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Maine Governor Introduces Legislation to Invest \$160 million in Bridges

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April 8, 2008 -- AUGUSTA – Responding to growing concern over the condition of bridges around the State and to a November 2007 study, “Keeping Our Bridges Safe,” Maine Governor John E. Baldacci today submitted bipartisan legislation that will invest an additional \$160 million over four years in bridge construction and preservation.



Iron bridge over Crooked River on Ryefield Bridge Road, Otisfield Gore, Maine:
Photo by Bob Travis (CC)

“The tragedy last year in Minneapolis showed the world that we must remain vigilant when it comes to our bridges. We had a team of engineers review our bridge inspection program and funding levels, and



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they found that we need to make a significant investment,” Governor Baldacci said. “With this plan, we’ll put \$160 million in new funding to work alongside existing resources to rehabilitate and improve the State’s bridges.”

The initiative will supplement current bridge funding of about \$70 million per year with an additional \$40 million per year over the next four years.

The initiative would fund 246 bridge projects around the State, including 80 bridge replacements. Of the 246 projects, about two-thirds of the bridges being improved are currently on the Maine Department of Transportation’s Bridge Watch List. The remainder will prevent bridges from falling into poor condition.

To pay for the bridge investment, three fees would be increased. The State’s vehicle registration fee would increase from \$25 per year to \$35 per year; the title fee would increase from \$23 per year to \$33 per year; and the vanity plate fee would increase from \$15 per year to \$25 per year. With the modest increases, Maine’s fees will remain at or below those of New Hampshire and the New England average.

“This initiative is important for our economy, and it’s important to our ability to safely move people and goods around the State and around the country,” Governor Baldacci said. “We want our bridges to be reliable, safe and secure, and that requires us to make investments. The initiative is balanced and responsible.”

Governor Baldacci introduced the bill after receiving a letter from the co-chairs of the Legislature’s Transportation Committee, who encouraged him to submit legislation for bridge improvement.

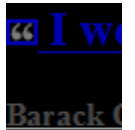
“The Transportation Committee has struggled to find ways to meet the needs of Maine motorists and businesses at a time when major portions of Maine’s transportation network are nearing the end of their service life,” wrote Sen. Dennis Damon and Rep. Boyd Marley. “To succeed at this time, we strongly believe you must lead this effort, starting with a Governor’s bill.”

The bill has 29 sponsors and co-sponsors, including Rep. Marley, Sen. Damon, Transportation Ranking Member Sen. Christine Savage, Rep. Richard Cebra, Rep. Charles Fisher, Rep. Charles Ken Theriault, Rep. Kimberley Rosen, Rep. Edward Mazurek, Rep. George Hogan, Rep. Ann Peoples, Rep. Patsy Crockett, Rep. James Campbell, Rep. Robert Walker, Rep. Sean Faircloth, Rep. Michael Carey, Rep. Leila Percy, Rep. Glenn Cummings, Rep. Christopher Barstow, Rep. Ted Koffman, Rep. Jeremy Fischer, Rep. Hannah Pingree, Sen. Karl Turner, Sen. Beth Edmonds, Sen. John Martin, Sen. Elizabeth Mitchell, Sen. Dana

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More information is available at: www.mainedot.gov.

Source: Maine Governor



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