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## MaineDOT News Releases

Following are the latest news releases issued by The Maine Department of Transportation.

- + 12/3/2021: [I-295 Bridge Replacements in Yarmouth](#)
- 11/23/2021: [All Commercial Vehicles Prohibited from Frank J. Wood Bridge](#)



News Release for November 23, 2021

For more Information:  
Paul Merrill, Public Information Officer - 207-624-3355 or 207-215-9297

**BRUNSWICK/TOPSHAM** - To improve compliance with weight restrictions, the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is prohibiting all commercial vehicles from using the Frank J. Wood Bridge. This new weight restriction follows the department's October 25th posting, which limited the bridge to vehicles that weigh no more than ten tons or 20,000 pounds.

This new posting means any vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) greater than 26,000 pounds is prohibited from using the bridge. In general, this posting applies to all large trucks, buses, and vehicles with more than two axles. All vehicles that weigh more than 20,000 pounds (the previous posting) are still prohibited from using the bridge. Overweight vehicles should use the Route 1 Bypass as a detour route.

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"Too many vehicles were not complying with the ten-ton limit," said MaineDOT Chief Engineer Joyce Taylor. "Restricting the bridge to all commercial traffic will make enforcement efforts easier. We need to take these steps to extend the life of the current structure until we can replace it."

To help enforce the bridge's weight restrictions, MaineDOT has installed cameras and license-plate readers on the bridge. Our team of engineers has also been working with local and state police. Prior to this new posting, law enforcement efforts had required on-site weighing of vehicles to determine whether they were overweight. Now, they won't need to do that.

The Frank J. Wood Bridge, which carries Route 201 between Brunswick and Topsham, was originally constructed in 1931. It is a fracture critical bridge, rated in poor condition, and getting worse. During the last inspection, conducted in mid-September, bridge engineers found severe section loss on the structure.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires inspections of fracture critical bridges at least every two years. Deterioration of a steel truss bridge like this one is not always in a linear, predictable fashion. Once pack rust lodges between metal plates, bolts, rivets, and other steel members, the steel rust and deterioration can progress in a more rapid and aggressive manner than previously expected by prior inspections. Based on this and the findings of the recent inspection, MaineDOT engineers are now inspecting the Frank J. Wood Bridge every six months.

The original estimated construction cost to replace the Frank J. Wood Bridge was \$13 million. The total service life cost of the bridge over 100 years was only \$17.3 million. The original estimated construction cost of rehabilitating the bridge was \$15 million with a total service life cost over 75 years of \$35.2 million. In short, replacing the bridge was determined to be more cost effective, both initially and over the long-term.

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MaineDOT, the organization tasked with this bridge project and overseeing almost 3,000 bridges and spans statewide, and FHWA chose the replacement alternative following a lengthy and full National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Additionally, MaineDOT worked with a municipally appointed Design Advisory Committee to design a new bridge that meets all needs, including those of bicyclists and pedestrians, and which enhances this unique urban setting between two communities and celebrates its remarkable views of the Androscoggin River, the Pejepscot Falls, and historic redeveloped mills.

Since estimated construction costs were first calculated, the cost of bridge work has increased dramatically. Over the past 14 months, the price of steel has more than doubled, and raw material costs are going up at the same rate across the board. In addition, there is a labor shortage in the construction industry, putting upward pressure on prices.

"We understand and respect the passion of the relatively small group that wants to keep the existing 90-year old bridge, but the reality is this bridge is in poor condition and getting worse," said Taylor. "The extended debate and legal challenges have cost all Maine people many years and many millions of dollars. Given the condition of the existing bridge, the reliability and cost-effectiveness of the new bridge, the planned enhancement of pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and the support of local officials, the time has come to move forward as soon as possible."

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MaineDOT Chief Engineer Joyce Taylor will be available to speak with reporters on the Topsham side of the Frank J. Wood Bridge at 11:00 a.m.

Pictures of overweight vehicles crossing the bridge are also available along with the September inspection report.

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