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**Dennis S. Damon and Boyd P. Marley, Letter to Governor John E. Baldacci, re: An Act to Keep Bridges Safe, April 2,2008**

Maine Department of Transportation

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ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE

April 2, 2008

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Governor John E. Baldacci  
1 Statehouse Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Governor Baldacci:

We are writing to enlist your support to address Maine's crumbling transportation networks. As Co-Chairs of the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, we are alarmed by the mounting evidence that these networks are increasingly unsafe and are unable to meet the needs of Maine's economy. At the same time, Maine is part of a nationwide transportation funding crisis. This crisis is being caused by a perfect storm of reduced fuel tax revenues, high operating costs, and high construction costs, all of which are driven by historic energy costs and worldwide demand for materials.

Last year, the Maine Department of Transportation's Long Range Transportation Plan concluded that Maine has a \$2.2 billion shortfall between needs and resources over the next 10 years. Maine has 22,670 miles of public roads, 20% of which are in "mediocre" or "poor" condition. (Source: DOT Long-Range Transportation Plan, April 2007)

More urgently, your own Bridge Task Force concluded that Maine needs to nearly double its annual investment in bridge repair and maintenance just to maintain the bridges we have. They recommend an additional \$50 to \$60 million annually. Some details:

Maine has 2,000 bridges in "fair" or "poor" condition.  
Maine is currently repairing/replacing about 14 bridges a year.  
Additional funds will increase this to 30-40 bridges a year. Even replacing 37 bridges a year, the average age of Maine bridges will remain at or above 50 years.  
(Sources: Governor's Bridge Task Force, 2007 and Maine Better Transportation Association)

Similarly, Maine's railroad network needs to be upgraded. Soaring energy prices have underscored the advantages of rail for moving people and goods. Maine businesses have frequently commented that the ability to ship freight efficiently is fundamental to their competitiveness. Freight rail can provide that competitive advantage.

To address all of these issues, we are requesting that you immediately submit a Governor's bill for bonding through the TransCap Fund, which was established in 2007 P.L. Chapter 470. The bonds, approximately \$40 million a year for each of the next four years, would be used to begin to fund the bridge improvement plan developed by the Governor's Bridge Task Force and to pay for the improvement of key freight rail lines. The investment in bridge repairs will also allow DOT to expand its road repair program within existing resources.

We recommend that these revenue bonds be funded through modest increases in fees for vehicle registration, vehicle titles, vanity plates, and any other areas you identify. This initiative can be funded while keeping these fees at or below the New England average.

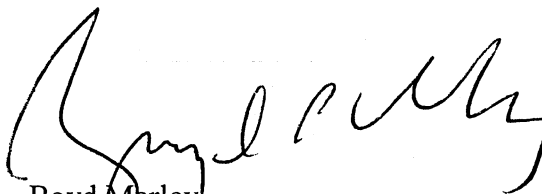
We are very mindful of the impact of any action on Maine's trucking industry. The approach we have outlined will benefit that industry by increasing demand for their services and by reducing repair costs associated with deteriorated road conditions for all motorists.

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. To succeed at this time, we strongly believe you must lead this effort, starting with a Governor's bill. Efforts without you in the past have failed. However, with your support, and the hard work of the Transportation Committee and the entire Legislature, we believe we can succeed. The safety and economic prosperity of Maine citizens requires no less.

Sincerely,



Dennis Damon  
Senate Co-Chair



Boyd Marley  
House Co-Chair