

Regional Transportation Priorities Survey Results

Introduction

Northern Maine Development Commission completed a regional transportation priorities survey in August 2015. The survey was completed using Survey Monkey with announcements emailed to municipalities, and businesses in Aroostook County. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information from municipalities, businesses, and other interested stakeholders on Aroostook County's transportation infrastructure and to determine what the region's priorities for this infrastructure are. Our goal is to ensure that MaineDOT is well aware of the region's priorities when they develop projects for their Capital Work Plan. The survey is for planning purposes only.

Sixty (60) detailed responses were received and provide an overview of the region's priorities as they relate to Aroostook County's transportation systems.

What Transportation Mode is the most regional important?

Respondents were asked to rank the region's transportation modes. Modes included: roads, bridges, rail, airports, and trails. **Roads** ranked as the highest priority mode of transportation in the region followed by **bridges, rail, airports/air services, and trails**. Overall 58 of the 60 respondents ranked **roads** as their highest priority followed by **bridges**. In several of the comments received roads and bridges were used interchangeably and were often thought of as a single component. **Rail** was a distant third followed by **airports/ air services**. Only 2 responded that **trails** were the most regionally important transportation mode.

Mode	Weighted Average
Roads	1.05 (58)*
Bridges	1.59 (31)
Rail	2.47 (13)
Airports/Air services	2.74 (6)
Trails	3.30 (2)

*= number of respondents that indicated the mode as their top priority

The following table shows the total responses to this question.

Mode	Most Important	(no label)	Moderately Important	(no label)	Not Important	Total	Weighted Average
Roads	96.67% 58	1.67% 1	1.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	60	1.05
Bridges	52.54% 31	38.98% 23	5.08% 3	3.39% 2	0.00% 0	59	1.59
Rail	22.81% 13	36.84% 21	21.05% 12	8.77% 5	10.53% 6	57	2.47
Airports/air service	10.53% 6	29.82% 17	43.86% 25	7.02% 4	8.77% 5	57	2.74
Trails	3.51% 2	26.32% 15	22.81% 13	31.58% 18	15.79% 9	57	3.30

Overall condition

Participants were then asked to rank what they felt was the overall condition of their top priority transportation mode. Slightly over 61% responded that the condition was fair, followed by poor (18.3%), good (15%), and very poor (5%). No one responded that the mode was in excellent condition.

Condition	Responses
Very poor	5.00% (3)
Poor	18.33% (11)
Fair	61.67% (37)
Good	15.00% (9)
Excellent	0.00% (0)
Total	60

Regardless of their perceived importance to the region, questions regarding specific transportation modes were asked. Modes were not listed in any specific order and a question for each mode was developed.

Roads

Participants were asked to identify what they felt was the most regionally important **road** with all 60 responding to this question. Several of the answers were generic (Route 1) while others were more specific (Route 1 between Mars Hill and Presque Isle). All 60 (100%) provided a response to the top priority, 54 (90%) responded with a second priority, and 41 (68%) provided a response as to the third priority.

The follow table shows a listing of all roads identified as most regionally important. In total 16 roads received a response. **US Route 1** was listed as the top priority in the region by nearly 42 percent of those responding, followed by Route 11 (20%) and Route 161 (12%) In some cases, roads such as the Danforth Road and Dickey Road were identified. It is assumed that these are Routes 1 and 161 respectively. **Route 1** received the highest number of responses in the second priority road corridor, followed by Route 11, and Route 161. There was an order change when respondents listed their third priority. Route 161 received 34% of the responses, followed by Route 1, and Route 11. Ultimately, Routes 1, 11, and 161 were listed as the region's priority corridors.

Route	Top Priority		Second Priority		Third Priority	
	Responses	Percent	Response	Percent	Response	Percent
Route 1	25 (1)	41.67	12 (1)	22.22	9 (2)	21.95
Route 11	12 (2)	20.00	11 (2)	20.37	7 (3)	17.07
Route 161	7 (3)	11.67	6 (3)	11.11	14 (1)	34.15
Route 2-A	4	6.67	1	1.85	1	2.44
Interstate 95	4	6.67	3	5.56	3	7.32
Route 1-A	4	6.67	8	14.81	2	4.88
Route 2	1	1.67	5	9.26	2	4.88
Foxcroft Road	1	1.67	0	0.00	0	0.00
Allagash Road	1	1.67	2	3.70	0	0.00
Route 228	1	1.67	0	0.00	0	0.00
Sly Brook Road	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Danforth Road	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Route 163	0	0.00	1	1.85	1	2.44
Route 162	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Route 169	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
Route 167	0	0.00	1	1.85	0	0.00
North Maine Woods Road System	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	2.44
Total Responses	60	100	54	100.00	41*	100.00

* One responded that “We don’t need a Bypass” which was not tabulated into the list.

When asked to identify what they felt was the most important issue impacting their top ranked corridor, respondent indicated that **condition of the route** was the most important issue, followed **heavy truck traffic through downtown**, and **lack of paved shoulders**. The following table indicates the responses received. A #1 response indicated top priority.

Issue	Most Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Weighted Average
Speed	22.64% 12	41.51% 22	1.89% 1	2.47
Heavy Truck Traffic through downtowns	40.74% 22	29.63% 16	1.85% 1	2.13
Unrestricted access (too many driveways or entrances)	6.00% 3	44.00% 22	20.00% 10	3.34
Lack of paved shoulders	32.69% 17	13.46% 7	7.69% 4	2.27
Condition of route	66.04% 35	1.89% 1	0.00% 0	1.40
Congestion	3.92%	37.25%	17.65%	

Issue	Most Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	Weighted Average
	2	19	9	3.41
Mixed uses (bicycle/pedestrian/horses/v ehicles)	17.31% 9	25.00% 13	17.31% 9	2.98

The following ten (10) comments regarding corridors were provided:

- Pot Holes, Cracks, and Culverts sinking.
- Lack of sidewalks and multi-modal access.
- Keeping pavement in A1 condition, winters are hard on our roads.
- Gross Vehicle Weight Limits are too low = more trips
- Passing lanes
- Speed of rail
- Adding a truck lane in the New construction of Soucy Hill on Rt. 11
- Sections need rebuild
- Dangerous speeds on state roads, speed not policed, i.e. roads in St. Agatha, 70+ mph in 35 mph zones
- Soucy Hill

And finally regarding **roads**, when asked what the State's top priority should be, improvements to the existing rural highway (45%), north-south transportation connection improvements (33%) and improvements in freight train and marine shipping facilities were the top three vote getters.

Answer Choices	Responses
East-West transportation connection improvements	3.33% 2
North-South transportation connection improvements	33.33% 20
Alleviating congestion in town and city centers by building bypasses	5.00% 3
Community amenities such as pedestrian and bicycle path improvements	3.33% 2
Passenger transportation such as local bus system and passenger rail improvements	0.00% 0
Improvements to existing rural highways	45.00% 27
Improvements in freight trains and marine shipping facilities	10.00% 6
Total	60

Bridges

Forty-nine (82%) provided a response to the most regionally important bridge. Bridges over the Aroostook River received the most responses (28) or 57% of the responses. Specifically the Aroostook River Bridge in Presque Isle received the highest number of responses (10) followed by Aroostook River Bridge in Caribou (7), and Ashland (7). Fourteen individual bridges were identified as being regionally important.

Bridge Name	Responses	Percent
Aroostook River Bridge (Presque Isle)	10	20.41
Aroostook River Bridge (Caribou)	7	14.29
Aroostook River (Ashland)	7	14.29
North Street (Houlton)	4	8.16
International Bridge (Fort Kent and Madawaska)	4	8.16
Fish River Bridge (Main St. Fort Kent)	2	4.08
Aroostook River (Fort Fairfield)	2	4.08
All are equal	2	4.08
St. John River Bridge (Allagash)	2	4.08
All bridges across Aroostook River	2	4.08
Mattawamkeag River	1	2.04
Millinocket	1	2.04
No idea	1	2.04
Molunkus Stream (Sherman)	1	2.04
Baskaheagan Stream (Danforth)	1	2.04
Mill Bridge (Fort Kent)	1	2.04
St. John River (Van Buren)	1	2.04
Total	49	100

Airports and Air Services

Survey respondents were asked to identify what they believed to be the most regionally important airport or air service was. Fifty-six (56) responses were received and an overwhelming number (77%) indicated that the most regionally important airport was the Northern Maine Regional Airport located in Presque Isle.

Airport Name	Responses	Percent
Northern Maine Regional (Presque Isle)	43	76.79
Houlton International (Houlton)	4	7.14
Bangor International (Bangor)	3	5.36
Loring (Limestone)	2	3.57
Northern Aroostook (Frenchville)	2	3.57
None	2	3.57
Total	56	100

Rail and Rail Service

When asked what the region's priority for rail and rail service should be, over 60 percent of those responding (38) indicated that freight rail should be the top priority. Twenty nine percent felt that both rail and passenger rail service should be the top priority while 3 percent felt that passenger service should be the focus.

Other Modes

While the region does not contain a true public transportation system, **public transportation** was listed as being the region's top priority for other modes of transportation. This was followed by **car and van pooling**, **on road bicycle and pedestrian trails**, and **off road bicycle and pedestrian trails**. Comments received concerning **other modes** included (no order implied):

- Wider shoulders for Amish Buggies and horses.
- Log and freight trucks
- Focus on higher payloads = Less Loads on roads
- Bypassing local towns and cities
- These are less important in rural counties.
- Monitoring of excessive speed by cars and large trucks in residential

When asked what **other** mode would be utilized more often if available, off road bicycle and pedestrian trail was the most identified other mode with 56% of the responses. A majority of the respondents indicated that they would not utilize on road trails, public transportation, or car and van pooling to work if available.

Transportation Projects

And finally the survey asked respondents to list their top three transportation projects if they had a finite amount of funding available. Fifty seven (95%) responded with a top priority project. Responses were varied with some being very specific and other more generic. Several themes were seen in the answers. These included extending Interstate 95 north from Houlton (10 responses), upgrade existing roads (13 responses) and completing projects on Route 11 (5 responses). The following is a list of projects identified (no order implied):

- Improvement to existing rural highways
- Expanding 95 from Houlton north to Madawaska/Ft Kent
- Upgrade for current roads
- Rotary construction at Houlton Shopping Plaza
- Roads
- Rail service
- North South Highway
- Upgrade the current roads
- Caribou Road from Cross Lake to Fort Kent
- Extension of I-95 to Presque Isle Rte 1-A Mars hill to Limestone w/paved shoulders
- Widening road for bike and pedestrian travel
- Not a bypass- Upgrading Rt#1 north to south
- Paving existing infrastructure
- Public transportation

- Maintain & upgrade existing rural highways
- Rural road repair
- North South Interstate Expansion
- Study/research Maine/New Brunswick/Quebec freight transport issues as a region
- Replacement of bridges in immediate danger of failure
- Soucy Hill Upgrade on RT 11
- All of the Presque Isle bypass put on the ground including the bridge crossing the Aroostook River.
- Presque Isle bypass
- Rail Sidings - Rail Upgrades
- Road shoulders on Route 11
- Town roads
- Cost effective air transportation
- Improve rural roads
- East Road to Van Buren Road
- Reconstructing all town roads
- Keep Route 1 in excellent condition
- More rail car and locomotive availability/capacity
- 95 to the valley
- Pavement, Repair of US RTE 1 North of Van Buren
- By passing Soucy hill with less of grade
- Make US 1 a limited access highway
- Truck byway around Fort Kent
- Upgrade roads
- Fix Route 11, especially between Eagle Lake and Ashland
- Presque Isle bypass
- Upgrade the rest of Route 11, maintain same.
- Over-all road repair
- Extend 95 into Northern Aroostook County
- More policing of speeding in residential and downtowns
- North South Highway
- Soucy Hill - Route 11
- Improving condition of existing roads
- US Rt 1 from Mars Hill to Interstate 95 passing lanes & roadway improvement and maintenance
- Replacement of bridge on Green Street
- Extend I - 95 to Madawaska
- Complete upgrades to 161 to include paved shoulders
- I-95 North to the valley
- Replace existing Culverts on Stream Crossings
- Improve Rt 167 (Fort Rd) between PI and Fort Fairfield (grooves are bad)
- Roads
- Reconstruction of Rural Roads
- Rte 161 Town office - Dempsey Curve

Second Priority Projects (no order implied)

- Improvement to existing bridges

- Interstate north
- Foxcroft Road complete redesign and construction
- Rail
- Road conditions
- Upgrade the current roads with wider shoulders & passing lanes
- I-95 or other highway to Presque Isle
- Repair of Cross pipe on Airport Drive in Presque Isle
- Rte 11 Sherman to Ft Kent w/paved shoulders
- Complete construction of Route 11 where needed
- More fast/slow lanes on hills
- Bridge Analysis/Repair
- More passing lanes on Rt 1
- Upgrade bridges
- Public transportation
- East West Interstate
- Study for increasing truck weight capacity
- Reconstruction and paving of minor State routes
- Presque Bypass
- Major upgrade of Route 161 from the Ouellette Road in Ouellette north all the way to Ft. Kent.
- Secondary road upgrades
- Bridge Safety and Maintenance
- Improvements of RTE 11 turnoff to Soldier Pond Road (slope)
- Trails
- Routes 1,11,161 - passing lanes and improvements
- Extend off road highway to old Levesque Mill site
- Rista Rd
- Keep Route11 in excellent condition
- Higher rail speeds
- Efficiencies in Route 1
- Pavement of Secondary Streets
- Adding a truck lane to Soucy hill
- Make Rt 11 a limited access highway
- Improvements to conditions of all rural highways
- Rail upgrades
- Route 11 south of Ashland
- Extend route 95 north from Smyrna to Presque Isle
- Add more box cars and center beam cars to RR
- Culvert water control
- Properly pave Route 11
- Stricter monitoring of tractor trailers: speed, inspections, etc.
- Improved State Rt 161
- Improving road shoulders
- US Rt 1A from Ft. Kent to Limestone/Fort Fairfield to Mars Hill, same as above
- Replacement of culverts on minor collector roads
- Widen Route 1
- Complete upgrades to 163 to include paved shoulders
- Passenger Rail and Freight

- Rebuild, resurface feeder roads for Routes 2A, 2 & 1
- Rt 212 thru Moro, Merrill, Smyrna Mills
- Sidewalks
- Enhance Public Transportation Systems
- Rte 161 Market St - New Canada

Third Priority Projects

- Community amenities
- Passenger transportation throughout County
- Houlton Railyard infrastructure improvements (Boxcar Scale Installation)
- Airport services
- Upgrade the current roads.
- Presque Isle bypass
- Complete construction of Fort Kent to Allagash where needed
- Inspect all bridges
- Rail Service Upgrade - Passenger
- Upgrades to Rail
- Public Transportation
- Study/research for Tourism transport infrastructure/issues.
- Upgrade freight and passenger rail services
- Improve rail speed and reliability
- Bridge upgrades
- Increasing GVW allowances on highways
- 4-Corners Soldier Pond Road, New Canada Road, Sly Brook Road and Strip Road
- Secondary roads paved to current specs.
- More passing lanes on RT1
- Route 11 enhancements
- Passenger rail
- By passing around the town of Portage.
- Make US 1A limited access highway
- Extended asphalt shoulders on all routes
- Public transportation
- Route 11
- Rebuild bridges in Ashland (Rt. 11) and Masardis Garfield Rd. (Aroostook R)
- Bridge repair
- Extend passenger rail into Presque Isle or Caribou
- Amish safety
- Upgrade Rail
- Study safety of existing bridges
- N/A
- Overlay on minor collector roads
- Widen Route 1 A
- Affordable Air Service from the County
- Improve travel surface on existing town gravel roads
- Improve RT 164 (aka Washburn Rd) between Washburn and Caribou

- Improve Freight Rail System
- Rte 1 Fort Kent - Frenchville