2020 Annual Report

MAINE TURNPIKE

Safe | Reliable | Sustainable

Director's Letter

We are in the middle of one of the worst public health crises in world history. It rivals the deadly flu of 1918, the polio epidemic of the last century, the aids illnesses of 30 years ago, and perhaps even the plagues of Egypt as recorded in Exodus.

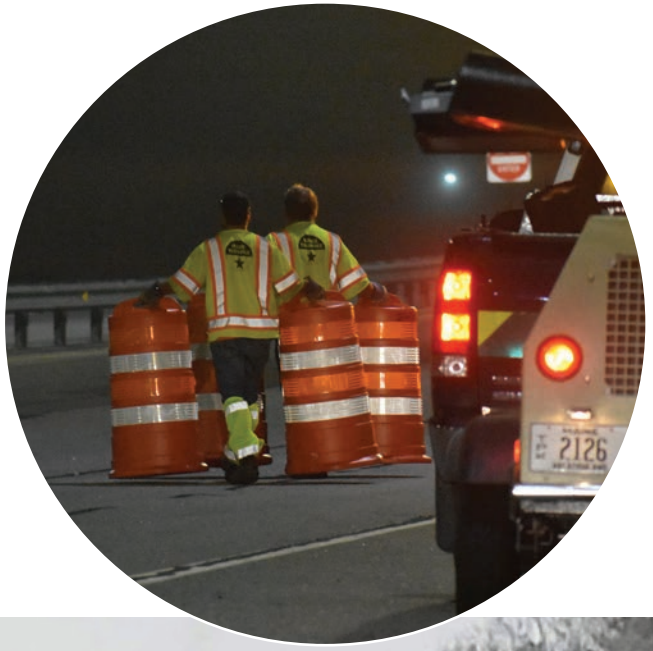
As we enter the winter months, COVID-19 has recently grown worse and is now spreading with greater intensity through all parts of the world including Maine. By now, every one of us has at least one friend or relative who has come down with the disease, and still others who have lost a job or a business because of the virus.

Those of us able to stay safely at work during the past year are far more fortunate than many others. Most Turnpike employees have been able to continue working in reasonable isolation from one another and often outdoors or in other ventilated settings. When the virus struck, the Turnpike had 19 capital contracts under construction or about to begin. After discussions with our contractors, we determined that nearly all of their outdoor construction work could continue safely if suitable precautions were followed in the field. As the work went forward, the Turnpike was able to pour millions of dollars into the economy of southern Maine at a time when it was desperately needed to keep bread on the table. And, we got a lot of good work done on widening the mainline, pre-loading the ground under Exit 45, adding new lanes to four Portland bridges, and rebuilding other sections of our 73-year old road.

Our employees are the ones who make it possible for this road to function so well and so smoothly even during these times of dreadful uncertainty. Although our commuter traffic diminished close to zero last spring, we continued to service nearly as many freight and delivery trucks as we did before the pandemic. We had an important role to play in keeping alive the Maine economy.

Peter Mills
Executive Director

MTA COVID-19 Operations



Maintenance

During the height of Maine's lockdown in the spring, the MTA kept the road open. Our highway crews patrolled the Pike to make sure travelers were safe, maintained the service plazas for the essential truck traffic, and responded to weather events. There were several snow and ice events during that time and that meant our crews were out treating the road. Although crews were reduced during the height of the pandemic, by May all of our maintenance personnel were back to work. Social distance protocols were put in to place to protect our crews and they continued to carry out their duties as usual, making repairs to guardrail, patching potholes, and mowing clear zones.

Toll Collection

Despite diminished traffic during the early stages of the pandemic, MTA toll collectors continued to work, preserving the option for customers to pay with cash. Staffing levels were decreased, allowing those who needed to stay home to do so.

For those working in the tolls, MTA consulted with medical advisors and studied CDC guidelines to implement precautions to keep collectors and customers safe. Collectors are at double arms' length from motorists and it takes only a second or two to complete most transactions. The factors of distance, shorter duration, and reduced frequency diminish risk. In addition, collectors wear nitrile gloves that are readily available. Each toll is supplied with disinfectant spray and wipes for regular use.

Customer Service

MTA closed the retail walk-in service for E-ZPass in March for 14 weeks. During this time, E-ZPass customer service was available to our customers online and over the phone. The number of calls was down at the beginning of the pandemic but gradually increased through the summer. In late June, with social distancing protocols in place to help keep the public and our E-ZPass Customer Service Representatives safe, the retail walk-in service reopened. There are now plexiglass separation barriers and markers on the floor to guide people while in line, as well as signage to ensure mask wearing and proper social distancing while in the area. As fall approached, the E-ZPass Customer Service Center was fielding just about as many calls and visits as would be expected under normal circumstances.

Traffic Management and Communications Center

The MTA's in-house Traffic Management and Communication Center (TMCC) ensured that drivers had a safe roadway to travel, and that the truckers could continue bringing in much needed supplies. The TMCC is staffed 24 hours a day--365 days a year (366 days in 2020). During the pandemic, the Communication Specialists that work in the TMCC provided coordination with state police, EMS, tow trucks and kept the traveling public informed about incidents on the roadway.

Service Plazas

The MTA owns five Service Plazas on the turnpike that provide travelers with food, restrooms, and fuel. These properties are leased by HMS Host and CN Brown. Our plazas provided travelers with mostly uninterrupted service of fuel and restrooms throughout the pandemic. Food service, however, was impacted during this time with decreased hours of operation for some concessions. MTA felt it was very important that these plazas remain open to provide much needed services to those in the trucking industry that were critical throughout the pandemic. At the plazas, the number of tables were reduced in accordance with Maine's rules on indoor gatherings, and cleaning and sanitization protocols were increased. As traffic came back, the number of customers at the service plazas increased as well.

Projects

Construction during Covid-19

Maine Turnpike Authority awarded $38 million worth of new construction projects in the spring of 2020. All in all during 2020, the Maine Turnpike spent $106.5 million on capital construction projects that helped to keep the economy of Southern Maine afloat during the pandemic-induced recession. Throughout the pandemic, work continued on many large infrastructure projects that were already underway. These projects include the construction of Open Road Toll Plazas in York and West Gardiner and several bridge projects in the Greater Portland Area. The Portland Area Widening Project was awarded in March of 2020, during a time when Maine was experiencing strict stay at home orders. MTA kept its contractors working safely throughout the pandemic. The decrease in cars on the road actually helped with the maintenance of traffic as more frequent lane closures were possible and some work normally done at night could be done during the day. We are grateful to our many Maine contractors who kept the Maine Turnpike Authority projects moving and Mainers employed during this time.

Concrete deck placement at Stroudwater River Bridge in Portland

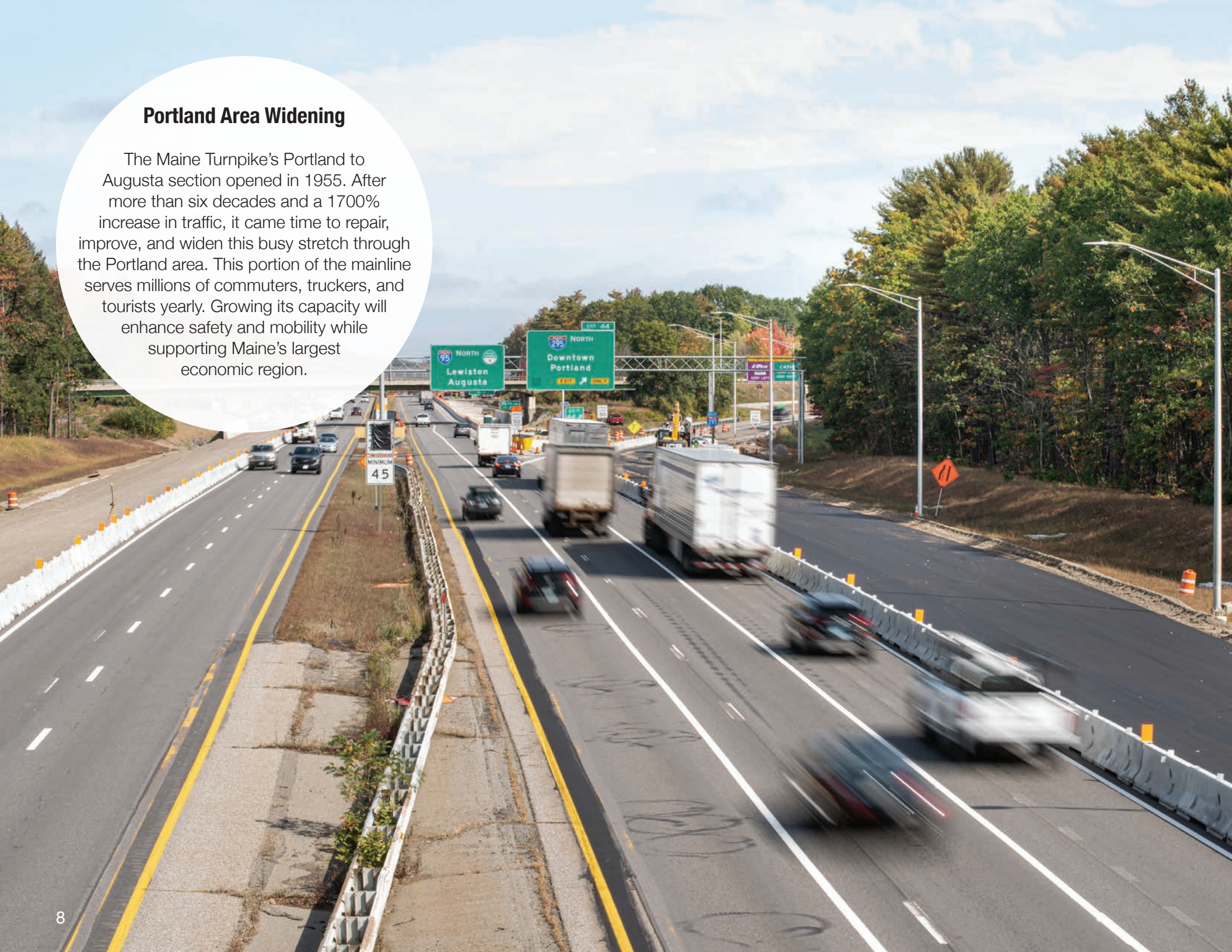
Portland Area Widening earthwork construction at mile 43 in Scarborough

LIST OF PROJECTS AWARDED IN 2020

Project Type	Municipality	Description	Amount
Capacity	Various	Portland Area Widening & Safety Improvements (Mile 43 to 46)	$28,000,000
Maintenance	Portland	Forest Ave/Riverside Industrial Park Emergency Vehicle Ramp	$674,000
Maintenance	Wells	Burnt Mill Road Emergency Vehicle Ramp	$321,000
Maintenance	York	Cider Hill Emergency Vehicle Ramp	$264,000
Maintenance	York	Mountain Road Emergency Vehicle Ramp	$111,000
Paving	Various	Pavement Rehabilitation (Mile 35.3 to Mile 42)	$7,600,000
Toll Systems	New Gloucester	New Gloucester ORT Upgrades	$557,000
Toll Systems	West Gardiner	West Gardiner ORT Upgrades	$371,000
		Total awarded in 2020 for construction:	***$37,898,000***

Portland Area Widening

The Maine Turnpike's Portland to Augusta section opened in 1955. After more than six decades and a 1700% increase in traffic, it came time to repair, improve, and widen this busy stretch through the Portland area. This portion of the mainline serves millions of commuters, truckers, and tourists yearly. Growing its capacity will enhance safety and mobility while supporting Maine's largest economic region.



New Exit 45 Interchange

Work on the new Exit 45 Interchange began in the fall of 2019 when the enbankment pre-load contract was awarded. Pre-load work continued in 2020, with construction of the new interchange scheduled to begin in 2021. When completed, Exit 45 will have a more efficient diamond interchange, a brand new bridge with increased clearance, and ramp toll plazas giving drivers a safer, more fluid connection to the Turnpike.

Ongoing Bridgework

We are making room for six lanes of highway from Mile 44 to Mile 49 by widening and modernizing four key bridge systems: at the Stroudwater River, the Pan Am Railway, Warren Avenue, and Cummings Road bridge. Work on these bridges continued throughout 2020.

Stroudwater River Bridge, Portland

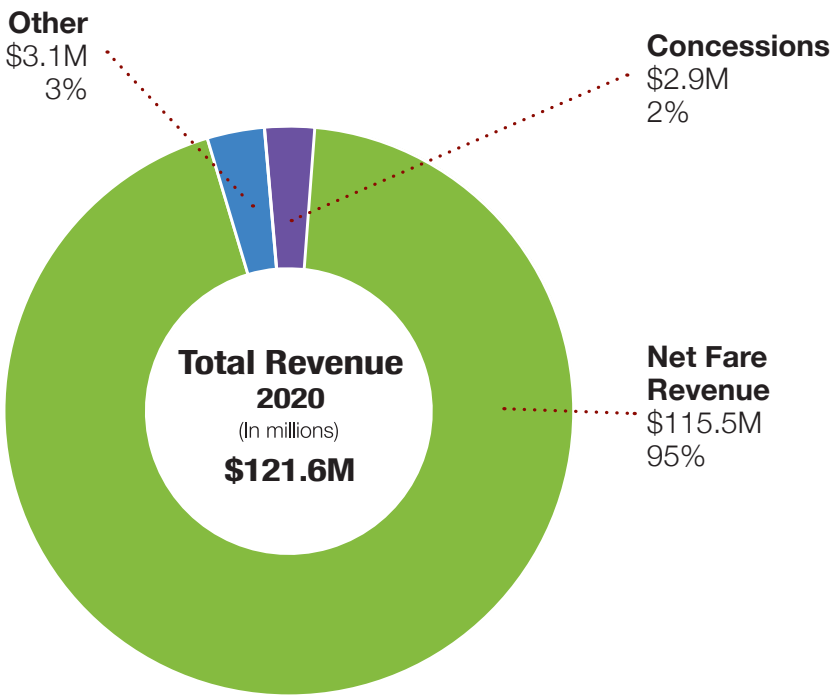
York Toll Plaza relocation at Mile 8.8

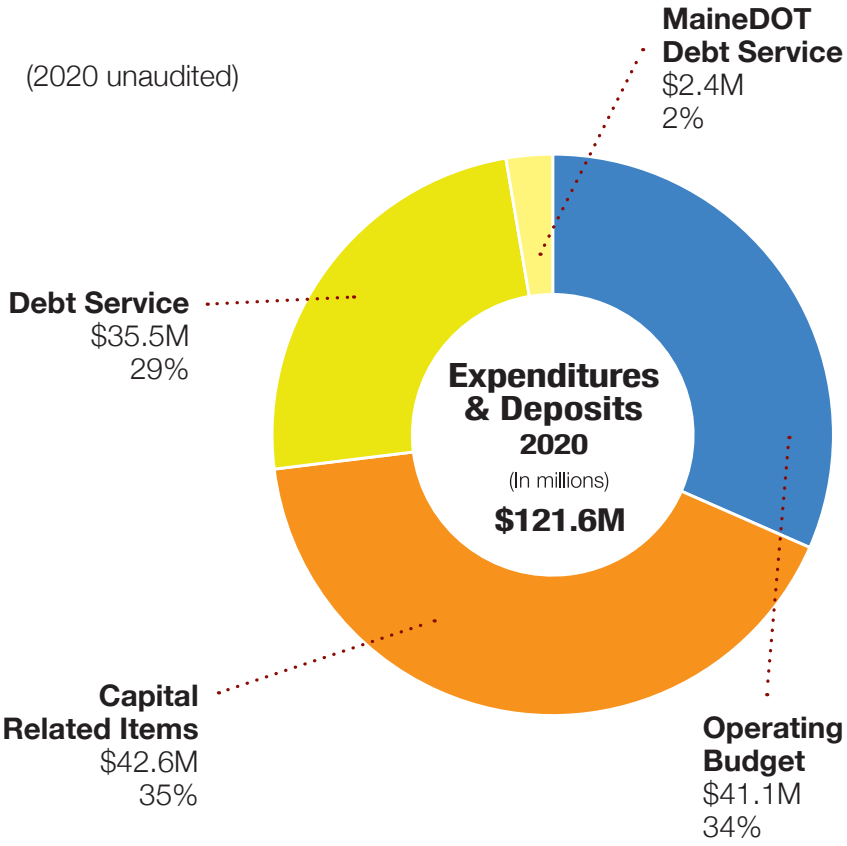
Toll Systems

Construction continued in 2020 on two turnpike toll plazas: the York Toll relocation project and the West Gardiner I-295 replacement project. When completed, both plazas will include Open Road Tolling lanes allowing E-ZPass customers to cruise through at highway speeds, paying their tolls electronically. A strategic construction plan has kept motorist inconvenience to a minimum over the course of the multi-year projects.

Finance

(2020 unaudited)





Exit 44 ORT plaza in Scarborough

Covid-19 Impacts

Until mid-March of 2020, both traffic and revenue were up from 2019 by over four percent. Once the pandemic hit, both dramatically declined. By April, transactions were down 54 percent and revenue by 44 percent. However commercial truck traffic delivering goods in high demand increased. This lessened the blow to revenue as heavier trucks pay higher tolls. Over the spring and summer as travel restrictions were reduced, traffic and revenue began to come back. By October 2020, revenue had bounced back to less than 10 percent below 2019 and traffic was down by less than 15 percent. As colder weather started to move in and a second round of the virus emerged, November and December brought another drop in both traffic and revenue. As the year came to a close, total transactions on the Maine Turnpike were 70 million, down 20 million from 2019. The last time the Maine Turnpike saw similar traffic numbers was in 2002. However, toll revenue for 2020 was only down by 17 percent (20 percent overall due to lost concession revenue).

Bond Cap Increase

In 2020 MTA sought legislative approval to increase its bond cap from $486 million to $600 million. The legislature approved passage and the governor signed into law on February 27, 2020 – less than two weeks before their abrupt adjournment in response to COVID-19.

Bond Issue and Capital Program

In March of 2020, with the sudden reduction in revenue and an ambitious four-year capital program ahead of us, MTA advanced its bonding plan to a sale that took place on November 3, 2020. The Turnpike issued $130 million of premium revenue bonds yielding $156 million in new capital.

The proceeds are being applied to the rebuilding of Exit 45, a six mile widening around Portland from Exit 44 to Warren Avenue, a new southbound exit lane for Biddeford, and new interchange connections to Saco. The bond funds are also being used to complete multi-year projects still under construction including new toll plazas for York and West Gardiner/I-295, widening and lengthening of the Cummings Road Bridge, the widening of three Portland bridges over the Stroudwater River, the Pan Am Railway, and Warren Avenue, and the pre-loading of soils in preparation for rebuilding Exit 45.

Employee Recognition

The employees of the Maine Turnpike Authority are the reason we can deliver on our promises of **safety** and **reliability**—day and night, all year long. Our team's institutional knowledge, longevity, and loyalty make it possible to offer the high standards of customer service that our travelers expect of us. We are pleased to recognize the dedication of our employees.

5 YEARS

Shellie M. Buckmore
Toll Collector I
Harry W. Buzzell
Automotive Mechanic III
John W. Cannell Jr
Director of Maintenance
Bobbi J. Cressey
E-ZPass Customer Service Representative
Ronald C. Currier Jr
iSeries Programmer-Analyst
Edmond J. Dube III
Automotive Mechanic III
Andrew W. Dyke
Highway Maintenance III
Kevin M. Evans
Highway Maintenance III
Wayne M. Foss
Toll Collector I
Steven J. Genge
Toll Collector I
Donald E. Holland
Toll Collector I
Jessie M. Hutchinson
Toll Collector I
Iver A. Iverson III
Electronic Toll Collection Coordinator
Juliette M. LaFerriere
Toll Collector I
Suzanne J. Langlais
Toll Collector I
Tyler G. Laverriere
Financial Analyst
Richard E. MacDonald Jr
Highway Maintenance III
Jaime L. Maynard
Communication Center Specialist
Bria D. Ryder
Payroll Administrator
Jacob C. Sargent
Toll Collector I
Marie T. Silver
Toll Plaza Supervisor
Mary K. Strickland
Toll Collector I
Scott E. Whitten
Toll Collector I
Keith E. Wright
Highway Maintenance III

10 YEARS

Anthony M. Dyer
Automotive Mechanic III
Charles X. Higgins
Toll Collector I
Pamela J. Lambert
E-ZPass Manager
Robert C. Thayer
Automotive Mechanic II
Jason I. Thyen
GIS Coordinator
Marie E. Turgeon
Toll Plaza Supervisor

15 YEARS

Ebenezer N. Akakpo
PC Support Specialist-ADP System Administrator
Dawna L. Crockett
Toll Collector I
Stacey A. Hathorne
Toll Collector I
David A. Katula
Highway Maintenance III
Sean R. Poage
Network Manger - Network Engineer
Gregory J. Stone
Director of Highway Safety
Val J. Tait
Human Resources and Benefits Specialist II

20 YEARS

Jonathan A. Arey
Staff Attorney
Brenda S. Gayton
E-ZPass Customer Service Representative
Rosa E. Jaynes
Business Accounts Processor
Joseph R. Lamb
Highway Maintenance III
Kathleen A. Martin
Toll Collector I
Bruce R. Sevigny
Oil-Gas Burner Technician
Stephen R. Tartre
Director of Engineering / Chief Engineer
William H. Yates III
Director of Information Services
Jeanne E. York
Toll Collector I

25 YEARS

Douglas D. Davidson
Chief Financial Officer
Michael P. DeSimone
Highway Maintenance III
Gerald L. Picard
Highway Maintenance III
Jeffrey A. Stevens
Highway Division Supervisor

30 YEARS

Diane L. Frederickson
Toll Collector I

35 YEARS

Daniel M. Burkill
Toll Collector I
John P. Cheche
Toll System Maintenance Technician
William E. Hartley
Automotive Mechanic III
Raymond D. Leach
Automotive Mechanic Foreman
Michael A. Wilson
Toll Collector I

40 YEARS

Richard P. Cabana
Printing Room Coordinator

Executive Staff

Peter Mills
Executive Director

Douglas D. Davidson
Chief Financial Officer
& Authority Board Treasurer

Peter S. Merfeld, P.E.
Chief Operations Officer

Jonathan A. Arey, Esq.
Staff Attorney
& Authority Board Secretary

Richard R. Barra
Director of Fare Collection

John W. Cannell, P.E.
Director of Highway
Maintenance

Lauren G. Carrier
Director of Human Resources

Matthew W. Elliott
Controller

John P. Sirois
Director of Finance

Richard Somerville
Director of E-ZPass Operations

Greg J. Stone
Director of Public Safety

Stephen R. Tartre, P.E.
Director of Engineering
& Chief Engineer

William H. Yates, III
Director of Information Services
& Communications

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Saco, Maine
York County

Bruce A. Van Note
Commissioner
MaineDOT
Ex-Officio Member

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Vice-Chair
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Androscoggin County

Ann R. Robinson
Member
Portland, Maine
Cumberland County

Michael J. Cianchette
Member
Cumberland, Maine
Cumberland County

Jane L. Lincoln
Member
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Kennebec County

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ezpassmaineturnpike.com

Outside United States
(207) 871-7771, then press 2

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Front and Back Cover: Stroudwater River Bridge, Portland

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