



# MaineDOT View

## Prioritization drives new capital goals

**O**VER THE LAST YEAR OR SO, three *Maine Trails* articles have outlined MaineDOT's framework to manage Maine's highway system based on highway corridor priorities (HCP) and customer service levels (CSL). In the last article, we illustrated how the HCP/CSL matrix will be used to benchmark current highway and bridge conditions and to assist with prioritization of candidate projects for the biennial work plan.

In this article, MaineDOT is proposing new capital goals based upon this same framework. This approach allows us to achieve our mission of responsibly providing the safest and most reliable transportation possible given available resources. These new goals have been submitted for legislative consideration in this session (L.D. 1753 – An Act to Improve Transportation in the State, Part B). If adopted, these “right-sized” goals and practical designs will cut our unmet capital needs *nearly in half*, setting the stage for more realistic and hopeful discussions regarding capital funding.

### EXISTING GOALS

The Maine Legislature set the existing capital goals in 2007 (PL 2007, Chapter 470). These goals, codified in 23 MRSA §73 (6), were a milestone in that they set a direction and provided a requirement for MaineDOT to report progress towards them on a biennial basis. The original goals were developed during a time when there was a reasonable expectation for substantially increased federal and state funding for surface transportation. But times have changed. Neither the federal nor state motor fuel tax is likely to increase in these challenging times, and other options such as a mileage-based user fee are not yet viable. Just as families and businesses need to set priorities and revisit their goals when money is tight, we need to set realistic expectations in order to continue to provide a safe and reliable transportation system.

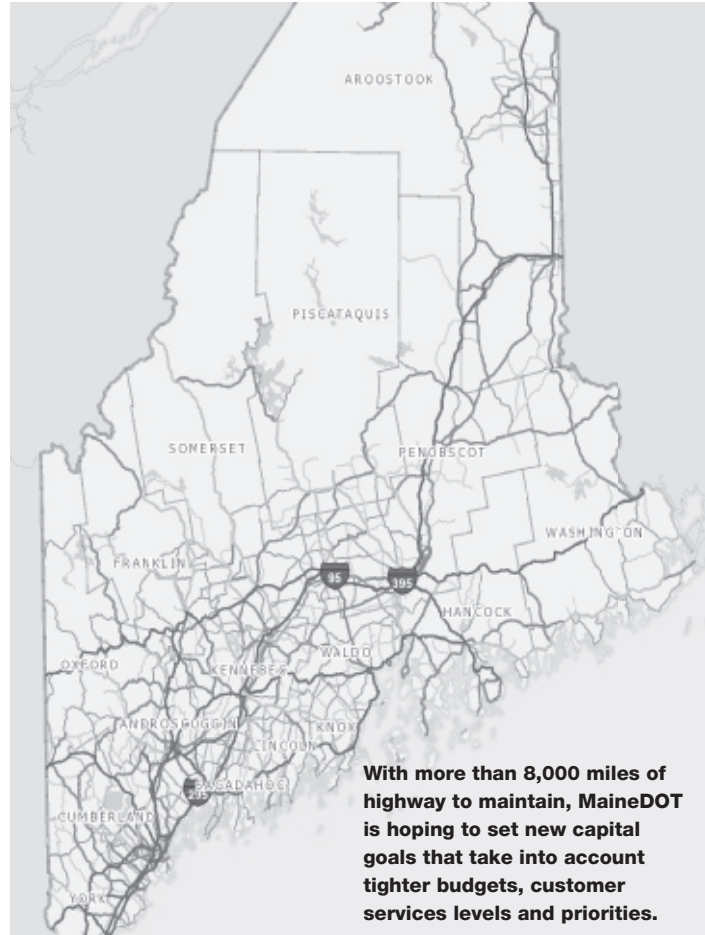
Comparing the cost of the existing goals against funding resulted in a \$2.7 billion highway and bridge unmet need over the next ten years, leaving us \$270 million per year short. To place this figure in context, this equates to nearly a 40-cent increase per gallon in fuel tax, currently set at 30 cents.

### PROPOSED ‘RIGHT-SIZED’ GOALS

Our proposed right-sized goals based on highway corridor priorities and customer service levels are customer-focused, outcome based and will lead to common sense transportation solutions. They will provide a transportation system that is adequate and meets the public need versus “one size fits all” national design standards that Maine simply cannot afford.

The proposed replacement goals can be summarized as follows:

- **Priority 1 and 2 Highways**  
Eliminate all CSL “D”s and “F”s in 10 years (Safety, Condition and Service). All roads Fair or better.
- **Priority 3 Highways**  
Eliminate all CSL “D”s and “F”s in 15 years (Safety, Condition and Service). All roads Fair or better.



**With more than 8,000 miles of highway to maintain, MaineDOT is hoping to set new capital goals that take into account tighter budgets, customer services levels and priorities.**

MAINEDOT

- **Priority 4 Highways**

Implement a program that will maintain Ride Quality at “C” (Fair) or better within five years.

- **Priority 5 Highways**

Continue the seven-year cycle for light capital paving.

As an integral part of the HCP/CSL framework, bridge CSLs would have similar targets for safety, condition and service, with public safety being paramount.

*Even with these right-sized goals, there would still be a substantial unmet capital need, but the need would be reduced by nearly half.* Full highway and bridge reconstruction would be targeted to the higher priority highways, while lower priority highways would see more highway rehabilitation, paving and bridge repairs versus full reconstruction.

Once we have reasonable capital goals based on customer expectations and have stretched available dollars using practical designs, the stage is set for policy debates about state priorities and transportation funding needs. Working with the governor and our congressional delegation, we look forward to those discussions. ■