Commissioner for 10 months. The Governor wanted to get a solid financial picture of the State Highway Trust Fund that was highlighted as a problem in a previous state audit. In addition, Commissioner O'Leary had the task of making the 10-year highway plan fiscally responsible.

Over the course of the year, "a plan was developed by the Governor's

Advisory Committee on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT), working with the DOT using input from regional planning commissions and from 33 public hearings throughout the state of New Hampshire." (Press Release, January 15th, 2008 "Gov. Lynch Submits 10-Year Transportation Plan") On November 8th, GACIT approved by a vote of 5 to 1 the new 10-year highway plan. The financial result was that the \$4.1 billion price tag in the previous plan for road and bridge construction and improvement was cut in half in the revised

plan. The Governor did put back \$114 million to return some of the projects that had been removed.

The new highway plan prioritizes repairing Red Listed bridges in need of critical repair and preserving the state's existing infrastructure. "It would allow the state to move forward with critical repairs and improvements to 89 Red Listed bridges, work on the portions of Interstate-93 with the greatest safety and congestion problems, repair the Memorial Bridge in

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A SAFER ROAD
TO TOMORROW

Safety · Quality of Life · Economic Development

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Safer Road Partners

Associated General Contractors of New Hampshire

The Associated General Contractors is a non-profit trade organization of general contractors, subcontractors, and industry professionals dedicated to improving the professional standards of the construction industry.

NH Good Roads Association

New Hampshire Good Roads Association is a non-profit trade organization established to encourage the development of a safe, efficient and environmentally sound highway transportation system in New Hampshire.

Safety and Health Council of Northern New England

The Council's mission is to educate and promote safety & health policies, practices and procedures that prevent and mitigate human economic losses arising from unintended causes.

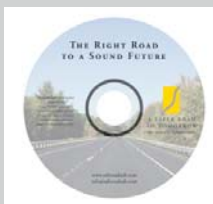
New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police

The Association secures a closer official and personal relationship among commanding officers of all New Hampshire, to encourage a cordial and cooperative relationship among all police officials.

New Hampshire Lodging and Restaurant Association

The Association is a statewide, non-partisan trade organization. Our mission is to promote, protect and educate the food service and lodging industries of the state and to ensure positive business growth for our members.

Safer Roads Releases DVDs



A Safer Road to Tomorrow coalition released its 10-minute DVD, "The Right Road to a Sound Future," a transportation campaign to raise public and legislative awareness about the poor condition of New Hampshire's roads and bridges.

Safer Roads commissioned TRIAD, Inc., from Ohio to produce the DVD. Their business is advertising and public relations, specifically in the area of transportation. Their clients come from such far-reaching states as Ohio, Alabama, and Arizona.

The process of putting the DVD together was a collaboration. Both Safer Roads and TRIAD contributed data and information, TRIAD put together a script, Safer Roads edited and revised it. Then a TRIAD cameraman came to New Hampshire to shoot footage of the state's worst roads and bridges, many of which were featured in the Safer Roads 2008 calendar, including Route 4 in Mascoma; Memorial Bridge in Portsmouth; Rollercoaster Road, Laconia; the Spaulding Turnpike overpass in Rochester; Interstate 93 and the State Capitol in Concord. The project began in October of 2007, and the DVDs were distributed during the week of January 21st, of 2008.

The distribution of these DVDs began on the same day that the Public Works Committee held its meeting on the 6¢ gas tax increase. It was the culmination of many hours of work preparing over 900 DVDs, letters, and envelopes for mailing. Since then, those copies have been mailed to the Governor and Executive Council, Congressional delegates, all House and Senate members, the Regional Planning Commissions, the

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Gas Tax Voted Inexpedient to Legislate by Public Works and Highway Committee and House



On January 17th, 2008, House Bill 1445 was introduced to the Public Works and

Highway Committee by Representative Frederick King. The bill would have increased the gas tax by 6¢, from 18¢ per gallon to 24¢. Of the total increase of \$50,543,878, eighty eight percent, or \$44 million, would have gone to a separate account in the highway fund called the Highway and Bridge Betterment Account. The remaining 12 percent, \$6,065,265, would have been divided among New Hampshire municipalities.

A Safer Road to Tomorrow was proactive in educating the public and legislature about the poor condition of New Hampshire's roads and bridges. In January, Safer Roads sent calendars to over 800 recipients to inform them about

the nature and scope of deficiencies in New Hampshire's highways. Later, in January and February, over 900 persons received Safer Roads' DVD "The Right Road to a Sound Future," which further documents the deficiencies in New Hampshire's infrastructure. On January 17th, Gary Abbott of AGC of NH testified before the Public Works and Highway Committee in support of the necessary funding HB 1445 would provide, and distributed the Safer Roads DVD to all the committee members. During that public session, no one spoke in opposition to the gas tax. It was supported by New Hampshire Good Roads, the Municipal Association, Aggregate Manufacturers Association, in addition to Associated General Contractors.

The Public Works and Highways Committee met in executive session on January 24th to discuss the fate of HB 1445. John Cloutier stated during the session that he was certain that if there were a silent vote taken, the bill would pass unanimously. David Campbell explained his concerns with the tax. "The committee

fully realizes the near catastrophic state of New Hampshire's bridges and roads, which are funded almost exclusively by dwindling federal funds and the state gas tax. The majority of the committee believes that we should not consider asking the public to support raising the gas tax until (1) the diversions from the Department of Transportation to other agencies are carefully examined, (2) House Bill 1493 continues a House/Senate study committee of the Highway Trust Fund to determine the exact funding needs and funding options, including our bonding capacity, (3) we look at innovative funding mechanisms such as public/private partnerships, and (4) we get input from the new Department of Transportation Commissioner."

For these reasons, the Public Works and Highway Committee deemed this bill inexpedient to legislate by a 9-4 vote. On February 6th, the full House also voted the bill inexpedient to legislate.

House Bill 1618 Eases Highway Fund Diversions



The state of New Hampshire receives income for the Highway Fund through various means to maintain and build roads and bridges. These means include tolls on state

roads, the gas tax, and motor vehicle fees and fines. In the past 5 years, from 2003 to 2007, a significant amount has been received from these highway funding sources, ranging from a low of \$215,000,000 to a high of \$273,000,000. These receipts, however, do not go entirely to their intended purpose.

Diversions are moneys taken from funds earmarked for maintenance and construction of roads and bridges. These funds are diverted into a General Fund from which other agencies draw: Aid to Cities and Towns, Department of Safety, District and Municipal Courts, and Superior Courts. In 2003, transfers

to the General Fund reduced the Highway Fund by 36 percent; in 2004 by 39 percent; in 2005 by 43 percent; in 2006 by 43 percent; and in 2007 by 38 percent. The total dollar amount of these diversions has increased every year, while fewer roads and bridges are being repaired and constructed every year.

The 2008 House Bill 1618-FN-A, according to Representative Howie Lund, is intended to "restore a long-standing practice of remitting all motor vehicle fines to the Highway Fund, less the cost of collection." Representative William Hatch states, "The state constitution was amended in 1938 to specify that a large number of highway-related revenues would go to a new dedicated Highway Fund for the purpose of construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of the highways. In 1983, the state created a unified court system that was financed by the fines and fees generated in those courts and by the motor vehicle fines collected by the state police net of costs of the motor vehicle division. All these went to the General Fund. HB 1618 was introduced to make clear a constitutional split between the Highway and

General Funds." The legislation would allocate an increasing percentage of gross appropriations to the Department of Transportation (a minimum of 68.5 percent in the first biennium of 2009), and a decreasing percentage to the Department of Safety (a maximum of 30 percent). The percentage to the DOT would increase in the following two biennia and the percentage to the DOS would decrease.

With any increase in the Highway Fund, there will most likely be an increase in future infrastructure improvement. House Bill 1618 has passed the full House twice with amendments from both the Ways and Means Committee and the Finance Committee. Now the legislation will go to the full Senate for their consideration.



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Portsmouth, and widen sections of the Spaulding Turnpike and the first portion of the Conway Bypass. Approximately 55 percent of the plan is focused on preservation.” (Governor Lynch’s letter to Speaker Terie Norelli and Senator Sylvia Larsen) Governor Lynch says, “This Plan closely adheres to the estimated funding available for transportation projects from 2009-2018.”

Granted the new plan cuts many projects; however, about half the money remaining after the Red Listed bridges are repaired will be used for restoring roads, with a focus on I-93 in southern New Hampshire. There are three main issues that this portion of the plan addresses. The first is safety. “Since I-93 was built in the early 1960s, traffic volumes have increased over 600 percent, about 115,000 vehicles per day in Salem. The increase in traffic leads to an increase in accidents.” The second area of concern is capacity and congestion. “Currently, traffic frequently backs up between the state line and Manchester, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. Traffic volumes are projected to continue to increase, resulting in more congestion which will further compromise safety.” The last concern is the condition of the infrastructure. “I-93 is over 40 years old with bridges, roadway infrastructure, and interchanges in need of major rehabilitation and modernization. Fourteen of the forty-three bridges within the Salem to Manchester corridor are on the state’s Red List.” (Excerpts in this paragraph from NHDOT On the Move, “FAQ about Rebuilding I-93,” Spring 2007 edition)

At this point, the Governor’s 10-year transportation plan is being proposed to the 2008 House of Representatives as House Bill 1646. The bill states that the plan is predicated on the report submitted by the Governor to the Legislature on January 15th, 2008, and is intended to serve as a guideline for transportation projects in the state for the next decade. The plan closely adheres to the estimated funding available for transportation projects for 2009-2018, returning New Hampshire to a realistic 10-year plan.

Oregon’s Mileage Fee Concept

Oregon’s highway fund problem in 2001 was very much like New Hampshire’s now: **“86 percent of all revenue came from gas taxes; the gas tax had not kept pace with inflation; voters had opposed increases in the gas tax; fuel efficient automobiles result in less gas tax paid.”** (Office of Innovative Partnerships and Alternative Funding Road User fee Pilot Program) The Oregon legislature passed House Bill 3946 in 2001 to create a task force that would develop a revenue-raising alternative to the gas tax – a mileage fee. “The new system would directly reflect the burden each user places on the road system.” (Oregon Department of Transportation Final Report, November 2007) The main criteria were that the system be affordable to implement, enforceable, and easy on the consumer.



On May 14th, 2004, researchers unveiled two wireless systems to determine vehicle miles traveled. One system would calculate “how many miles a vehicle travels between refueling, automatically read the data, compute a fee, and add this fee to the cost of the fuel while a vehicle is at the fuel pump. The Global Positioning System (GPS) technology would distinguish whether the miles are driven in or out of Oregon.” (Daily Journal of Commerce, 5/14/04, Jessica Swanson) The suggested mileage tax is one and a quarter cent per mile, which would eventually replace the state’s 24¢ per gallon tax. “When the car pulls into a gas station, its mileage data is uploaded by a short-range radio frequency to a wireless reader. It sends the numbers to the station’s computer, which asks a central computer for information on the car’s last reported mileage.

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Department of Safety Commissioner, the DOT Assistant Commissioner, road agents and public works directors of cities and towns, the Municipal Association, the Motor Transport Association, contributors, the Safer Roads partners, and the media. The DVD will soon be available for viewing and downloading on the Safer Roads website (<http://www.saferoadsnh.com/>). All these 900 recipients of the Safer Roads DVD will see a powerful verbal and visual documentation that makes clear how poor NH’s roads and bridges really are. It also makes clear that they must be repaired and that there is a feasible financial solution:

New Hampshire is known for its great quality of life, the wonderful environment it offers to live and raise a family, and its appeal to those ready to retire. However, we need more adequate planning and managing of one of our most important resources – our transportation infrastructure. Safety, efficiency, and smart transportation planning are integral to motorists of all kinds, shapes and sizes and to the success of our state.



Safer Roads’ intent is to motivate each legislator, each municipal worker, each individual, and the media who get this DVD to help educate the public about the condition of NH’s roads and bridges by sharing it with their network of business peers, associates, clients, and with the public. Hopefully, as a result, those who view the DVD will be inspired to call on lawmakers to ensure that thoughtful investments are made to improve the safety and capacity of highways, roads, and bridges in NH and put them on “The Right Road to a Sound Future.”



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“When that data arrives, the gas station computer does the math. It calculates new taxable miles, computes how much tax is owed, and relays that information back to the pump. After that, the gas station subtracts the gas tax from the per-gallon price displayed on the pump. The consumer fills the tank, then pays for the fuel plus the mileage tax.” (Seattle Times Newspaper, 7/5/04, Eric Pryne). Cars that don’t have the odometer and GPS devices will simply continue to pay the gas tax.

The field test began in April of 2006 and ran for about a year. The electronic devices were not manufactured into the vehicles. Point of sales systems could not be changed. So “the field test retrofitted temporary, prototype on-vehicle devices into vehicles privately owned by volunteer participants, employed lab-generated data transmission technology, and jury-rigged modifications to existing fueling station systems.” (Oregon Department of Transportation Final Report, November, 2007)

The outcome? The necessary critical administrative elements of the concept went like clockwork. The result of the study: Concept Proven.

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