



For Immediate Release: December 10, 2008

Contact: Erik J. Wiberg, P.E., M. ASCE
(207)286-8008 or reportcard@maineasce.org

Maine's Infrastructure Falling Below Average

Civil Engineers Evaluate Condition of State's Infrastructure in New Report Card

Augusta, Maine – The Maine Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) today released its first *Report Card for Maine's Infrastructure*, assigning the state's 14 infrastructure areas reviewed a cumulative grade of C-. The future does not look encouraging as the projected funding gap for infrastructure maintenance and improvement is estimated to be in the billions over the next 10 years. In most infrastructure areas, public agency budgets are less than half of what is being recommended for investment needs.

Sixteen ASCE infrastructure leaders, a team of civil engineers, and industry experts volunteered hundreds of hours to review public records and provide this evaluation of infrastructure in Maine. They analyzed the following fundamental components of each infrastructure area: existing conditions, capacity, operations & maintenance or deferred maintenance, public safety & security, risk and consequences of failure, and current and projected levels of funding.

This *Report Card* covers roads, bridges, railroads, ports and waterways, passenger transportation, airports, dams, municipal wastewater, municipal drinking water, contaminated site remediation, solid waste, schools, energy, and state parks. One of the areas received a D: roads; while four others received a D+: bridges, dams, municipal wastewater, and contaminated site remediation.

Decisions about infrastructure, which we all pay for through user fees and taxes, as well as private investments, need to be made based on long-term comprehensive planning, with sustainable and reliable funding sources. The purpose of this report card is to raise public awareness of the importance of a modern and well-maintained infrastructure. Maine's infrastructure is struggling to meet the public's needs and

underinvestment, double-digit construction inflation and rising fuel costs over the past few years, have left the state's infrastructure susceptible to falling even further behind.

"The health, safety and welfare of our citizens are directly tied to the quality of our infrastructure," said Erik J. Wiberg, P.E., President of the Maine Section of ASCE. "Maine's economy is built on its infrastructure. Current and forecasted funding is inadequate to meet the needs. If Maine is to grow economically and sustain its quality of life, investment into infrastructure needs to be a higher priority."

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) forecasts just over \$3 billion will be available given current funding paradigms over the next 10 years with needs for the overall state managed transportation system in excess of over \$6 billion. Thus the 10-year funding gap for transportation is in excess of \$3 billion.

Roads receive a D due to conditions. Poor pavement has increased from only 2% of all MaineDOT roads in 1996 to over 26% in 2006. MaineDOT's pavement preservation program for modern "built" roads, mostly arterials that carry more than half the state's traffic, is funded at half of what is needed resulting in the risk of many of those 2,100 miles falling into poor condition and requiring more costly improvements in the future.

"To think that the investment we have made in these critical arterial roads over the past 50 years will be lost due to lack of care is unconscionable" said John Hodgkins, P.E. (retired), ASCE Maine Report Card committee member and former Director of Project Development at Maine Department of Transportation.

Bridge (D+) conditions are expected to improve over the next few years due to legislation passed in 2008 that provided additional funding for bridges. However, there is still a more than \$440-million gap in funding for bridges over the next 10 years. Currently, thirty-four percent of Maine's bridges are listed as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, higher than the national average of 25 percent.

Railroads (C) continue to be under-utilized in Maine and further investment should facilitate higher use. Maine is currently 48th in the nation for freight tonnage moved by rail.

Ports & Waterways (C-) have received major investments in past few years, but require further investments in order to meet the projected demands of containerized cargo and the cruise industry.

Passenger transportation (C-) has had a recent surge in demand in past few years (over 113% growth from 2004 to 2006) with the increase in fuel costs. Transit, ferry, and passenger rail all require additional funding in order to meet rising demand. Only 55% of transit vehicles are considered in good condition.

Airports (B-) have traditionally received 95% of their project funding from federal sources and conditions reflect this investment. A funding shortfall is projected of over \$100 million for the next 20 years.

Dams receive a D+ due to conditions and lack of funding. Maine continues to fall well below the needed funding for Dam Safety inspectors and ranks near the bottom nationally for dam safety program funding.

Potential federal funding for 17 eligible high-hazard dams in Maine is approximately 15% of what is required, while maintenance of most dams is being deferred due to lack of funding (more than half are privately owned).

Municipal Wastewater (D+) has over \$400 million in current back-logged projects, including \$174 million in combined sewer overflow projects. *"We notice the condition of roads and bridges every day we travel, but our buried infrastructures, such as water mains and sewers, remain 'out of sight-out of mind' until a pipe ruptures or sewers overflow polluting our waterways and beaches"* comments Chet Rock, Ph.D., P.E., member of ASCE Report Card committee and Associate Dean, University of Maine College of Engineering.

Drinking Water (C), while current conditions are safe, has an estimated need of \$900 million over the next 20 years. Only \$15 million per year has historically been available, representing a \$600 million shortfall.

Funding for Contaminated Site Remediation (D+) is lagging and there is a risk to public health and safety. More than 730 sites remain contaminated with hazardous waste or petroleum products, and \$41 million in additional funding is currently needed for the 6 remediation programs managed by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Solid Waste (C) has made good progress in last 20 year though current policies need to address the fact that Mainers generated 51% more waste than the national average in 2005 and are currently are not meeting recycling goals.

Schools (C-) are a major issue in Maine as current funding levels result in a projected 20-year gap of \$600 million. Less than half of priority health and safety project requests for schools have been funded over the past 6 years.

Energy (C+) generation and transmission is in good condition though reliability concerns and future projections of need require diversification of energy supply and approximately \$2 billion of transmission system investment. The significant investment is required in order to maintain efficient, cost-effective energy generation sources and a robust transmission and distribution grid that meet regional reliability standards and environmental emissions regulations.

State park (B-) conditions are safe after a \$7.5 million bond in 2007; however, a backlog of more than \$30 million in projects remains which if implemented would have immediate impacts to the level of service the parks could provide, thus having positive economic impacts to the state as a whole.

The Maine Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (Maine Section ASCE) represents more than 700 civil engineering professionals who live and work in Maine. Founded in 1852, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) represents more than 146,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America's oldest national engineering society. For more information and a full copy of the report card report visit www.maineasce.org.

###