

***Restoring Interstate Durability for the Economy and Safety 4 Maine
(RIDES 4 ME) Network of Projects***
Maine Department of Transportation

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
FY 2026 Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highways Projects
(INFRA) Grant Program

Funding Opportunity Number: NSMFHP-26-INFRA

OUTCOME CRITERIA NARRATIVE

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The Project advances all four FY2026 INFRA outcome criteria — Safety, Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity, State of Good Repair, and Innovation are primary purposes supported by direct, data-driven benefits. Each criterion below states the current challenge with cited data, presents the Project's solution, and details criterion benefits.

Criterion #1: Safety – Safety is a primary purpose of the Project.

Current Challenges

The Project highways carry the state's highest interstate volumes at speeds reaching 65 mph on I-295 and up to 75 mph on I-95 — all on a deteriorating road surface that is presenting safety challenges while being tasked with carrying ever-increasing volumes.⁹ Further contributing to the safety concerns are the harsh winters that Maine faces which lead to damaging freeze-thaw cycles and numerous applications of road salt on the highway surface each winter.

From 2018 to 2025, I-295 had 1,890 crashes, including 7 fatal and 438 injury crashes, about 236 per year.¹⁰

Deteriorated pavement contributes directly to the crash types analyzed: wet-weather and loss-of-control crashes resulting from degraded skid resistance and rutting that ponds water.



A pothole slowly deepens on I-295 in Cumberland County.

MaineDOT has also identified a safety risk in the Yarmouth area. There is no cable median barrier between northbound and southbound lanes of the interstate that would prevent a vehicle that is out-of-control from crossing the median and being hit by a vehicle traveling in the other direction. MaineDOT recently updated its median-width criteria and the median in this area is narrow enough to warrant a new cable median barrier under the new criteria.¹¹ Statewide, Maine recorded 789 traffic fatalities from 2019 to 2023, with run-off-road and head-on or sideswipe crashes accounting for roughly 70 percent of fatal crashes.¹² MaineDOT's Office of Safety tallied I-295 crashes by KABCO severity between 2018 and 2025:

⁹ MaineDOT Scope Summaries, WIN 26338.00 / 26344.00 / 26468.00 / 28472.00.

¹⁰ MaineDOT Office of Safety, crash summary reports, I-295 NB and SB, 2018 to 2025.

¹¹ MaineDOT Scope Summaries, WIN 26338.00 / 26344.00 / 26468.00 / 28472.00.

¹² Maine Bureau of Highway Safety / FARS, 2019 to 2023; TRIP, Maine report (2025).

Severity (KABCO)	I-295 NB	I-295 SB	Combined	Share
Fatal (K)	3	4	7	0.4%
Incapacitating injury (A)	10	13	23	1.2%
Non-incapacitating injury (B)	111	92	203	10.7%
Possible injury (C)	113	99	212	11.2%
Property damage only (O)	774	670	1,444	76.4%
Total (2018-2025)	1,012	878	1,890	100%

Project Solutions and Benefits

The Project incorporates specific safety improvements that are part of a documented safety risk mitigation strategy, the *Maine Strategic Highway Safety Plan*, and that have corridor-wide impact.¹³ The Project will reconstruct the driving surface, restore skid resistance and cross-slope, add highly-reflective roadway markings, install new and/or upgrade current highway guardrails, add shoulder rumble strips, and install new cable median barriers where warranted. Crash reductions, estimated using FHWA Crash Modification Factors applied to the I-295 KABCO baseline, combines overlapping treatments on a weighted-average basis below.¹⁴

According to crash data from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and various state departments of transportation, the impact of cable median barriers combined with rumble strips generates a 92 to 94 percent reduction in cross-median fatal crashes, and an 80 to 85 percent reduction in combined fatal and injury crash severity across interstate systems. There is also a 57 percent lower chance of injury when striking a cable barrier compared to a traditional steel guardrail. Also, 95 out of 100 crashes into the cable median barrier result in the vehicle being successfully stopped without breaching the opposing lanes.¹⁵

The Project avoids about 4 to 5 crashes per year, including a ‘fractional portion’ of a fatal crash annually, monetized at approximately \$23.9 million in discounted safety benefits.

Countermeasure	Illustrative Crash Reduction Factor (CRF)	Primary target crash type
Pavement reconstruction (skid / cross-slope)	~10% to 15%	Wet-weather and loss-of-control
Shoulder rumble strips (rural freeway)	~16% (run-off-road FI)	Run-off-road
High-retroreflective polyurea markings	~3% to 6%	Nighttime / lane-departure
Guardrail upgrade / new	site-specific	Roadside departure severity

¹³ Maine Strategic Highway Safety Plan (2022)

¹⁴ USDOT Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance, 2026 Update (December 2025), Appendix A (2024 dollars; 7 percent real); FHWA Crash Modification Factor Clearinghouse (cable median barrier; pavement reconstruction; rural-freeway rumble strips; markings).

¹⁵ *Safety Evaluation of Cable Median Barriers in Combination With Rumble Strips on the Inside Shoulder of Divided Roads*, Federal Highway Administration, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/17071/17071.pdf>

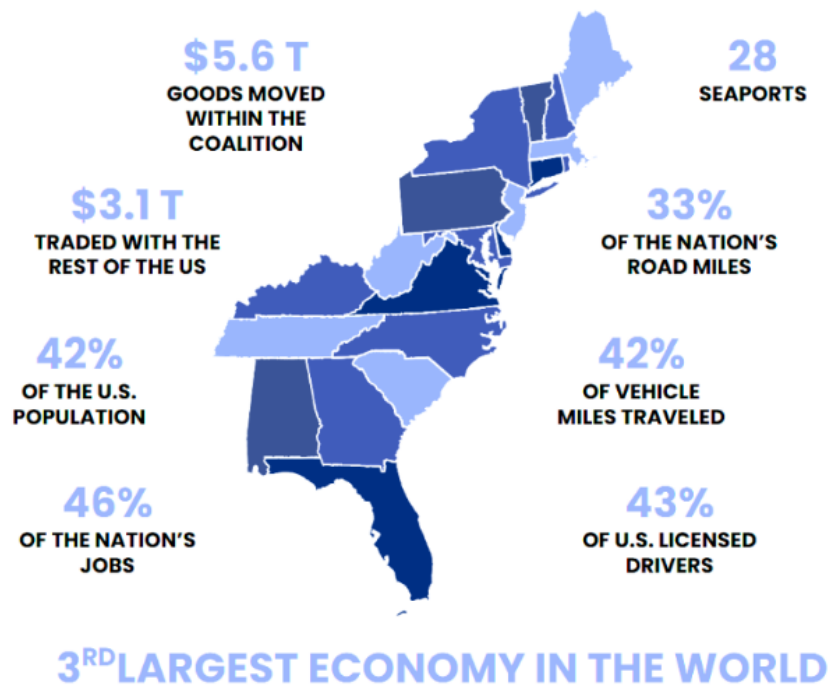
Criterion #2: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity – Economic competitiveness is a primary purpose of the Project.

Current Challenges

Trucking is the largest freight transportation segment in the U.S., carrying nearly 64 percent of all domestic freight by weight and 72 percent by value. Trucks are the primary mode used to carry shipments moving less than 750 miles.¹⁶

The Project advances the 23 U.S.C. § 150 national goals of freight movement and economic vitality. I-95 is an extremely critical U.S. thoroughfare, serving the entire eastern U.S. as it stretches from Houlton, Maine, to Miami, Florida — connecting Maine, New England, New York City and surrounding areas, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., the mid-Atlantic region, parts of the South, and Florida. This coverage makes it a primary truck route supporting national and international freight movement. I-295 is the primary north-south connector between Portland and the region surrounding Bangor, the largest and third largest cities in the state. It's the principal route for commerce and tourism between southern and northern Maine and connects to the Maine Turnpike and U.S. Route 1. It is the access spine to Portland's marine and freight terminals. I-95 is on the Primary Highway Freight System and carries the largest freight volume in the state. In 2012, Maine raised its interstate truck weight limit to 100,000 pounds, although special axle counts must be adhered to.¹⁷

Surface deterioration on a high-speed, high-truck-share corridor raises vehicle operating costs, threatens travel-time reliability, and exposes shippers and travelers to non-recurring congestion when lanes close for emergency repair or because of crashes due to poor road surface. Roadway reliability is needed to support the annual value of freight traveling the Interstate 95 corridor in New England, which exceeds \$150 billion to \$200 billion. The Eastern



Courtesy The Eastern Transportation Coalition.

¹⁶ USDOT 2026 National Freight Strategic Plan, page 9, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2026NationalFreightStrategicPlan_FINAL_508.pdf

¹⁷ Maine Integrated Freight Strategy (2017); Maine State Freight Plan; FHWA National Highway Freight Network (Maine), Primary Highway Freight System.

Transportation Coalition (formerly the I-95 Corridor Coalition) notes that the broader multi-state corridor handles more than 12 million commercial trucks annually, securing its spot as the most economically vital freight corridor in the northeastern U.S.¹⁸

In Massachusetts and northern New England, the highway funnels into the massive I-95/I-93 Boston logistics market, where it then splits into the northern New England arteries. In New Hampshire and Maine, trucks carry the vast majority of goods, with Maine alone depending on its highway infrastructure to move the immense share of freight diverted away from slow, weight-restricted rail lines. I-95 is a major artery for the Pine Tree State's \$102.8 billion economy and the \$9.4 billion generated annually from tourism spending.¹⁹

Project Solutions and Benefits

The Project addresses a freight bottleneck identified in the *Maine State Freight Plan* and improves a corridor vital to the efficient movement of goods. By restoring a smooth, structurally sound surface it will preserve reliable travel times, reduce vehicle operating costs relative to continued deterioration under a No-Build scenario, support growth of Maine exports moving to the Port of Portland, and protect freight throughput on the state's most central corridor. These effects total approximately \$170 million in discounted travel-time, ride-quality vehicle-operating-cost, and incident-reliability benefits, including reduced non-recurring congestion from recurring incident backups and avoided emergency reroutes.

The Network of Projects helps preserve vital transportation connections. In order for a highway to serve the economy and the community most effectively, it must be void of obstacles, like a chain with no weak links. It is collectively ineffective to have some segments of the highway provide safe and efficient transportation, just to suddenly encounter others with infrastructure challenges that contribute to unsafe conditions, vehicle wear and tear, slower speeds, and traffic congestion. To support the movement of freight Interstate 95, as well as the region's railroad line, both serve the vast lumber and paper industries. The railroad often faces its own infrastructure and funding challenges, so trucks are often able to provide a service alternative. I-95 is the primary regional roadway the absorbs the freight when it is switched from rail to road.

Criterion #3: State of Good Repair – State of good repair is a primary purpose of the Project. It will restore existing infrastructure and reduce future construction and maintenance burdens.

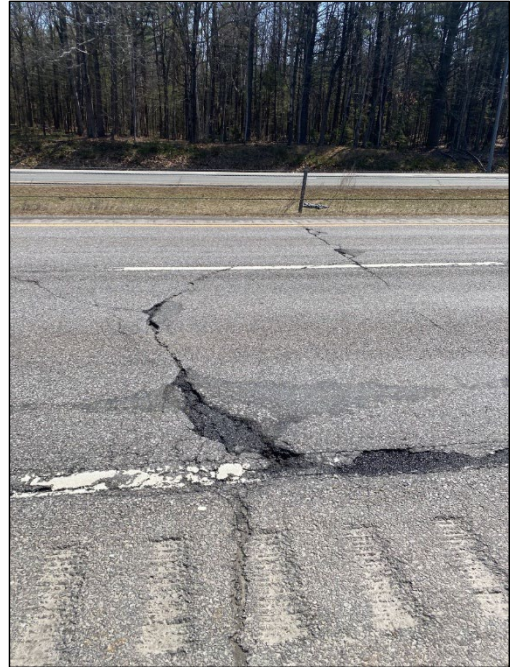
Current Challenges

The surface pavement lies on early-1960s concrete resting beneath only three to four inches of asphalt. This structure is now failing at the concrete's expansion joints. Statewide, only 31.1 percent of interstate pavement is rated Good.

¹⁸ The Eastern Transportation Coalition, <https://tetcoalition.org/>

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Maine GDP (2025); Maine Office of Tourism (2025).

MaineDOT utilizes a Customer Service Level (CSL) methodology to evaluate state-managed highways based on specific engineering measures. Those evaluations are then given a grade from A to F. Under MaineDOT's measurement framework, I-295 is classified as a Priority 1 Corridor. This designation includes the Interstate system and all other key routes on the National Highway System (NHS). Priority 1 corridors are subject to the highest maintenance standards and strict performance goals. MaineDOT tracks the road surface condition using specific, data-driven engineering parameters. Rather than providing a single subjective summary, the condition of the road surface is continuously measured via automated collection vehicles using two key criteria: *Pavement Ride Quality* is measured using the International Roughness Index (IRI), which translates to a CSL grade (A through F) indicating how smooth or bumpy the surface feels to motorists. *Pavement Rutting* tracks the physical displacement depth of the asphalt in vehicle wheel paths, which impacts hydroplaning risk and vehicle control. Under the *Current Performance Standard and Trajectory*, MaineDOT is legally obligated to manage and fund its Priority 1 and Priority 2 networks to maintain a CSL rating of 'Fair' or better (equivalent to a C grade or higher) across the corridor.



Continued surface preservation is a short-term fix but yields a shortened service life; the No-Build is a cycle of escalating patching with declining ride quality on the region's highest-use corridor.



This screenshot from MaineDOT's Map Viewer via Google Streetview showing the surface condition of a segment of I-295 in Freeport. The surface of the right lane is severely deteriorating, creating elongated ruts in the pathway of vehicle wheels.

Project Solutions and Benefits

The Project restores and modernizes existing infrastructure, resulting in lower long-term maintenance costs, and addresses a projected vulnerability that, left unaddressed, would threaten the efficiency and

mobility of the state's busiest interstate. It replaces the failing structure with a minimum four-inch high-polymer asphalt section that adds strength while flexing with the concrete beneath, extending service life to approximately 20 years.²⁰ The Project delivers approximately \$69.4 million in



I-295 in Portland. Photo courtesy Bangor Daily News.

discounted net maintenance savings over the 30-year analysis period; residual value is conservatively taken as \$0 over that same 30-year horizon.

Criterion #4: Innovation – Innovation is a key Project purpose.

The Project deploys innovation across technology and project delivery, meeting the three key categories of the criterion:

- **Innovative technology:** New weigh-in-motion and continuous vehicle count sensors being installed will monitor real-time freight and pavement-condition data on a National Highway Freight Network corridor. The high-polymer asphalt that will be laid will feature a water-intrusion membrane to protect the underlying road structure.
- **Innovative project delivery:** MaineDOT will utilize the NEPA Assignment Program (Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program) to innovatively accelerate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and permitting measures. This program formally assigns the Federal Highway Administration's NEPA responsibilities to a state department of transportation. Through the program, MaineDOT has assumed responsibility from FHWA for all classes of NEPA (Categorical Exclusions, Environmental Assessments, and Environmental Impact Statements) and also assumes responsibility for environmental laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and interagency consultation in Maine. The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for the Project will be carried out by MaineDOT pursuant to either:

²⁰ FHWA pavement service-life references; MaineDOT design basis (to confirm).

- 23 U.S.C. 326 and Memorandum of Understanding executed by FHWA and MaineDOT dated October 9, 2024
- 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding executed by FHWA and MaineDOT dated January 30, 2026

Maine is the 9th state in the nation to receive NEPA Assignment Program approval.

- **Innovative method:** Accelerated-construction sequencing, including night work with daytime reopening and optional overnight closures with traffic diverting to the parallel U.S. Route 1 as a detour, will be a safe and effective way to minimally interfere with traffic on the high-volume corridor.