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To use this tool, go to http://www.iihs.org/ratings/default.aspx.

Increasing Municipal Transportation Funding

Municipalities stand to benefit in increased funding for transportation improvements this Legislative Session. Both the House and Senate have put forth proposals that will provide cities and towns with more funding than they have seen in recent years. This is good news, as municipalities only have two ways they can improve their infrastructure—money from the state or property taxes. With state funding remaining at the same level since 1991, municipalities have faced the same challenges as the state, and need to stretch every dollar.

New Hampshire’s municipal infrastructure is among the worst in the nation. As motorists exit the interstate system, they enter onto municipal rural roads, and the state was ranked 9th out of all states for the worst rural roads in 2011. As funding has not increased to allow for significant improvements, these roads have likely not improved much since then. The major concern associated with rural roads is safety of motorists and passengers. Traffic fatalities on rural roads occur three times as much as those on interstates. Insufficient design features such as lane widths, curves, shoulders, and clearance are common among rural roads. Poor condition and roadway design increase the likelihood of traffic accidents and fatalities.

The House recently passed House Bill 177, which increases the rate of the road toll twenty-three cents over twelve years and the diesel tax twelve cents over six years. Municipalities, by low, receive 12% of the funds generated by the road toll. After full implementation, municipalities will see approximately 37% more funding in the Municipal Block Grant than they have in previous years. Furthermore, prior to being passed out of the House, the bill was amended to require all the funding received from the increase to go to infrastructure investment. This means that other departments will not receive any additional funding from the increase. The state and municipalities will have a dedicated fund to make the necessary infrastructure repairs in the long-term. It also means that municipalities will not have to increase property taxes to repair their infrastructure.

The Senate, meanwhile, has passed Senate Bill 152, which allows one high-end, highly regulated casino to be established in the state. The likely location of the casino is Salem, NH. After expenses, the revenue earned from the casino will be divided among several groups (Department of Education, Health & Humans Services), with the infrastructure system receiving 45% of the funds in the current bill. The funds must first be used towards existing debt service on the I-93 widening project. Then, one-sixth of the remaining funds will go to the existing betterment fund, or municipalities.

Both bills have strong support in their bodies, as well as strong opposition. What’s most important is that New Hampshire legislators recognize the problem the state is facing and are looking at solutions. The state will benefit most from a plan that provides long-term financial stability that will allow continuous improvement to the infrastructure system. This will ensure that New Hampshire remains competitive, and can attract new businesses to the state.
Increasing Transportation Funding Around the Nation

New Hampshire is not alone in looking at ways to increase funding for infrastructure improvements. In fact, twenty-five states are considering gas tax increases, tolling, mileage tax, sales tax, or some other tax or fee. With over half the nation looking at proposals, it is clear that improving the infrastructure is not just a New Hampshire priority, but a nationwide priority. For more information on this new rating, read the latest Status Report at www.iihs.org.

TRIP Releases 2013 Report On NH Transportation Network

In February, The Road Information Program (TRIP) was back in New Hampshire to report on the state of the infrastructure. TRIP was last in the state in 2010, and the system has not improved since then, in fact it’s gotten worse. In 2010, TRIP reported that nearly one-third of New Hampshire’s bridges were rated in poor condition. Today, that number remains the same. In three years, the state has not been able to significantly reduce the number of structurally deficient or functionally obsolete bridges. The number of roads in poor condition is just over one third as well. While the number of poor bridges has remained flat, the cost to drivers has increased. TRIP estimates that driving on roads in need of repair cost drivers an extra $323 in vehicle operating maintenance, such as alignments. This is a 20% increase since 2010 estimates.

These numbers highlight the inefficiencies of New Hampshire’s infrastructure system. These inefficiencies pose significant economic concerns for the state. Nearly two-thirds of all goods in New Hampshire are transported by trucks. Weight-restricted bridges and poor roads slow travel times for these shipments. Additionally, it limits the competitiveness New Hampshire has in attracting new businesses. TRIP reports that business have responded to improved communications and greater competition by moving from a push-style distribution to a pull-style distribution system. Full-style distribution uses smaller, more strategic and time sensitive movement of goods. Furthermore, a 2010 survey by Site Selection magazine found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and taxes.

Not only do businesses rely on an efficient transportation system, citizens do as well. And New Hampshire’s population is expected to grow, putting even more stress on an outdated system. The state currently has over 1 million licensed drivers, and a total population of just over 1.3 million people. In just under twenty years, the population is expected to grow 25%. New Hampshire’s vehicle miles traveled have been increasing steadily over the last two decades as well, and currently stands at 12.7 billion. The number of miles traveled by citizens is projected to increase at the same rate as population increases.

Currently, there is not sufficient revenue to support the improvements necessary to ensure that the roads can adequately provide for the needs of its users. TRIP estimates that the state has a $1.3 billion backlog of projects, and would need an additional $74 million each year to address the problem. Within the $1.3 billion is $615 million to improve all roads in poor condition, and $680 million to repair all bridges that have at least one structural deficiency. The additional yearly funding would allow the state to maintain current road and bridge conditions, and complete the I-93 widening project.

The report is available to read and download on the A Safer Road to Tomorrow website at www.saferoadsnh.com. Also available on the website is the 2010 Trip report, and a 2011 report on New Hampshire’s rural roads.

Municipal Funding Brochure

The American Society of Civil Engineers has released their 2013 Infrastructure Report Card, and the nation earned an overall grade of D+. ASCE ranks the nation based on 16 areas, and each category was evaluated based on capacity, condition, funding, future need, operation and maintenance, public safety and resilience. The chart below shows the grades for each of the categories:

- **Aviation**: D
- **Bridges**: C
- **Dams**: D
- **Drinking Water**: D
- **Energy**: D+
- **Hazardous Waste**: D
- **Inland Waterways**: D-
- **Levees**: D-
- **Ports**: C
- **Public Parks & Rec.**: C-
- **Rail**: C
- **Roads**: D
- **Schools**: D
- **Solid Waste**: B-
- **Tambit**: D
- **Wastewater**: D
- **Wastewater**: D

In 2009, when ASCE last took inventory of the nation’s infrastructure, the organization gave the nation a D. While the nation is improving overall, it is not significant improvement. In fact, less than half of the categories improved between 2009 and 2013. Furthermore, the categories that did improve, did so marginally. For example, Bridges improved from a “C” to a “C+”, and drinking water improved from a “D-” to a “D”.

ASCE estimates that by 2020, over $3 trillion is needed to address the issues presented in the report card. Nearly all the categories have a significant backlog of projects, but lack the sufficient funding source. For more information on the Report Card, go to http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org.
Teen Driving Fatalities Increase

A February report by USA Today shows increasing teen driving fatalities between 2011 and 2012. A survey conducted by the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) showed that in the first six months of 2012, teen driving fatalities increased 19%.

This trend continues the recent trend, as 2011 also saw an increase in the number of teen driving fatalities. This is after several years of declining deaths. GHSA believes that the improving economy, and the lesser effect of the graduate licensing program have added to the number of fatalities.

The state of the economy often has an impact on the number of traffic-related fatalities. In a down economy people drive less, and in a good economy they drive more. The greater number of people on the roads, the greater chance of accidents.

The graduated licensing program, which gives young drivers more responsibility as they gain experience, has been an effective trend in the past. However, some states have weaker programs, limiting the program’s effectiveness.

For more information, visit the Driving Toward Zero website at www.shdttc.org.

Increasing Transportation Funding Around the Nation

New Hampshire is not alone in looking at ways to increase funding for infrastructure improvements. In fact, twenty-five states are considering gas tax increases, tolling, mileage tax, sales tax, or some other tax or fee. With over half the nation looking at proposals, it is clear that improving the infrastructure is not just a New Hampshire priority, but a nationwide priority.

To estimate a dollar increase, use this tool outlining the benefits of HB 617. The brochure also includes a chart of 12 New England states and their respective gas tax rates. The numbers include the federal gas tax which is currently, 18.4 cents.

It’s important to note that the price of gasoline is not directly correlated to the rate of the gas tax. The price of gasoline at the pump is largely determined by market forces. Furthermore, the tax is not paid in full by citizens purchasing gasoline at the pump, the majority is paid at the distribution level. If a gasoline station owner decides to pass the increase in gasoline tax on to his or her customers, it can affect his ability to compete with other area gasoline stations.

Over half of all states proposing to increase transportation funding, are doing so through a gas tax. The gas tax has been the traditional method of transportation funding at both the state and national level because of its ease of collection. This method requires no new technology or learning curve to implement, and it is based on an individual’s usage of the roads. Therefore, the greater number of miles a person drives, and subsequently the greater wear and tear they put on the roads, the more they share in the cost towards the maintenance of the roads.

Municipal Funding Brochure

The A Safer Road to Tomorrow coalition has developed a small brochure outlining the benefits of HB 617. The brochure also includes a chart of 12 New Hampshire towns and their respective projected funding increase if HB 617 is passed.

Each city and town is projected to receive 37% more funding through the bill. To estimate a dollar increase, use this percentage in combination with the amount expected to be received in 2014.

To download the brochure, go to www.saferoadsnh.com, and under the Media tab, select Reports, and then Safer Roads.

Family Cars Promote Safety

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has created a new award that recognizes vehicles that perform well in small overlap crash tests. Small overlap crashes occur when the front corner of a car collides with another vehicle or an object like a tree or utility pole. Moderately priced, family cars beat out many of the higher-priced luxury cars that were used in the test. Many of the cars used in the test perform well in the standard moderate overlap frontal test, but IIHS found that a quarter of frontal crashes are from small overlap crashes.

Introducing the small overlap crash will help improve occupant protection in frontal crashes.

To coincide with the new crash test, IIHS has developed a new safety award, Top Safety Pick+. The President Obama has also made the infrastructure in the small overlap crash test. To receive the award, vehicles must receive good ratings in at least four of the five evaluation areas, and no less than acceptable in the fifth evaluation area. The Honda Accord and Suzuki Kizashu were the top performers in the test. The Toyota Camry and Toyota Prius both ranked at the bottom, earning poor or marginal in one or all the evaluation areas. Both of these vehicles perform well in the moderate overlap crash test.

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Full-style distribution uses smaller, more strategic and time sensitive movement of goods. Furthermore, a 2010 survey by Site Selection magazine found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and taxes.

Not only do businesses rely on an efficient transportation system, citizens do as well. And New Hampshire’s population is expected to grow, putting even more stress on an outmoded system. The state currently has over 1 million licensed drivers, and a total population of just over 1.3 million people. In just under twenty years, the population is expected to grow 25%. New Hampshire’s vehicle miles traveled have been increasing steadily over the last two decades as well, and currently stands at 12.7 billion. The number of miles traveled by citizens is projected to increase at the same rate as population increases.

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America Earns A+ For Overall Infrastructure

The American Society of Civil Engineers has released their 2013 Infrastructure Card Report, and the nation earned an overall grade of A+. ASCE ranks the nation based on 16 areas, and each category was evaluated based on capacity, condition, funding, future need, operation and maintenance, public safety and resilience. The chart below shows the grades for each of the categories:

- Aviation D
- Bridges C+
- Dams C
- Drinking Water D
- Energy D
- Hazardous Waste D
- Inland Waterways D- Levees D- Wastewater D
- Ports C
- Public Parks & Rec. C-
- Roads D
- Schools D
- Solid Waste B-
- Tansit D
- 
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Search for crash test results

By make and model:  
By type/size:  

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