

***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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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Funding Opportunity Number: NSMFHP-26-INFRA
Assistance List Number: 20.934 (Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The **Maine Department of Transportation** (MaineDOT) is requesting \$71,760,000 from the Federal Railroad Administration's *FY 2026 Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highways Projects (INFRA)* grant program to fund Final Design and Construction activities for the ***Restoring Interstate Durability for the Economy and Safety 4 Maine (RIDES 4 ME) Network of Projects***. The Network of Projects consists of replacing very deteriorated pavement, improving the structure underneath the pavement, and installing and/or replacing outdated safety guardrails on some of Maine's most heavily traveled interstate corridors. Under the Project, 66 directional miles of Interstate 95 and Interstate 295 will be resurfaced, 132 miles of rumble strips will be included, and 16 miles of guardrails will be installed or replaced. The Project will incorporate innovative pavement resurfacing measures that will improve safety conditions, return a portion of the National Highway System (NHS) and National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) to a state of good repair, and support numerous segments of Maine's diverse economy. The Network of Projects, under 23 U.S.C. § 117, will advance all four FY2026 INFRA outcomes: Safety, Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity, State of Good Repair, and Innovation. They consist of:

Project	Location	Counties	Task	Mileage	Avg. Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) % Trucks
I-295 Southbound	Topsham to Falmouth/Portland	Sagadahoc Cumberland	Pavement and Guardrails	22	24,600 - 29,670 9%
I-295 Northbound	Falmouth/Portland to Topsham	Sagadahoc Cumberland	Pavement and Guardrails	22	24,600 - 29,670 9%
I-95 Southbound	Newport to Pittsfield	Penobscot Somerset	Pavement and Guardrails	7.5	10,570 24%
I-95 Northbound	Argyle to Howland	Penobscot	Pavement and Guardrails	15	4,830 16%

The Project will:

- Enhance safety on Maine's most heavily traveled interstate corridor by rebuilding failing pavement, adding highly-reflective pavement markings, installing and/or upgrading guardrails, and restoring rumble strips.
- Improve mobility for Maine residents and tourists.
- Strengthen freight mobility and supply-chain reliability on the primary north-south route

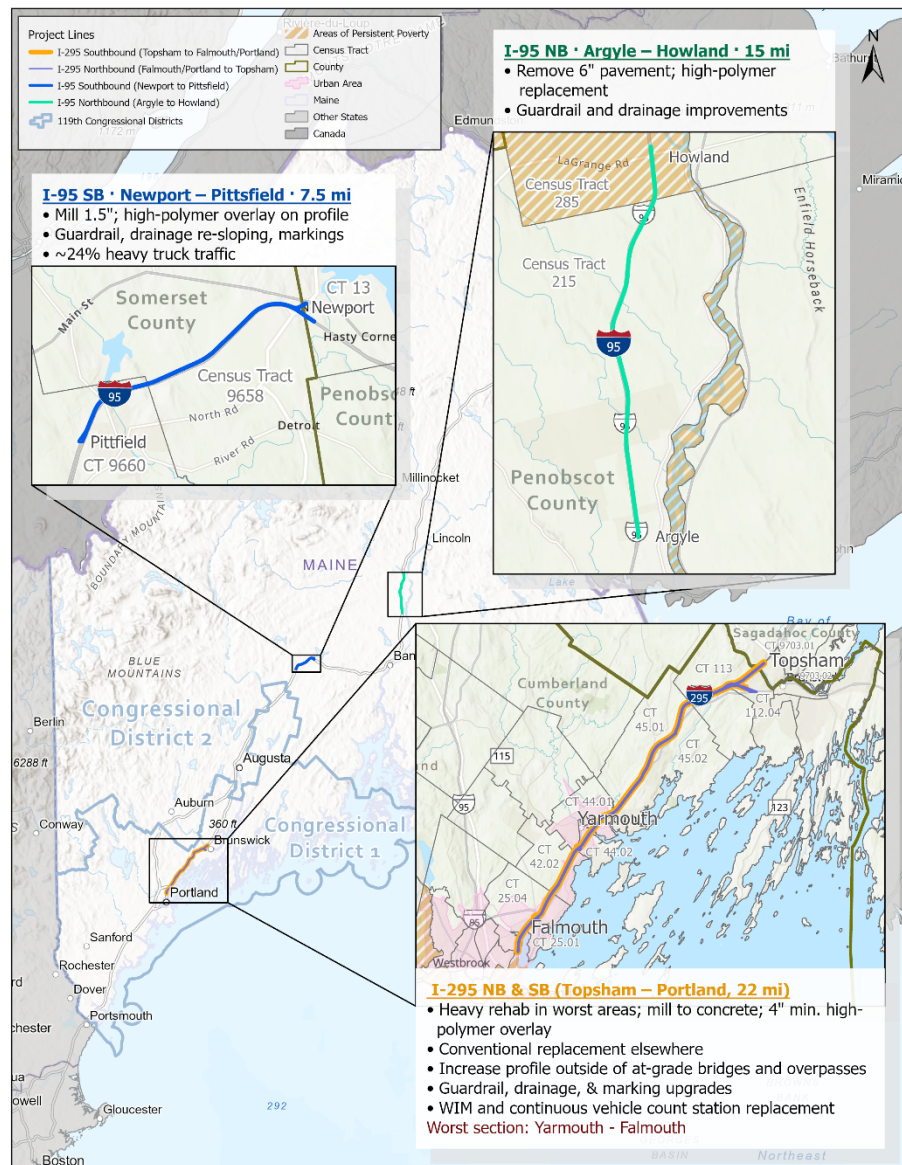
between southern and northern Maine, as well as Maine and eastern Canada.

- Restore deteriorating 1960s-era interstate pavement.
- Extend the service life and lower maintenance costs of the road surface by use of a high-polymer asphalt structural section placed over existing concrete.
- Deploy innovative materials and install new vehicle weigh-in-motion and continuous vehicle count technology on I-295.
- Advance MaineDOT's list of transportation infrastructure projects, tourism goals, freight plan, and safety elements.

Project Location

The I-295 segment runs from the railroad tracks overpass in Topsham (Sagadahoc County) 22 miles south through Brunswick, Freeport, Yarmouth, and Cumberland, and Falmouth to Portland (Cumberland County), in Congressional District ME-01. The I-95 segments lie in Penobscot and Somerset counties, in Congressional District ME-02. The southern I-295 corridor falls within the Portland, Maine Urbanized Area (UACE 71263; 2020 population 210,907) and is designated urban; the I-95 segments are designated rural.¹ The Project spans 13 Census Tracts; all are listed in the Project Budget section of the application.

The Project is reasonably expected to begin construction within 17 months of obligation. Absent INFRA funding, the work would take place in a piecemeal fashion over a very long horizon, while the road surface



¹ U.S. Census Bureau; Census Reporter, Portland, ME Urbanized Area (UACE 71263).

would continue to deteriorate. This would escalate maintenance costs (due to the need for additional band-aid repairs) as well as future replacement costs (due to inflation). It would also increase crash exposure on the corridor carrying the most passenger traffic and freight in Maine.

Network of Projects Statement of Work

The Project qualifies as a Network of Projects under 23 U.S.C. § 117: four programmed interstate highway Projects addressing the same transportation challenge — the structural failure of Maine's 1960s-era interstate pavement and the safety consequences of the deterioration — delivered as one coordinated statewide program. Each component has independent utility. Project components will be advertised as two construction packages to decrease mobilization costs and reduce traffic disruptions. The Project consists of:

- **I-295 Southbound, Topsham to Portland (22 miles):** Remove current asphalt layer down to the top of the old concrete below; install a SAMI layer (Stress Absorbing Mastic Interlayer) directly upon the exposed concrete surface, and placing a minimum of a four-inch, high-polymer asphalt pavement over the SAMI layer. Employ a conventional removal and replacement of asphalt for 10 miles in each direction in areas that are not seeing severe deterioration. For other areas, apply a heavy rehabilitation with concrete repair; remove deteriorating asphalt all the way down to the top of the concrete, replace with a 4-inch minimum high polymerized asphalt, increasing profile where possible to add structure above the concrete. Increase the profile outside of at-grade bridges and overpasses. At-grade bridges and overpasses will receive heavier treatment. Make safety improvements to 33,500 linear feet of guardrails, improve road surface drainage, apply highly-reflective pavement markings, replace weigh-in-motion and continuous vehicle count stations. The most deteriorated section of roadway in the Network of Projects (Yarmouth to Falmouth) is located in this section.
- **I-295 Northbound, Portland to Topsham (22 miles):** Same treatment as the southbound portion detailed above, advertised alongside the southbound work as one package to reduce costs. Remove current asphalt layer down to the top of the old concrete below; install a SAMI layer (Stress Absorbing Mastic Interlayer) directly upon the exposed concrete surface, and placing a minimum of a four-inch, high-polymer asphalt pavement over the SAMI layer.
- **I-95 Southbound, Newport to Pittsfield (7.5 miles):** After assessing surface treatment success at other locations along I-95 with similar heavy truck volumes, MaineDOT proposes removing a 1.5-inch layer of asphalt by milling, and replace it with a high-polymer asphalt layer on top of the existing profile. Additional improvements include replacing or restoring 12,750 linear feet of guardrails, improving road surface drainage by re-sloping both travel lanes, and applying highly-reflective pavement markings. This is a high-truck-volume segment of I-95 with about 24 percent of the overall traffic consisting of heavy trucks.
- **I-95 Northbound, Argyle to Howland (15 miles):** Perform a heavy rehabilitation scope by removing six inches of pavement and replacing it with new high polymer asphalt, 5,200 linear feet of guardrail replacements, and drainage improvements.

The Project lies entirely on the U.S. Interstate System. The I-295 segment, part of the National Highway System, runs from the railroad tracks overpass in Topsham (Sagadahoc County) 22 miles south through Brunswick, Freeport, Yarmouth, and Cumberland, and Falmouth to Portland

(Cumberland County), in Congressional District ME-01. The I-95 segments, part of the National Highway System (NHS) and National Highway Freight Network (NHFN), lie in Penobscot and Somerset counties, in Congressional District ME-02. The southern I-295 corridor falls within the Portland, Maine Urbanized Area (UACE 71263; 2020 population 210,907) and is designated urban; the I-95 segments are rural.² Because the majority of Project cost is spent in the urban I-295 corridor, the Project is designated urban, with rural components identified to calculate the Budget's urban/rural cost split. The project location file accompanies the application.

Background and History

I-295 and the segments of I-95 that are part of the Project were originally constructed as concrete roadway in the early 1960s; the I-95 segments were built from 1962 to 1963. By the 1980s, the concrete was cracking and developing potholes, so it was overlaid with asphalt to greatly improve the road surface. As the asphalt deteriorated over time during the next few decades, the corridors received successive paving jobs, most recently a 2016 to 2017 pavement project on I-295. Today, in most sections, only a few inches of asphalt sit atop the original concrete. Given the high volume of heavy trucks and 70 mph speeds in some areas, the Department has seen some segments hold up poorly.

Existing Conditions

Beginning in late 2023, the underlying concrete began cracking at its expansion joints, and that instability has made its way to the roadway surface in the form of cracks, potholes, spalls, and ruts, most severely on the busy eight-mile Yarmouth to Falmouth section.



A portion of I-295 in Cumberland County showing extensive cracks and spalling.

In 2025, MaineDOT's pavement testing team used ground-penetrating radar and pavement samples, as well as a LiDAR run capturing cross-slope and rutting areas. Field investigation confirmed that the pavement failure was structural, not just on the surface. Core samples that were dug revealed that the 1980s asphalt overlay layer was debonding from the concrete, with reflective cracking propagating from the concrete's expansion joints. Ground-penetrating radar and LiDAR quantified the rutting and cross-slope loss that impair drainage and wet-weather traction. This revealed the need to do more than just simply apply another layer of asphalt that no longer holds, but to more structurally rebuild the highway surface. MaineDOT recognizes the need to provide a more permanent and durable fix, but needs Federal funding to help support the high cost.

² U.S. Census Bureau, Census Reporter, Portland, ME Urbanized Area (UACE 71263).

Users and Beneficiaries

Maine's population has increased 6.4 percent annually over the past decade.³ Maine and New Hampshire are currently tied as the fastest-growing states in New England by percentage. Both states experienced population gains primarily driven by domestic migration — people moving from other U.S. states.⁴

The Project's users and beneficiaries include interstate passenger drivers and commuters between Portland and the Mid-coast and Bangor regions, as well as freight carriers and the approximately 9 percent (I-295) to 24 percent (I-95) of traffic that is heavy trucks supporting national and international freight movement, along with New England and Maine's diverse economy. Tourists and visitors rely on the fast and efficient interstate highway connections to numerous tourist areas. The Project will greatly support the state's \$8.6 billion tourism industry. Given the remoteness of much of Maine, first responders rely on the interstate for speedy response and are disrupted by lane-blocking incidents.

Quantitative Facts

- 2024 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on I-295 ranges from approximately 24,140 to 29,670 vehicles per day by segment, projected to grow to approximately 26,820 to 32,970 by 2046.⁵
- Heavy trucks make up approximately 9 percent of I-295 traffic and approximately 24 percent of I-95 Newport to Pittsfield traffic.
- Approximately 86 percent of Maine freight tonnage moves by truck; in 2015 about 97 million tons valued at \$96 billion moved over Maine's transportation system.⁶
- I-295 had 1,890 reported crashes from 2018 to 2025 (1,012 NB; 878 SB), including 7 fatalities and 438 injuries, or about 236 crashes per year.⁷
- Statewide, only 31 percent of Interstate pavement is rated Good against a 35 percent State of Good Repair (SGR) target; these segments lead that backlog.⁸

Consistency with INFRA and USDOT Goals

The Project is consistent with USDOT's *2026 National Freight Strategic Plan* and aligns with **all** INFRA Outcome Criteria. The *Freight Strategic Plan* details the goals for a **Safe** and **Efficient** freight system in the U.S. The Project supports two critical Strategic Objectives that these goals are founded upon:

1. *Reduce or eliminate serious injuries and fatalities of the freight system* – employ a better road surface and safety technologies to reduce crashes.
2. *Accelerate deployment of proven safety technologies in freight operations and infrastructure* – employ an improved pavement surface that will improve vehicle traction and reduce standing water on the road surface so vehicles can move safely, even in the harsh winter conditions in Maine; install cable median barriers; upgrade guardrails that are out of safety compliance.

³ Federal Reserve Economic Data, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

⁴ *All Six New England States Gain Population, but Demographic Basis of Gain Varies*, University of New Hampshire, January 2026, <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/all-six-new-england-states-gain-population-demographic-basis-gain-varies>

⁵ MaineDOT traffic data.

⁶ Maine Integrated Freight Strategy (2017); Maine State Freight Plan.

⁷ MaineDOT Office of Safety, crash summary reports, I-295 NB and SB, 2018 to 2025.

⁸ Maine Office of Tourism (2025).