

Senate Transportation Committee

Vivian Hall 271-3091

HB 2026, relative to the state 10-year transportation improvement plan.

Hearing Date: April 21, 2026

Time Opened: 2:37 p.m.

Time Closed: 3:36 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators McConkey, Ricciardi, Ward and Fenton

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Prentiss

Bill Analysis: This bill adopts the state 10-year transportation plan for 2027-2036.

Sponsors:

Rep. Milz

Rep. Cloutier

Who supports the bill: Representative David Milz, Rockingham 13; Representative Keith Ammon, Hillsborough 42; Betsy Bosiak; Joseph Bicza, Cindy Yanski, Community Action Program, Belknap-Merrimack Counties; John Cloutier; Scott Burns; Lisa Steadman; and Andrew Harmon.

Who opposes the bill: Daniel Richardson.

Who is neutral on the bill: Colin Lentz, Strafford Regional Planning Commission; Selectman Jeff Biron; Commissioner David Rodrigue and Toby Reynolds, Department of Transportation.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative David E. Mills, Rockingham 13:

- Rep. Milz introduced HB 2026, the 10-year plan.
- He noted it initially faced a \$300–\$400 million shortfall and had projects removed to address the gap.
- He explained that the Executive Council added back 13 projects costing \$255 million, but Public Works, after consulting with the Department of Transportation, approved 11 of them for \$23 million and cut the two largest, saving \$233 million.

- He stated that Public Works also approved one additional project for \$6.8 million and included a full recap of these changes in his amendment and accompanying summary sheet.

Commissioner David Rodrigue and Toby Reynolds, Department of Transportation

- Mr. Reynolds and Commissioner Rodrigue introduced the Department of Transportation's 10-year plan and provided supporting materials, including the plan book, presentation, and a change log detailing revision.
- The plan totaled approximately \$4.5 billion over 10 years, with about 85% dedicated to roads and bridges and the remainder to air, rail, and transit.
- Mr. Reynolds described funding for non-highway modes as largely stable and primarily supported by federal sources, with limited flexibility between categories.
- He noted revenues were relatively flat while project costs were increasing due to inflation, resulting in fewer projects and no new additions to the plan.
- He emphasized priorities of maintaining and preserving existing infrastructure, including pavement conditions, bridges, and safety-related investments.
- He stated the department evaluated and ranked projects based on merit and financial risk to address funding gaps and bring the plan into fiscal constraint.

Senator McConkey asked whether the 10-year plan originally anticipated toll revenue increases and whether that expected funding had materialized.

Mr. Rodrigue explained that some projects could be funded through a proposed toll increase, which would allow certain federally funded projects to shift to toll funding. He noted that doing so would free up federal funding for use on other projects across the state. He gave examples, including bridge work in the Bow/Concord corridor and improvements at Manchester exits 6 and 7, where funding could be reallocated if toll revenue increased.

Senator McConkey asked if the tolls bill were to pass the House and toll revenues increase, if that would allow the 10-year plan to be amended to restore removed projects by freeing up a significant amount of federal funding for redistribution.

Commissioner Rodrigue said that \$86.8 million would be freed up. He explained that higher-priority projects remained in the plan, some projects had construction removed but retained engineering, and others were eliminated entirely but could potentially be added back.

Senator McConkey asked if they could bring forward the language for an amendment.

Senator Ward asked what the status was for the planned reconstruction or rebuilding of the bridge between Charles Town and Springfield, Vermont. She asked if this was in the plan and if there was set date for the project.

Commissioner Rodrigue confirmed that the project will start next year.

Senator Fenton asked how many red-listed bridges there are.

Commissioner Rodrigue said there are 114 red-listed bridges on the state list and 211 red-listed bridges on the municipal list.

Senator Ricciardi noted that it is a safety issue.

Commissioner McConkey asked if he could provide amendment language?

Commissioner Rodrigue confirmed he would.

Senator Ricciardi introduced an amendment for New Boston and spoke to the amendment.

Betsy Bosiak:

- Ms. Bosiak explained the request was to obtain easements needed for the replacement of the Gregg Mill Road Bridge in New Boston before further deterioration occurred.
- She said the easements involved DNCR-owned land acquired with LHIP funds, requiring legislative approval or a more time-consuming court process.
- She clarified that the request did not seek additional funding, only authorization to proceed with the easement acquisition to allow the project to move forward.

Joseph Bicza, Project Supervisor

- He stated that the engineering design work for the Gregg Mill Road Bridge replacement in New Boston was nearing completion, with only easement acquisition remaining to proceed to construction.
- He explained that easements were needed from adjacent conservation lands owned by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources because the project would slightly extend beyond the existing right-of-way to allow construction access.
- He emphasized the project was a necessary in-kind replacement of a narrow, weight-restricted, and unsafe bridge that did not meet current standards for width or sight distance.
- He warned that without the amendment, the project would be delayed at least a year, increasing costs due to inflation and rising material prices, and urged prompt approval to move it to bid and construction.

Senator McConkey asked if this was a town road.

Mr. Bicza said yes.

Senator McConkey asked if he was trying to acquire right of way from DNCR.

Mr. Bicza clarified that they are asking for temporary construction easements to construct the project.

Senator McConkey asked why this is being proposed through the 10-year plans.

Ms. Bosiak clarified that without an amendment, the project would be delayed.

Senator McConkey asked if they acquired this easement from Dancer.

Ms. Bosiak said yes.

Senator McConkey asked why they couldn't reach that agreement with Dancer.

Ms. Bosiak the RSAs, it's RSA 162-C and several others that indicate that this is a process that must be used.

Senator Ricciardi clarified that this was the only conduit late in session to fix this problem for the town.

Selectman Jeff Biron, New Boston

- Selectman Biron stated the bridge replacement was essential due to New Boston's significant population growth and increased traffic from larger and heavier vehicles.
- He emphasized that the existing narrow bridge posed safety concerns for emergency services, including fire trucks and EMS response vehicles.
- He concluded that widening the bridge was necessary because current conditions were no longer adequate for the town's needs or the structure's original design capacity.

Senator McConkey expressed that he is not opposed to this and it's just the process.

Commissioner David Rodrigue:

Senator McConkey asked if this would be an item that would be handled as an asterisk that comes in the 10-year plan?

Commissioner Rodrigue confirmed he thinks it could be an asterisk. The project was originally expected to be delivered in 2025. He explained that the project requires easements on adjacent properties and outlined the legislative process needed to secure them, noting it is time-consuming. He indicated the request sought legislative relief to avoid delays but noted uncertainty about whether this type of action had been used in prior 10-year plans. I do think it could be an asterisk, if you will.

Senator Ricciardi emphasized that the information and research regarding this project has been vetted.

Commissioner Rodrigue thinks it could include some wording to allow this project to take place.

Collin Lentz, Strafford Regional Planning Commission:

- Mr. Lentz raised concerns about project cuts and urged the committee to identify additional state revenue sources to help restore funding while maintaining a balanced 10-year plan.
- He highlighted concern over reductions to safety-related projects, noting several delayed or removed projects in Madbury, Middleton, and other corridor and intersection improvements despite ongoing roadway fatalities.
- He noted that while some bridge, intersection, and transportation alternative projects remained funded, many local safety improvements lost construction funding, and he referenced a proposal to index funding to inflation as a long-term solution.
- He emphasized the importance of public transit to the regional economy, citing its economic return and essential services for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- He requested consideration of allowing public transit providers access to gas tax and turnpike revenues to support operations.

Senator McConkey asked if these projects were in the 10-year transportation plan and then pulled out.

Mr. Lentz confirmed this and spoke about the background.

Senator McConkey asked him what his number one project was.

Mr. Lentz said from the top three projects on the provided list, 155 town hall Madbury was the top project.

V.H

Date Hearing Report completed: April 27, 2026