

## MEMORANDUM

**TO: BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
COUNCIL OF STATE EXECUTIVES**

**FR: RICH JULIANO, GENERAL COUNSEL**

**RE: UPDATE MATERIAL – STATE-BY-STATE COMPILATION – EFFECT OF CORONAVIRUS  
(COVID-19) PANDEMIC ON TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS (EDITION #67)**

**DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2020 – PM**

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ARTBA is closely monitoring the status of transportation construction projects across the country in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are consulting with our affiliated chapters and members on a continual basis. Several chapters have shared the status reports they have made to their members, and are allowing us to excerpt them in this document. The information below also reflects reports made through our Council of State Executives, as well as direct contacts and news stories. Several public agencies have provided updates to ARTBA directly. As is noted a number of times, ARTBA's affiliates have remained in close contact with their respective governors and/or state departments of transportation since this crisis developed.

The full version of this memo now runs over 400 pages in length. It can be accessed at <https://www.artba.org/coronavirus> or by contacting me.

For your convenience, this "update" version of the memo **only includes content added or revised since the previous edition**. Please continue to pass along any items of interest to me at [rjuliano@artba.org](mailto:rjuliano@artba.org), which we will utilize for the next edition of this report.

Best wishes to everyone, and thank you for your participation in and support of ARTBA at this important time.

## New in this Edition

Material from these states...

- **Hawaii:** H-3 freeway closure for COVID-19 testing continues without federal approval
- **Idaho:** No updates to report.
- **Illinois:** Quincy to delay road projects after low gas tax revenue
- **Maryland:** Howard Street Tunnel project to move ahead despite transportation budget cuts
- **Massachusetts:** Transit Authority Looks to Bus Lanes to Reduce Crowding, Encourage Social Distancing
- **New Jersey:** NJDOT Issues Lane Closure Directive and COVID-19 Face Covering Reminder
- **North Carolina:** I-26 Connector among road projects facing delays in NCDOT schedule revision
- **Pennsylvania:** PennDOT Extends Expiration Dates on Commercial Driver Licenses, Commercial Learner's Permits and Hazardous Materials Endorsements
- **South Carolina:** Pandemic keeps many inside, SCDOT loses \$49 million in gas tax fees
- **Virginia:** VDOT's Materials Division Extends COVID Mitigation Procedures
- **Washington:** How Washington has managed its toll roads during COVID shutdowns

## Hawaii

(9/1/20) – Excerpts from KITV-4...

H-3 freeway closure for COVID-19 testing continues without federal approval

It could very well be the country's largest COVID-19 testing site to date.

The H-3 freeway was shut down in both directions so that thousands of residents could be tested in the Harano Tunnels.

The massive unprecedented undertaking required coordination of multiple agencies -- but one major partner was missing.

"We got a letter back from Federal Highways today after working with them and it was a denial of our use," said Ed Sniffen, deputy director of highways for the Hawaii Department of Transportation.

Among the concerns of federal highway officials -- the closure's impact on traffic, commerce, public safety and military operations on the Kaneohe Marine Corps base. Despite not getting the feds' blessing, state officials said they were too invested and the need too great to turn back.

State officials defended the use of the H-3 for non-transportation purposes, saying the need is worth the risk of the federal government possibly withholding future funding. Hawaii receives about \$180 million each year from the feds.

State transportation deputy director Ed Sniffen believes he may not have made a strong enough case to the federal agency for the closure. He said he'll respond to the letter with more information about the gravity of Hawaii's situation, lower traffic volumes on alternate routes, and safety precautions being taken. Governor David Ige said he was aware of the potential denial but agreed to move forward.

"With all the preparations that we had done, with all the personnel that we planned, for the promotion we had -- we felt that based on the issues raised - we believe that maybe we didn't provide them enough information about our situation," Governor Ige said. "We do believe this is a safe testing site. It has all of the attributes that we would want in terms of the community's convenience..."

## Idaho

**(9/14/20)** – The Idaho Transportation Department advises it has no relevant project-related updates to report at this time.

## Illinois

**(9/3/20)** – From WGEM-TV...

### Quincy to delay road projects after low gas tax revenue

The state of Illinois will push back some road work projects that IDOT had scheduled to be completed this year because of lower-than-expected gas tax revenues.

That's also true for the city of Quincy, which gets money from the state gas tax to pay for city improvement projects.

The city of Quincy is seeing less gas tax since the start of the pandemic.

Without this money, city officials are having to make decisions about which planned projects will be able to be completed on time and which will have to be delayed.

For now, city officials said they are getting some additional funds from a transportation renewal payment from the state.

This means they will have enough money to finish any projects that were already started, but they don't know when that money will run out.

"There's a lot of streets that need the work. We were hoping that these additional funds would come in and help us get caught up on some of our backlog, but right now with the decrease in gas sales that's looking in doubt," said Jeffrey Conte, City of Quincy director of engineering.

The funds are usually used for projects like road resurfacing and concrete joint repair.

The city is prioritizing projects that need the most immediate help.

City officials said this motor fuel tax revenue makes up about 25 percent of the annual budget for public works projects.

So far, they estimate the city is about \$200,000 short.

## Maryland

(9/3/20) – Excerpts from the *Baltimore Business Journal*...

Howard Street Tunnel project to move ahead despite transportation budget cuts

Reconstruction of the Howard Street Tunnel will continue to move forward even as the Maryland Department of Transportation plans to defer projects and cut bus service in Baltimore to deal with billions of dollars in lost revenue.

Gov. Larry Hogan's administration unveiled its draft consolidated transportation program Tuesday covering fiscal years 2021-2026. The spending plan totals \$13.4 billion, a reduction of \$2.9 billion, or 18%, from the prior six-year budget. The proposal also recommends \$98 million in budget cuts for the current fiscal year that began July 1.

While the cuts will affect agencies within the Department of Transportation across the board, the Hogan administration's proposal maintains funding for a long-awaited project to expand the Howard Street Tunnel. The state has been working for years to secure funding for the project, which would increase the clearance of the 125-year-old tunnel to allow for double-stacked shipping containers.

The Maryland Port Administration finally secured the necessary funding for the \$466 million project late last year after winning award a \$125 million federal grant. CSX Corp., the Jacksonville, Florida-based railroad that owns the tunnel, also committed \$113 million. Officials expect the expansion of the Howard Street Tunnel to increase the number of containers handled by the Port of Baltimore and generate new jobs...

Port officials remain hopeful construction can begin in 2021. Federally required environmental assessments were expected to be completed by the end of summer but have been delayed as the Port Administration shifted its focus to the Covid-19 pandemic. Executive Director Bill Doyle told the Business Journal in June that the environmental reviews probably won't be completed until December.

Richard Scher, a spokesman for the Port Administration, said the environmental assessment will be completed by the end of the year and that the project remains on track to be completed by 2024.

"The Howard Street Tunnel reconstruction project continues to move forward," Scher said. "This endeavor is an excellent example of public and private entities working together...It will create thousands of new jobs and significantly increase container growth at the Port of Baltimore."

...[L]ike other transportation agencies, the Port Administration will be impacted by the cuts. The draft spending plan includes \$227 million in capital budget cuts. Among the deferred projects and maintenance is \$175 million for berth improvements and expansion of the Masonville dredge placement facility...

## Massachusetts

**(9/2/20)** – *From Route Fifty...*

### Transit Authority Looks to Bus Lanes to Reduce Crowding, Encourage Social Distancing

Transit officials in Massachusetts will create up to 14 miles of dedicated bus lanes in Boston and three of its suburbs, a regional effort designed to improve bus service, making it easier for riders to maintain social distancing as the area begins to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Throughout this pandemic, the majority of our ridership has been on our bus system,” Steve Poftak, general manager of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, said in a statement. “Advancing this program is the fastest way we can provide thousands of our riders with significant improvements in service reliability.”

The project, announced last week, will add bus lanes in Boston and the cities of Chelsea, Everett and Somerville “throughout this fall and spring,” the agency said in a statement.

Officials worked with municipalities to target bus routes that have reported the highest rates of ridership since the pandemic hit in March, along with those that experience “above-average chronic delay.”

Those routes provide transportation for essential workers, officials said. Dedicated lanes for public transportation can improve service by allowing buses to move more quickly through congested areas, limiting waiting times and crowding at bus stops, as well as on the buses themselves.

“This crisis has reminded us of the deep disparities across our region. Our most vulnerable residents have borne the brunt of this illness, even as many of them have been among our essential workforce that has never ceased heading into work every day,” Joseph A. Curtatone, mayor of Somerville, said in a statement. “Streamlined bus routes are safer bus routes, and they serve parts of our community that deserve priority attention.”

Bus lanes will be marked with striping, red paint, signage and changes in signaling, with more permanent infrastructure changes to come next year. Emergency response vehicles and school buses will also have access to the lanes, and several cities in the area will also incorporate bike lanes and pedestrian safety improvements, according to the agency.

The project is expected to cost around \$20 million, most of it funded by the transportation authority. The municipalities are expected to provide additional funding for parts of the project not directly related to transport, including streetscape improvements, the agency said.

The initiative is part of the “Better Bus Project,” a five-year, \$8 billion capital investment program designed to improve bus service as a whole throughout the area.

## **New Jersey**

**UTCA of New Jersey (9/2/20)** – The New Jersey Department of Transportation issued its lane closure timelines for the upcoming Labor Day holiday. NJDOT will start its Lane Closure restrictions at 7:00 am on Friday, September 4th and they will last until 10:00am on Tuesday, September 8th.

The NJDOT has also requested that UTCA remind its member firms to adhere to the Department's Policy/Procedure document concerning "COVID-19 FACE Coverings" issued on July 27, 2020. The Department and Governor's office are receiving complaints that NJDOT contractor employees are not adhering to the CDC guidelines concerning face coverings by workers.

## North Carolina

**(9/4/20)** – Excerpts from the Asheville *Citizen Times*...

I-26 Connector among road projects facing delays in NCDOT schedule revision

A slew of high profile road projects including the I-26 Connector in Buncombe County are facing delays.

A revised schedule of projects from across the state was released by the North Carolina Department of Transportation earlier this week. It also includes the widening of Sweeten Creek Road, the widening of N.C. 191 and Sand Hill/Sardis Road work.

NCDOT Division 13 engineer Mark Gibbs said many of the proposed changes will not impact actual construction dates, but some, including the schedule for the portion of the I-26 Connector around the I-40 interchange, will be pushed back...

Gibbs said the delays are due to a financial situation at the NCDOT that stems from the coronavirus pandemic; overspending in the previous fiscal year, which he primarily tied to unexpected natural disaster expenses; and rising cost estimates for the projects themselves.

The changes are still contingent upon on Board of Transportation approval, which Gibbs said isn't set in stone, but that these types of items are "usually a rubber stamp" by the board. The board is set to discuss the matter during its October meeting. The proposal also relies on the sale of \$700 million in NC Build Bonds.

"We are hopeful that both of these things will happen and the projects will move forward under the proposed schedule," he said.

The NCDOT schedule modifications will not affect the widening of an 18-mile stretch of I-26 between the Brevard Road interchange in Buncombe County and Four Seasons Boulevard in Henderson County. Construction on that project began in September 2019 and is still slated for completion in late April 2024....

## Pennsylvania

**(8/31/20)** – From PennDOT...

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced today that in response to statewide COVID-19 mitigation efforts, expiration dates for commercial driver licenses and commercial learner's permits will be extended for Pennsylvania residents through September 30, 2020. Expiration extension deadlines on non-commercial driver license, photo identification cards, learner's permits and camera cards will expire on August 31.

Effective August 31, the following products' expiration dates will be extended:

- Commercial learner's permits scheduled to expire from March 16, 2020, through September 30, 2020;
- Commercial driver licenses scheduled to expire from March 16, 2020, through September 30, 2020; and
- Hazardous Materials Endorsements (HME) for individuals who are a Pennsylvania-licensed commercial driver's license holder and who held a valid, unexpired HME with a determination of no security threat on or after March 6, 2020.

## South Carolina

**(8/31/20)** – Excerpts from WSPA-TV...

Pandemic keeps many inside, SCDOT loses \$49 million in gas tax fees

...Justin Powell, DOT's Deputy Secretary for Finance and Administration explained how there was a significant drop in traffic around the time of the coronavirus outbreak.

"What we've seen since that time is – about May when that order was lifted – we've seen traffic volumes getting closer to what they were last year, but not at the same level," Powell explained.

"So they are off – depending on the week right now – about 5-15% off. It's certainly something we have seen. People are driving less right now," he said.

Although many South Carolinians are saving money working from home Powell told News13 that less traffic has put a financial toll on the department.

The department's state revenue relies on new car sale fees, gas tax, and DMV fees. DMV and car sale fees remain steady – if not exceeding expectations. However, the drop in gas tax fees is hurting DOT's pockets the most, Powell said.

With more people working from home, the department has lost \$49 million in gas tax fees so far this year. As a result, the state DOT slowed hiring new employees and is cutting back on certain purchases.

Powell explained how traffic is getting closer to normal since the state has reopened, but not as close as it was last year. However, less traffic has made room for expansion of state roads.

"We've been able to allow work to occur that we may not normally allow during the day because volumes have been lower and actually able to advance some projects during this period of time," Powell said.

Federal funding has also helped with continuing many construction projects, but it's too soon to tell if any other internal adjustments will need to be made as the pandemic evolves.

## Virginia

**Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance (9/3/20)** – VDOT's Materials Division has announced an extension to December 31, 2020 of the guidelines implemented this past April for paper weigh tickets and concrete shipping ticket forms.

In early April VDOT's Materials Division issued guidance on the temporary elimination of paper weigh tickets and concrete shipping ticket forms (TL 28), as well as recommended safe sampling protocol when VDOT employees are sampling from production facilities. The guidance was originally effective through June 10 and subsequently extended to September 1, 2020 (See VTCA's Techlog – VDOT Issues COVID-19 Asphalt and Other Materials Delivery Ticket Guidance April 3, 2020). The procedures remain in effect until the end of the year at which time VDOT will evaluate whether or not changes to the temporary procedures will be necessary.

## Washington

**(9/1/20)** – Excerpt from KIRO Radio...

How Washington has managed its toll roads during COVID shutdowns

...Toll roads in Washington are still seeing 29% less use today than on September 1 of 2019, but that's a vast improvement over where they were after the initial stay at home orders went into effect in March.

By far the best performers continues to be the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, which is only seeing single-digit decreases over last year, and the 167 HOT lanes, which are also seeing a single-digit dip.

I-405 and SR 99 saw 80 to 85% drops in use in April. They have since recovered a little bit. SR 99 is still off by 65%, and I-405 is off more than 40%.

So what does this mean for the bottom line?

Total revenue for 2020 is just under \$179 million, which is an 18% drop over the 2019 revenue forecast.

But the silver lining here is this: After the cratering through the first quarter, the state revised its revenue forecasts based on COVID usage, and the toll roads actually outperformed that revised forecast.