

A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

July 2010 Newsletter

Press Conference Highlights Road Conditions and Funding Problems

On June 21, the A Safer Road to Tomorrow coalition participated in a press conference with The Road Information Program (TRIP) about the current state of New Hampshire's roads and bridges. Safer Road Partner and the Business and Industry Association's Senior Vice President, Dave Juvet, led the conference. Carolyn Bonifas, the Associate Director of Research and Communication at TRIP, represented the organization and presented the report, which she authored, "Moving New Hampshire Forward: The Condition and Funding of New Hampshire's Roads, Highways & Bridges" at the conference. Safer Roads partners including, David Cahill of NH Chiefs of Police, Chris Bean of NH Good Roads, and Gary Abbott of the Associated General Contractors of NH attended; as did Executive Councilor Ray Burton, Representatives Candace Bouchard and David Campbell, Department of Transportation Commissioner George Campbell, American Council of Engineering Companies, Peter McNamara of the NH Automotive Dealers Association, Tim Roache of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission, Paul Saunders of the Municipal Association, Larry Major of Pike Industries, and the Brain Injury Association. Reporters from WMUR, the UnionLeader, the Nashua Telegraph, the Concord Monitor, and New Hampshire Public Radio covered the event.



Ms. Bonifas began the conference by giving an overview of the current state of New Hampshire's roadways. She emphasized the important link between adequate roads and a strong economy, and the immense need for federal funding in the form of a long term transportation bill. Through her presentation she spoke of the numerous crucial projects that need to be completed to improve NH's mobility, but are unable to be because of lack of funding. Poor road conditions cost drivers too, about \$259 annual in extra vehicle operating costs. She stated that without more funding, dozens of projects will hit a road block, which will create greater safety concerns.

Each attendee was given a copy of the full report, which mirrored Ms. Bonifas' address. The report touches on the many factors influencing transportation and the many factors affected by transportation. Population growth is among those influencing factors. Increasing population has lead to a rise in vehicle miles travelled, putting more strain on the roads and bridges. This is also coupled with an extension of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation of Equity Act- A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Federal funding levels have not been increased, and state funding from the gas tax is decreasing. This combination of factors adds more stress to the system, and delays much needed projects. "As New Hampshire's roads and highways continue to age, they will reach a point where routine paving and maintenance will not be adequate to keep pavement surfaces in good condition, and costly reconstruction of the roadway and its underlying surfaces will become necessary." In fact, 1/3 of NH's roads are in poor or mediocre condition, and the amount of structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges equals 1/3 of the total bridges as well.



Adequate highways and bridges are important to continued economic development in the state. "As the economy expands, creating more jobs and increasing consumer expectation, the demand for consumer and business products grows." This creates an influx of trucks on the roadways from manufacturers striving to meet the demand. To stay competitive, New Hampshire needs roads and bridges that can sustain the impact of increased travel, and efficiently move goods across the state.



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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Booklet Emphasis Need for Investment in Transportation

“Campaign Choice: Where Do You Stand on Transportation?” is the A Safer Road to Tomorrow coalition’s newest informational booklet, and it is now available. The aim is to look at past reasons given for not increasing funding, and provide responses that show investing in our transportation system is key to our economic health. A nation’s transportation system is how citizens move from one place to the next, and its continued maintenance is needed to maintain a competitive edge and meet modern mobility demands. This booklet shows that by investing in our highways and bridges, we invest in our economy. More money for projects creates jobs, bringing more disposable income into the marketplace, stimulating the entire chain.



The booklet also touches on the funding situation, showing that states cannot rely solely on federal money to support their transportation system. Through charts and facts, the booklet shows that each level of government must fund and continually invest in their share of the system in order for it to function efficiently. Past Safer Roads booklets have shown the need for increased funding. This booklet begins with the fact that the need is already known, and delves further into the argument saying now is the time to take action.

The booklet is available on the A Safer Road to Tomorrow website, www.saferoadsnh.com, under “Publications” and then under “Other Media.”

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Maintaining the roadways is necessary for economic health, allowing the travel industry to flourish and goods to travel from manufacturers to consumers. It is also important to protect the safety of the state’s citizens. From 2004 to 2008 an average of 146 people were killed in motor vehicle accidents. These fatalities can be attributed to driving behavior, weather conditions, but also road geometrics. Roadway geometrics and features cause an estimated one-third of fatal accidents. “Where appropriate, roadway improvements such as adding turn lanes, removing or shielding obstacles, adding or improving medians, widening lanes, widening and paving shoulders, improving intersection layout, and providing better road markings and upgrading/installing traffic signals could reduce the severity and occurrences of serious traffic crashes.”

Following the presentation of the report, Executive Councilor Ray Burton spoke. He told the media that the roads in New Hampshire need attention, especially the secondary ones. He said that our Congressional Delegates, and those running for office, need to take a good look at the roads, and take action to improve them. NH’s infrastructure has problems that need to be addressed now, and they cannot wait. Fellow Legislators, Representatives Candace Bouchard and David Campbell, also shared a few words on the importance of transportation, adequate roads, and their HB 2 Commission which is studying alternative sources of revenue for the Highway Trust Fund. They echoed Ms. Bonifas’ statement that the condition of the roads and bridges in a state directly relate to the economic health of that state. Representative Bouchard stated that the state needs a predictable, reliable, and sustainable source of federal funding. Representative Campbell also spoke briefly about the recently passed Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and its evolution towards a more financially constrained plan.



DOT Commissioner George Campbell expanded on the Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan, and said that the federal partnership is key in planning and prioritizing the projects. He also touched on the federal funding problems, saying that currently the federal government is funding at \$285 billion, but is only collecting approximately half of that in revenue. He mentioned the benefit from the stimulus money, but said that the federal government needs to develop a funding plan for the states.

As the conference ended, one important theme resonated throughout each speech: the importance of federal funding. Road and bridge improvements are necessary to remain strong economically and address safety concerns, but they cannot be successfully completed without funding. A reauthorization would provide much funding for projects that will alleviate congestions and promote greater mobility throughout the state. Federal funding accounts for 24% of the revenue used annually by the state’s Department of Transportation, and it’s because of these federal funds that New Hampshire is able to complete numerous projects and rehabilitative work. The full [TRIP report](#) is available on the A Safer Road to Tomorrow’s website at www.saferoadsnh.com. TRIP is a non profit organization based in Washington, D.C. that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues.



Commission Presents Highway Funding Scenarios

The Department of Safety (DOS), as part of the House Bill 2 Commission to Study Future Sustainable Revenue Sources for Funding Improvements to State and Municipal Highways and Bridges, formed three funding scenarios for the Highway Trust Fund. The Department presented the scenarios during the April 12 meeting of the Commission. The scenarios use the Department of Transportation's (DOT) "Highway Fund Financial Model" and show what the road toll or registration fees will need to be increased or decreased by order to prevent the projected deficit in the year 2020. Currently, the Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan will end with a deficit of over \$600 million by the year 2020 if funding levels remain the same.

All scenarios use a "Base Case Scenario," which assumes an annual operating cost increase of 3%. The "Base Case Scenario" also assumes a 1.8% increase in the number of registered vehicles in the years 2014-2020 due to economic recovery, population growth, and a higher demand for vehicles. Prior to 2014, revenue from road tolls and registration fees have been adjusted to reflect the current economic climate. The advent of a greater number of more fuel efficient cars in the near future, and the Obama Administration's announcement on improving fuel economy, has not been taken into consideration.

Scenario	Year	Road Toll (\$)	Registration Fees (\$)	Ending Balance (FY 2020)
Scenario 1: Registration Fee Surcharge Sunsets in July 2011 - The deficit is made up entirely by the road toll. - The DOS uses total gallons consumed estimates.	<i>Current</i>	0.18	30	\$18,261,000
	<i>FY 12- FY 13</i>	0.32	0	
	<i>FY 14-FY 15</i>	0.36	0	
	<i>FY 17-FY 18</i>	0.35	0	
	<i>FY 19-FY 20</i>	0.34	0	
Scenario 2: Registration Fee Surcharge Sunset Repealed - Road toll remains constant at 0.18. - Registration surcharge remains in effect.	<i>Current</i>	0.18	30	\$43,726,000
	<i>FY 12- FY 13</i>	0.18	60	
	<i>FY 14-FY 15</i>	0.18	90	
	<i>FY 17-FY 18</i>	0.18	120	
	<i>FY 19-FY 20</i>	0.18	90	
Scenario 3: Combination of Road Toll Increases & Registration Fee Surcharge Decreases - Registration surcharge sunset is repealed, and surcharge is systematically decreased throughout the plan. - The road toll is increased.	<i>Current</i>	0.18	30	\$30,015,000
	<i>FY 12- FY 13</i>	0.275	20	
	<i>FY 14-FY 15</i>	0.335	10	
	<i>FY 17-FY 18</i>	0.37	10	
	<i>FY 19-FY 20</i>	0.32	10	

With the presentation of the scenarios, the DOS noted that there are an infinite number of combinations of increases and decreases to the road toll and the registration fee increase to fill the deficit. They also noted that there are a number of factors that cannot be effectively estimated, and they stressed that the scenarios should be looked at educationally, and not as definitive solutions or projections.

In closing, the Department suggested that the Legislature may want to look into charging more fuel efficient cars, such as hybrids, a higher registration fee in order to recoup the loss of revenue from less gasoline sales. While this would mean that hybrid cars are paying for their share of the road, it could also lead to a disincentive for buying more fuel efficient vehicles. A second option the Department suggests is to set a road toll at a percentage of the wholesale price of gasoline and diesel fuel. The tax rate would then correspond with the increases in price.

Bad Roads and Bridges in Your Community?



Nowhere in the state is immune from the deteriorating bridge and road conditions. Safer Roads is preparing for its 2011 Calendar, and is looking for feedback as to where the bad roads and bridges are in your area. Roads rated poor may show signs of deterioration, including rutting, cracks and potholes. Maybe you drive over a bridge that is posted or has netting underneath? Please email Andrea at info@saferoadsnh.com with the name of the road or bridge and its location.



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Transportation Luncheon Looks at Funding Issues

On April 22, the Business and Industry Association (BIA) held their annual transportation luncheon. "Transportation 2010: A Bridge to Tomorrow," was presented in partnership with AARP, Motor Transport Association, New Hampshire Municipal Association, and A Safer Road to Tomorrow. Several panelists were on hand to present their point of view and ideas. The panelists included: Michael Pillsbury, Deputy Commissioner, NH DOT; Representative Candace Bouchard, Chair, New Hampshire House Public Works Committee; Mark Brewer, Director, Manchester-Boston Regional Airport; Kathy Hersh, Vice Chair, NH Rail Transit Authority; and Janet Kavinsky, Director of Infrastructure, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Highways, rail, and aviation were the three main themes of the transportation discussion. Michael Pillsbury and Representative Candace Bouchard took the lead on highway issues. Mr. Pillsbury spoke about open road tolling and reducing congestion. Representative Bouchard spoke briefly about the House Bill 2 Commission that is looking at alternative revenue sources. Each touched on the Ten Year Plan and its lack of funding as well. Air travel and commuter rail were next on the agenda. Mark Brewer began with aviation, and explained that the air travel industry is still dealing the effects of high fuel prices. He said that the best way to keep costs low is for New Hampshire residents to choose the Manchester airport over the Boston airport. Kathy Hersh spoke about high speed rail and commuter rail. Ms. Hersh stated that the current focus is on intercity high-speed rail from Boston to Concord and commuter rail from Lowell to Manchester. Janet Kavinsky closed the event with Federal funding and its lack of adequate revenue. She said that raising the diesel and gas tax still appears too be the only short-term funding option until long-term options are available.

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