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**Letter from David A. Cole to Maine officials, re: Competitive
Transportation Programs, January 14, 2008**

Maine Department of Transportation

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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
16 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
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JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

DAVID A. COLE
COMMISSIONER

Responding to this letter via the enclosed forms is the single most effective way to make MaineDOT aware of your transportation improvement needs. To receive full consideration, your requests must be received by your municipalities Regional Council by March 17, 2008.

January 14, 2008

Dear Official:

I am writing to inform you that the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is initiating its biennial request for transportation project priorities to Maine municipalities, Indian Tribes and County Commissioners. This mailing marks the beginning of MaineDOT's preparation for the State Fiscal Years 2010-2011 Capital Work Plan which will be submitted to the Legislature in early 2009. MaineDOT is asking your municipality or organization to respond to the enclosed attachments to communicate your transportation requests. Although we continuously receive correspondence leading to requests for capital transportation projects, we formally contact municipalities and other stakeholders for transportation capital projects consistent with the state budget cycle every two years.

As you are aware, the gap between transportation needs versus revenue continues to grow. While construction inflation continues to increase due in large part to global demand for materials, transportation revenue growth has been marginal, if at all, due to factors such as increasingly fuel efficient vehicles or people choosing to drive less because of high fuel costs. In Maine, the demand and expectation for transportation investments continues to grow. MaineDOT needs to increase bridge funding by up to \$50 million a year and continues to spend the vast majority of its transportation resources simply maintaining existing transportation system components.

Since project prioritization for the 2010-2011 biennium will likely be more difficult than ever before, MaineDOT is partnering with Maine's Regional Council (RC) network throughout the state. Municipalities will send project request forms directly to their RC by March 17, 2008 which will evaluate them for consistency with Regional Transportation Strategies and *Connecting Maine*, MaineDOT's 20-Year Transportation Plan prior to returning them to MaineDOT. Both the *Regional Strategic Investment Plans* and *Connecting Maine* were developed with significant public input and MaineDOT held outreach sessions throughout the state. This timeframe is necessary due to the need for spring and summer field reviews and project cost estimating. Projects will ultimately be selected based on factors such as capital funding, safety, system preservation needs, statewide or regional benefit and the potential for transportation investment to stimulate or complement economic growth.

Enclosed are two forms, MaineDOT's *Competitive Transportation Programs* and *Transportation Project Request*, to be completed and returned to the RC indicated on each. MaineDOT is asking that they be submitted to RCs by March 17, 2008.



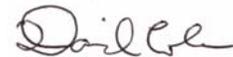
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For all *MaineDOT's Competitive Transportation Programs* your municipality simply has to indicate on the appropriate form that your municipality is interested in receiving more information about these specific programs. If you express interest and funding becomes available for these programs, MaineDOT will follow-up with additional information in the coming months. Indicating interest does not commit you to ultimately apply for any program.

The *Transportation Project Request* form provides an opportunity for you to submit your transportation priorities for all other types of projects. Since MaineDOT's projected funding will likely be predominantly limited to safety, rehabilitation, bridge and system preservation projects which are identified by engineering life-cycle assessments in addition to municipal and other requests, we recommend that you focus your requests linked to these project types. Project requests have a greater likelihood of being funded if they are directly linked to growing Maine's economy, such as supporting tourism. This disclosure regarding technical inputs into project selection and basic system maintenance needs is not intended to discourage you from submitting your priorities. It just reiterates the need for all of us to think regionally in transportation investment decision-making. Again, we are asking you to fill out and forward the *Transportation Project Request* form to the RC indicated on the form, which will initially review your transportation priorities and place them in context with *Connecting Maine*, (MaineDOT's Long Range Plan), Regional Transportation Assessments and Regional Strategic Investment Plans prior to forwarding them to MaineDOT.

We understand that you are very busy and often wear many hats, so we hope this approach will allow you to submit your priorities in a simple and direct manner. If you should have questions, please feel free to contact your Regional Council or Bill Croce at bill.croce@maine.gov or at 624-3282. We thank you in advance for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



David A. Cole,
Commissioner