

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

April 2010 Newsletter

New Hampshire's Proposed Ten Year Plan, Not Fully Funded

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT) has introduced the 2011-2020 Ten Year State Transportation Improvement Plan (Ten Year Plan). The 2011-2020 plan maintains similarities to the 2009-2018 plan, which eliminated \$1.7 billion of projects to produce a financially constrained plan. The Ten Year Plan carries a deficit of \$673.69 million, which may mean that some projects included in the Ten Year Plan may not be completed within the 10 year time frame. An amendment was introduced during a hearing on March 16 clarifying parts of the Ten Year Plan. It explains in further detail the funding issues, priority of projects, and studies that should be conducted. Also aiding in the clarification of the plan is the chart on page 3, which was at the request of the House Public Works Committee. The chart illustrates the allocations within the plan, the revenue amounts, and the surplus/deficit by funding source.



The Highway Funded portion of the plan is the largest, with projects totaling to \$2.6 billion. It also incurs the largest deficit with \$450 million unfunded with inflation factored in. The amendment recognizes the deficit, "There is a significant shortfall in the highway fund that will not allow the completion of all projects contained in the plan. This will, in the absence of additional revenues, require the delay or elimination of many of the projects in this and future Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plans."



One of the top priority projects included in the Highway Funded portion is the widening of I-93. The entire I-93 project consists of widening the highway from Salem to Manchester, however only a piece of the project is included in the Ten Year Plan. Widening the road north of Exit 3 in Windham, which is estimated to cost \$230 million, has been excluded from the plan due to funding constraints. However, the widening and reconstruction from the state line to Exit 3, as well as replacing the red-listed bridges at Exit 5 are included, and will be funded utilizing federal and state funds, as well as GARVEE Bonds. The amendment explains in further detail the I-93 priority, stating that while there are not enough funds to fully complete the widening project, it is still a top priority of the State. Therefore, "should alternative or additional funding become available, the widening of the entire I-93 project from Salem to Manchester is hereby authorized."

The second largest deficit comes from the rail program. Included in the proposed plan, are Capitol Corridor projects. The rail program only has revenue of \$5.20 million, leaving over \$200 million unfunded. Capitol Corridor projects are only included in the event that the State receives anticipated Federal Rail Authority grants or other funding. The amendment further clarifies the rail funds, by explaining that legislative approval is needed before construction or reconstruction can begin on a passenger rail system. However, if federal money is received to conduct studies or for planning purposes, no legislative approval is needed.



The amendment also outlines the turnpike system and its proposed projects in more detail. One project included in the Ten Year Plan is installing open road tolling at the Bedford Tolls.



A SAFER ROAD
TO TOMORROW

Safety · Quality of Life · Economic Development

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Safer Road Partners

Associated General Contractors of NH

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

NH Good Roads Association

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

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.

NH Association of Chiefs of Police

The Association secures a closer relationship among commanding officers all over the state, to encourage a cooperative relationship among all police officials.

NH Lodging & Restaurant Association

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

Business & Industry Association

The Association is NH's leading business trade association. It advocates for business interests with state and federal legislators and regulators.

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NH Prepares for New England's First Open Road Tolling

The I-95 tolls in Hampton, NH will become the site of New England's first open road tolling system come Summer 2010. In early March, construction began to remove the center lanes of the toll plaza, as well as the related section of the overhead canopy. Removing the center lanes and overhead canopy will allow for the installation of the new overhead gantry system that will support the open road tolling. The target start date for open road tolling is June 15, 2010.

"This cutting edge electronic tolling technology will make a huge difference for motorists and air quality. The infamous five-mile backups at the Hampton Tolls will be a thing of the past," said Department of Transportation Commissioner George Campbell.

Open Road Tolling will allow travelers with E-ZPass transponders to pass through the tolls at highway speeds. Travelers with out the transponder will still be able to pay cash through attended lanes that will be in protected lanes away from the open road tolling lanes.

Town Takes Road Maintenance Into Own Hands



Bedford, NH is not waiting for state and federal officials to improve their road maintenance budget. Instead, they are making use of a law enacted in 1997 that allows towns to increase registration fees to pay for road maintenance. The \$5 increase was proposed during a February town budget meeting, and was approved by voters on March 3.

The fee increase will begin in April, and is estimated to generate \$85,000 in 2010 and \$115,000 each year after that. The revenue generated from the increase will go towards the town's annual \$1 million road maintenance budget. The fee increase, like a user fee, will charge those who use the roads for the maintenance and repair of them.

On July 1, 1997 a law took effect that was passed by New Hampshire's General Court that allows the legislative bodies of a municipality to vote to collect an additional fee for the purpose of supporting a municipal and transportation improvement fund. The maximum amount a municipality can charge is \$5. The revenue collected allows a community to fund, wholly or in part, improvements in the local or regional transportation system including roads, bridges, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, parking and intermodal facilities, and public transportation.

Replacement E-ZPass Transponder Will Cost You

When your E-ZPass transponder's battery life runs out, it will cost you for a replacement. A bill was introduced by Representative Graham that would replace the transponders for free before they become inoperable, but through a majority voice vote, the full House voted that bill inexpedient to legislate on March 3. If this bill had passed, it would have cost the Department of Transportation (DOT) almost \$1.5 million in the first year, and nearly \$7.4 million the second year.



In the future, the Department of Transportation (DOT) will be developing a system for exchanging the transponders. The state will share a portion of the replacement expense through disposal and postage costs of new transponders. More information on the E-ZPass system can be found at www.ezpassnh.com.

Total Highway Deaths Declining

The number of highway deaths is on the slide as states around the country report record lows. The U.S. Department of Transportation reported on March 11, 2010, that the number of traffic fatalities is at its lowest level since 1954. This is the 15th consecutive quarter that number has declined.

New Hampshire joins the pack, as it records its lowest number of highway deaths in 47 years. The number is down 21% from 2008, which saw 138 highway fatalities. In 2009, 109 highway deaths were reported. The last time the number of highway deaths were so low was in 1961, where it was at 100. The chart below shows the number of total highway deaths in New Hampshire over the last 5 years.

Total Highway Fatalities in New Hampshire

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Highway Fatalities	171	166	127	129	138	109

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) cites the many traffic safety awareness campaigns that were launched in 2009 were a direct factor in lowering the number of deaths. Also factors in the low numbers are safer roads, safer vehicles, and less driving.

NHTSA collects crash data from all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico to produce annual traffic fatality reports. The first quarter 2009 report is available now, and the full report is expected by summer 2010. To view the preliminary report, visit: www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811291.PDF.

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However, the Airport Access Road that is currently being built will divert an estimated \$6,000,000 away from the Bedford tolls. The amendment proposes that the DOT Commissioner study the best location to replace the Bedford tolls to collect the most revenue.

Other areas the amendment clarifies include:

- Mass transit: forms of mass transit other than passenger rail must be integrated into the study of a passenger rail system to ensure cohesiveness
- Study of Franconia Notch Parkway: the DOT Commissioner will study the feasibility to widening I-93 to four lanes between the towns of Lincoln and Franconia
- Federal funding: many of the plans areas and projects rely on federal funding. The amounts of federal funding are differing and uncertain, and any reduction could result in the delay or elimination of a project.
- Turnpike shortfall: to address the deficit in the turnpike system, a system wide toll increase would be needed.

During the hearing, Associated General Contractors of NH's Gary Abbott testified in support of the Ten Year Plan and the proposed amendment. The clarification provided between the amendment and the chart provided by DOT will go a long way towards educating the public, cities and towns, and contractors on what projects are probable and which are unfeasible. Paul Worsowicz, a lobbyist for the Aggregate Industries group, also spoke in support of the plan and the increased clarification. He also thanked the DOT for their effort in putting together the plan. More information on the Ten Year Draft Plan can be found on DOT's website at www.nh.gov/dot.

draft

draft

**2011-2020 Ten Year Plan
Total Dollars by Program by Fiscal Year
GACIT Submission to the Governor**

FY	Highway Funded							Rail ³	FTA ⁴	Airport ⁴	Turnpike Expansion ⁵	Turnpike Renewal & Replacement	TYP FY Total ⁶	% of Total Program
	FHWA ¹	Betterment ²	State Aid Bridge	State Aid Highway	Other	Inflation	Subtotal							
2011	223.79	36.29	6.79	3.45	6.67	3.66	280.66	51.80	18.53	21.04	53.68	5.99	428.03	11.8%
2012	250.24	35.00	7.98	2.51	20.40	9.39	325.52	51.40	20.33	29.13	112.42	10.10	539.52	14.9%
2013	226.32	37.72	7.57	2.54	15.05	10.44	299.63	59.50	20.14	37.32	55.56	9.80	471.51	13.0%
2014	174.71	34.92	2.65	2.54	1.29	6.00	222.09	59.10	19.00	28.81	44.28	10.50	377.79	10.4%
2015	218.77	34.92	8.27	2.54	10.04	18.09	292.62	0.80	19.32	34.56	47.54	10.80	387.56	10.7%
2016	212.22	34.92	3.94	2.54	10.04	18.87	282.52	0.40	19.49	22.01	35.00	11.60	352.16	9.7%
2017	173.89	34.92	6.98	2.54	0.04	13.00	231.37	0.40	19.58	16.31	8.92	11.50	275.07	7.6%
2018	164.24	34.92	8.51	2.54	0.04	14.78	225.03	0.40	21.23	30.59	0.00	11.85	274.32	7.6%
2019	170.36	34.92	8.00	2.54	0.04	17.76	233.62	0.40	19.52	21.13	0.00	12.00	268.91	7.4%
2020	148.66	34.92	8.00	2.54	0.04	12.47	206.63	0.40	19.53	18.86	0.00	12.00	244.95	6.8%
Total	1,963.19	353.45	68.68	26.26	63.65	124.46	2,599.69	224.60	196.66	259.77	357.41	106.14	3,619.81	100.0%
% of Total Program	54.2%	9.8%	1.9%	0.7%	1.8%			6.2%	5.4%	7.2%	9.9%	2.9%	100.0%	
Revenue⁷	1,728.66	251.26	105.40	63.65				5.20	196.66	259.77	229.41	106.14	2,946.15	
Surplus/Deficit	(358.99)	(102.19)	10.46	0.00				(219.40)	-	-	(128.00)	-	(673.66)	

*figures are in Millions of dollars

- 1 I-93 priority improvements included based on \$195 M GARVEE Bonds and associated Debt Service
- 1-93 capacity improvements (widening north of Exit 3) are not included due to funding constraint
- 2 Betterment program maintained at current budget level of additional funding
- 3 Capital Corridor projects included pending anticipated FRA grants or other funding
- 4 Self-funded programs, projects limited to available funds
- 5 HB391 authorized projects included pending future toll increase
- 6 TYP FY Total does not include inflation
- 7 Revenue based on existing base budget conditions

Multiple Highway Fund Revenue Sources See Declines



Highway funding is continuing to fall in two of its revenue sources. New Hampshire's Highway Trust Fund is funded through several sources including the gas tax and registration fees. Last year, a \$30 surcharge was added onto vehicle registration fees to help fund the system, but the surcharge may not have the desired outcome. Earl Sweeney, Assistant Commissioner for the Department of Safety, has reported that they are seeing declining registration fees.

This is coupled with declining revenue from the gas tax. In 2009, gas tax revenue from July through February was at \$99,446,716, and in 2010 for the same period it is \$1 million less at \$98,427,328. Gas tax revenue had been increasing steadily through 2005, until it dropped in 2006 and began to decrease. With less revenue coming in, this means the State will have fewer funds to pay for projects and maintenance of New Hampshire's highways.



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91% Admit to Distracted Driving

Distracted driving has become commonplace for 9 out of 10 drivers on the road. A survey conducted by FindLaw.com found that 91% of drivers admit to engaging in distracting and potentially dangerous behavior while driving. According to the survey, the following are the most common activities drivers engage in:

Drinking coffee/other beverages	81%
Eating	76%
Talking on a cell phone	66%
Sending or receiving text messages	29%
Applying makeup	11%
Sending/receiving email	8%
Reading a book/newspaper	7%
Surfing the internet	5%

Many states have begun enacting laws that prohibit activities that can be distracting to drivers. New Hampshire passed a law last year which prohibits texting while driving. That law became effective in January of this year, and violators can be fined up to \$100.

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