



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Executive Council

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November 25, 2019

His Excellency, Christopher T. Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu:

Pursuant to RSA 228:99 and RSA 240 of the Laws of New Hampshire, enclosed are two copies of the draft 2021-2030 Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (Ten Year Plan) for the State of New Hampshire.

The Department met with the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) on June 19, 2019 and July 31, 2019 to begin the development of the 2021-2030 Ten Year Plan and to receive strategic direction on a number of policy issues regarding funding, prioritization of investments, financial constraint and unfunded needs. Based on discussions with and direction received from GACIT over multiple meetings, the DOT developed the Draft Ten Year Plan. It addressed financial constraint assuming level federal funding when the federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act expires with continued reliance on turnpike toll credits in lieu of State hard match to the federal highway program. The draft plan addressed the highest priorities developed by each Regional Planning Commission. The result was a financially constrained document identifying the needs that best aligned with the priorities of communities, Regional Planning Commissions and the DOT. The DOT prepared and presented a financially constrained Draft Ten Year Plan for 2021-2030 to GACIT on August 14, 2019. Proposed strategies for the Draft Ten Year Plan included completion of I-93 improvements and increased funding for Exit 4A, financially constraining the Ten Year Plan, bonding to complete major bridge projects, and continued prioritization of preservation by increasing investment in bridge projects and resurfacing programs to mitigate the impact of inflation.

GACIT held twenty (20) public hearings throughout the state in September and October, with the final hearing held on October 28, 2019. Written comments were accepted through November 12, 2019. In addition, new to this GACIT phase, an online transportation survey was made available to anyone with access to the internet, and the survey was open for use until November 12, 2019.

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Over 400 comments were expressed through the Hearing process: the need to expand travel options (transit, bicycle, pedestrian and other non-vehicle efforts) was heard the most, and the need to address infrastructure condition including pavements, bridge, safety and congestion were important themes. Also, many attending the public hearings advocated for advancing projects or increasing project funding. The purpose of the on-line survey was to gather public feedback on ten-year plan strategies. The majority of the 1600 survey respondents affirmed the need to address infrastructure condition, safety and congestion as the most important transportation investment priorities; expanding travel options was important, and there was some support expressed for addressing resiliency.

On November 6, 2019, NHDOT met with GACIT to present a summary of the online survey findings, to present specific requests heard at the 20 GACIT Hearings and the DOT's recommendations on how best to address those requests, as well as to present a recommendation on funding new CMAQ projects as part of the recent application process. Also, concurrence was given to the DOT to move forward with all of the DOT's proposed recommendations in updating the draft Ten Year Plan.

The modified plan includes \$78M in additional GARVEE bonds to be issued to bring the total new issuance to \$158M. This will allow the Department to accelerate the construction of existing red list bridge projects, increase funding for projects that were identified as being underfunded like projects on US Route 2 in Jefferson and NH16 in Dummer, and add a new project to construct Phase 3 of NH106 improvements in Loudon.

The DOT then met with each of the GACIT members individually to review their comments and for the Councilors to provide direction to the DOT on final changes to be made to the draft 2021-2030 Ten Year Plan.

Due to the current low interest rates on financing, GACIT directed the DOT to utilize \$44M in General Obligation (GO) 10-year bonds issued in SFY22 to advance the construction of thirty-six municipal bridge projects 1 to 5 years. The State Aid Bridge (SAB) Program is presently subscribed until 2028 and bonding would allow much needed and deferred municipal bridges to be replaced or rehabilitated by 2024. Present day interest rates on 10-year Bonds are at exceptionally low levels with rates estimated at 1.8%. Annual debt service is estimated to be approximately \$4.8M per year and amounts to approximately 70% of the SB367 revenue set aside for the SAB program.

As this Draft Ten Year Plan was developed, it became evident that there are several challenges that will need to be addressed in future Ten Year Plans. Following is a list of additional items that GACIT desires to bring to the attention of the Governor and Legislature.

- Advocate for NH's fair share of existing federal funding

Encourage the Governor, Legislature and Federal Delegation to continue to advocate in Washington for NH to receive its fair share of Federal Surface Transportation Funding as NH receives the lowest total amount nationally. In FY2020, NH is scheduled to receive \$41.5M and \$58.9M less in federal formula apportionment than fellow New England states Vermont and Rhode Island, respectively. This seriously impacts NH's ability to maintain its roads and bridges in fair and good condition.

- Advocate for additional state funding in 2026 to close the revenue gap created by the sunset of TIFIA rural roads and bridges pledge

Encourage the Legislature to identify a new revenue source to replace \$23M in SB367 funding allocated annually to the TIFIA State Owned Rural Roads and Bridges pledge that will sunset in state fiscal year 2025. This investment has contributed to the improved conditions of rural roads and bridges on the state system. Continuing this level of investment will assist in minimizing the number of red list bridges and maintaining Tier 3 and 4 roads in good or fair condition, of which 1100 miles are ineligible for federal aid.

- Address inequity that some communities face when traveling on certain portions of the Turnpike system.

Due to the location of toll plazas, certain commuters travel through multiple toll plazas traveling to and from work (e.g. residents of Rochester and surrounding communities). The Governor and Legislature should collaborate to review the rates, location of toll plazas and commuter discount programs in the next version of the Ten Year Plan and consider, in the interim, legislative responses that may be put in place more timely. Revenue implications must also be considered.

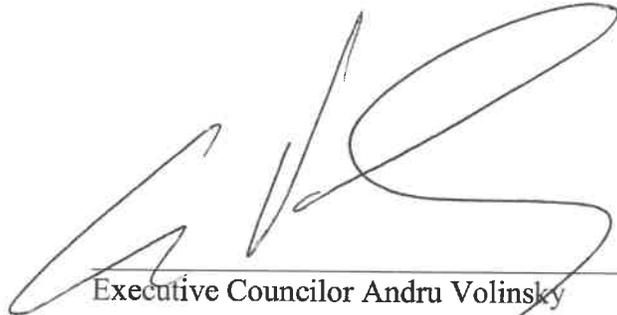
- Progression of the Capital Corridor Rail Project

With the passage of SB241, the next phase of the capital rail corridor has been included in the Draft Ten Year Plan. Timely progression and completion of the project development phase will identify a preferred alternative, complete the environmental assessment and provide a detailed financial plan. GACIT considers the timely development of the Capital Corridor Rail Project an important part of the Draft Ten Year Plan.

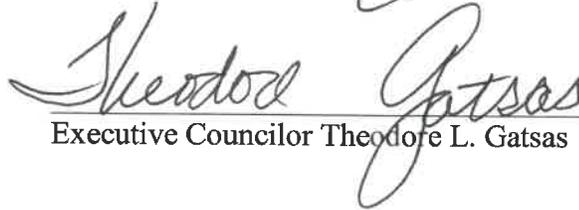
We believe this completes the Commission's work. The Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) hereby presents this recommended update to the Ten Year Plan for 2021-2030. A summary of the changes to the August 14th version of the Draft Ten Year Plan is attached to this letter for your reference. As you review the Plan document and other supporting information, we are available for any input you feel is needed, and we stand ready to assist you in completing the next step in the Plan.

Sincerely,


Executive Councilor Michael J. Cryans


Executive Councilor Andru Volinsky


Executive Councilor Russell E. Prescott


Executive Councilor Theodore L. Gatsas


Executive Councilor Debora B. Pignatelli


Commissioner Victoria F. Sheehan

Enclosures

1. GACIT Adopted 2021-2030 Ten Year Plan
2. Summary list of changes to August 14th Draft Ten Year Plan
3. Summary of GACIT process & testimony

cc: William J. Cass, Assistant Commissioner, NH Department of Transportation
Christopher M. Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner, NH Department of Transportation
Peter E. Stamnas, Director of Project Development, NH Department of Transportation
William E. Watson, Administrator, Bureau of Planning and Community Assistance, NHDOT
GACIT members