

# A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

October 2008 Newsletter

## Congress Passes Highway Trust Fund Fix Just in Time



The Federal Highway Administration announced in September a 30-40% cut in disbursements, which would create a \$52 million shortfall for New Hampshire. To avoid this, the Senate amended HR 6532 to become effective upon passage, and ratified it by voice vote.

On July 18, HR 6532 was introduced to the Congressional House as a measure to prevent the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) shortfall in FY 2009. The bill would credit the HTF with the \$8 billion in highway user fee revenue that was trans-

ferred to the General Fund in 1998 as part of TEA-21. Enacted, the bill would prevent all states from suffering a 34 percent reduction in federal highway funding in FY 2009. The House voted on July 23rd to approve HR 6532 by a vote of 387-37.

On Friday September 5th, the Federal Highway Administration announced a 30 to 40 percent cut in disbursements from the Highway Trust Fund in response to a decrease in the revenue that the Federal government receives. As a result of this cut and without HR 6532, New Hampshire

would lose \$52 million in the highway fund in fiscal year 2009. Concerned construction firms in the industry quickly contacted their Congressional Senators Gregg and Sununu to urge them to enact HR 6532 and to call on the President to sign the bill as soon as possible.

On Wednesday evening September 10th, the Senate passed the bill by voice vote. The bill was amended to allow the transfer of funds from the general fund to the Highway Fund immediately rather than on October 1st because the HTF does not have a sufficient bal-

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A SAFER ROAD  
TO TOMORROW

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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.

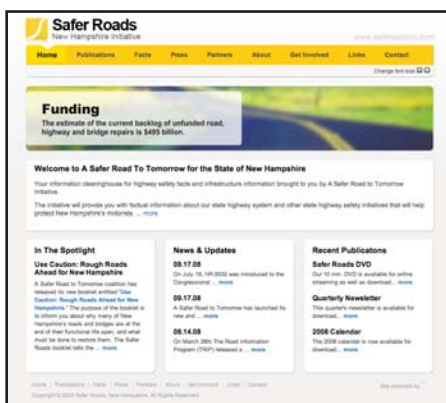
### New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police

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.

## A Safer Road to Tomorrow Launches New Website!



A Safer Road to Tomorrow has launched its new and improved website. Navigation from the home page is now even more user friendly than ever. The new site, which was refurbished over the summer, boasts a new publications page that now lists all Safer Roads' publications and makes the downloading of quarterly newsletters, calendars, and the DVD much easier. In addition, the Safer Roads DVD can now be played inside a player. The site features animated graphics and new information

sections which include up-to-date statistics, pages with news links, an elected officials section, and a "contact us" page with a new form for individuals to use.

Safer Roads' mission is to inform New Hampshire residents about the nature and scope of deficiencies in the state's highways and bridges, and their immediate and long-term impact on public safety, the economy, and our quality of life. If people

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## NH DOT Turnpike System Top Priorities

On June 18, 2008, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation distributed its Turnpike System Top Priority Capital Model to the Public Works and Highway Committee. This model runs through FY 2018. According to the cumulative Total Annual Surplus, in 2018, the Capital account will be \$20.8 million in the black after turnpike project expenses.

Here is a list of projects and costs: The Spaulding Turnpike expansion in Rochester from Exit 11 to Exit 16 will cost \$156.6 million; the Souhegan River Bridge, \$12.6 million; construction of a Park 'n' Ride facility in Dover near Exit 9 of Spaulding Turnpike, \$500,000; Black Brook, rehabilitation of the bridge on I-293 between Exits 6 and 7 in Manchester will cost \$3.8 million; replacement of Route 3 bridge over Everett Turnpike in Bedford, \$13 million; improvements to the access road from the Everett Turnpike to Manchester Airport and surrounding areas, \$1.1 million; feasibility study of Taylor River Dam and the bridge carrying I-93 over the Taylor River in Hampton, \$10.5 million; Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) in Seabrook, \$800,000; consultants (HNTB, C&B), \$900,000; Newington/Dover Professional Engineer (PE) and Right of Way (ROW) only, \$23 million; Newington/Dover Little Bay Bridge and Exit 3 reconstruction and widening, \$149.9 million; Manchester Mill Yard bridges, \$38.6 million; Bow/Concord I-93 transportation planning study, \$11.3 million. The total of all these projects is \$422.4 million. For more information on some of these projects, go to <http://www.nh.gov/dot/projects/index.htm>.

## The Reason Foundation's 17th Annual Report on the Performance of State Highway Systems

The Reason Foundation at the end of July, released its 17th Annual Report on the Performance of State Highway Systems. The Report organizes 2006 data for each state into 12 categories, and analyzes it. The data includes various costs, pavement and bridge conditions, congestion, and fatalities. The report then rank orders each state's performance in each category.

In overall ranking, New Jersey has taken last place since 2000. The other four states that make up the bottom five in 2006 are Alaska, (49th); Rhode Island (48th); Hawaii (47th); and New Hampshire, which came in at 46th. The study also mentions that just six states have over half of the poor rural interstate mileage in the country. The states are Alaska, Michigan, New York, California, New Hampshire, and Louisiana.

Other interesting facts that come from the report are "New Hampshire's state-owned highway at 4011 miles is the 7th smallest in the nation, and the state's overall performance rating dropped from 34th in 2005 to 46th in 2006. This is attributed to a big increase in its percentage of

rural and urban interstates in poor condition – up 23.33 percent for rural and 12.16 percent for urban."

The good news is that New Hampshire ranked 3rd best in fatality rates with .931 deaths per 100 million miles.

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The Reason Foundation explains the categories used in the table below. "Overall Cost Effectiveness includes the cost to operate and improve roads as well as their condition and performance. State Controlled Miles refers to each state's highway system. Receipts includes highway user revenues, general fund appropriations, other state fees, bond issuance and debt service, and funds from local government. Disbursements consists of expenditures for reconstruction and improvement of roads and bridge work, maintenance and highway services, administration, research and planning, law enforcement and safety, interest on bond payments, and bond retirement."

Ranking by Overall Performance	Overall Cost Effectiveness Ranking	State Controlled Highway Mileage	Receipts per State Controlled Mile	Total Disbursements per State Controlled Mile	Ratio of Receipts to Disbursements	Percent of Deficient Bridges
CT 25	CT 35	CT 3,959	337,208	300,419	0.11	CT 32.80
MA 43	MA 43	MA 3,244	581,657	749,070	-0.29	MA 36.16
ME 37	ME 22	ME 8,683	63,725	69,377	-0.09	ME 29.97
RI 48	RI 48	RI 1,104	100,042	426,508	-3.26	RI 53.43
NH 46	NH 46	NH 4,011	125,212	122,319	0.02	NH 30.27
VT 20	VT 30	VT 2,843	551,553	99,932	0.82	VT 35.71
Mean for All 50 States:		16,295	128,538	122,254	0.05	24.13

The Reason Foundation is a nonprofit public research and policy organization based in Los Angeles, California. A complete copy of this report, including statistics for every state that measure road condition, congestion, lane width, and fatalities, is available at [www.reason.org](http://www.reason.org).

## Federal Highway Administration Reports Traffic Volume Trends



Traffic Volume Trends is a monthly report based on hourly traffic count data. This data, collected at approximately 4,000 continuous traffic counting locations nationwide, are used to determine the percent change in traffic volume for the current month compared to the same month in the previous year.

The U.S Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released comparative data on February and March travel in 2007 and 2008. The report breaks the data down by region, then further by states within each region. Perhaps it is not surprising given the dramatic increase in fuel prices in the past several months, that travel on U.S. roads has decreased since last year at this time.

Overall, travel on all roads and streets changed

by -4.3 percent for March 2008 as compared with March 2007. In fact, this is the first time estimated March travel on public roads fell since 1979. At 11 billion miles less in March 2008 than in the previous March, this is the sharpest yearly drop for any month in FHWA history.

The table on the back page shows data for the Northeast only: February and

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## New Hampshire's Infrastructure Funding Crunch

The current economy downshift has impacted the condition of New Hampshire's infrastructure due to recent inflation of construction costs for materials necessary to maintain our roads and bridges and the shortfall in the revenue needed to fund their maintenance.

The root cause of the shortfall is the cost/revenue discrepancy. Construction inflation has risen sharply since 2003. While the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has gone up 17.5 percent since December of 2003, the cost of highway and street construction rose 65.5 percent during the same period. There has been a 15 percent increase in the past 12 months, as opposed to an average increase of 12.6 percent in the four previous years.

A good case in point to illustrate is asphalt prices. Again, while the CPI went up 17.5 percent since 2003, the per ton cost of asphalt increased 94 percent since 2003. Paving 1 1/2 inches of overlay on one mile of interstate on both sides cost \$136,800 in 2003, and costs \$266,000 today. A 17.5 percent CPI increase would have added just under \$24,000 to the 2003 cost rather than just under \$130,000. This example illustrates the trend, and by no means is the only area that is driving up construction costs. Diesel fuel, steel rebar and other materials are also depleting construction budgets.

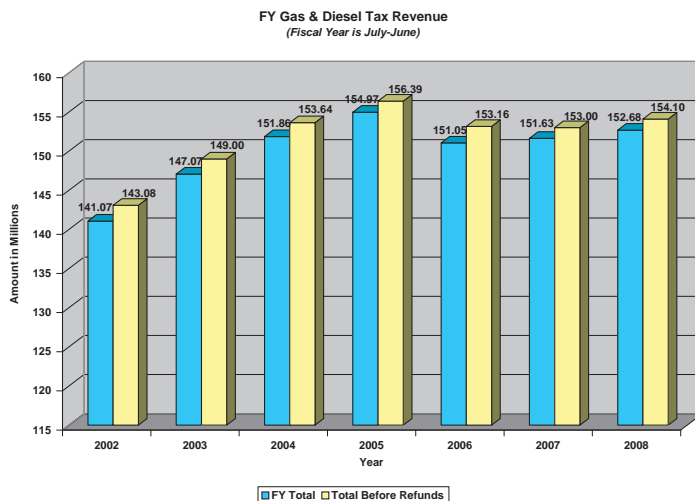
	Hot Bituminous Pavement- Cost per Ton*	Paving 1 Mile of Interstate, Both Sides = 3800 tons (1 1/2 in. overlay)	Regular Priced Gas
Apr-03	36.00	\$136,800	1.582
Apr-04	41.00	\$155,800	1.705
Jun-05	42.75	\$162,450	2.082
Apr-06	54.00	\$205,200	2.477
Jun-07	53.00	\$201,400	3.011
Jul-08	70.00**	\$266,000	4.023***
<b>% Increase</b>	<b>94.44%</b>		<b>154.30%</b>

\*Random sample from DOT Projects

\*\*Per NH contractors

\*\*\*June '08 average price

Revenue is not keeping up with construction inflation. The New Hampshire gas tax revenue, which is dedicated to fixing roads, has remained relatively flat over the last 3 years, as compared to an average 2 percent growth in the prior 10 years ending in 2005. And while gas prices are going up, gas consumption is going down. July 4th holiday weekend traffic in New Hampshire was down 3.8 percent compared to last year. This reduces income from gas tax revenue that would offset cost increases.



There are no emergency road or bridge situations in New Hampshire; DOT is doing a good job. However, highways and I-93 need to be repaired and upgraded to ensure safety and decrease congestion.

### HTF Continued from Page 1 ...

ance to fully reimburse states for payments they have made on ongoing federal-aid highway contracts. The full House passed the bill with the amendment on Thursday September 11th. The legislation was moved to the President's desk for his signature, and he signed it on September 15th. Now FHWA will resume reimbursing states on a daily basis for the full amount submitted.

The measure, while welcome, is only a temporary fix that will get the country through FY 2009. During that time, there needs to be developed and passed a long-term measure to create new sources of funding for the Highway Trust Fund. What will the new President's strategy be? Barack Obama "calls for stronger infrastructure and the development of high-speed freight and passenger rail." McCain's plan would include an "offer of a \$300 million prize to anyone who can develop a car battery that surpasses current technology." (from "Paying for Roads," Washington Post, 9/15/08) Either of these plans needs a lot more refinement and details to work its way through the next Congress.

### Web site Continued from Page 1 ...

understand the transportation problems, then they can thoughtfully evaluate and contribute to effective solutions.

The new website facilitates the coalition's mission of informing and motivating the public. The site makes easily accessible all of Safer Roads' publications and media, the most up-to-date infrastructure facts, and links to important road, bridge, and project information. Once informed, visitors to the new site can access a page that helps them contact any and all of the state's elected officials in order to voice their concerns. Visitors may also use the Safer Roads' interactive page to ask a question or sign up to help raise public awareness of the state's infrastructure needs.

**Contact**

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to join us in raising public awareness of how transportation impacts New Hampshire's economy, public safety and quality of life, please feel free to contact us!

1. What type of information are you inquiring about?  
(Choose One)  Yes  No

2. How did you hear about us?  
(Choose One)  Yes  No

3. Your Company (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

4. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Address: \_\_\_\_\_

6. City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Phone Number (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

8. E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Questions or Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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March vehicle miles for 2007 and 2008 and the percent change.

Northeast: Changes in all Estimated Miles (by millions) by State						
	February			March		
	2007	2008	% change	2007	2008	% change
<b>Connecticut</b>	2,189	2,201	0.6	2,560	2,544	-0.6
<b>Maine</b>	1,084	1,035	-4.5	1,225	1,170	-4.5
<b>Massachusetts</b>	4,116	4,078	-0.9	4,404	4,293	-2.5
<b>New Hampshire</b>	996	958	-3.8	1,132	1,063	-6.1
<b>New Jersey</b>	5,149	5,128	-0.4	6,504	6,325	-2.7
<b>New York</b>	9,865	9,865	0	11,940	11,658	-2.4
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	7,080	7,201	1.7	8,513	8,314	-2.3
<b>Rhode Island</b>	588	575	-2.3	614	601	-2.1
<b>Vermont</b>	621	602	-3.0	666	645	-3.2
<b>Totals</b>	31,688	31,643	-0.1	37,558	36,613	-2.5

According to AGC's Highway Facts Bulletin, "This decline in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) will have a direct impact on gas and diesel tax receipts into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). HTF revenue was projected in February 2008 to be \$3.7 billion below the levels projected when SAFETEA-LU was enacted. This continuing downward trend in driving will further impact HTF revenue.

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