



MAINE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC-
Maine)
Highway Subcommittee
2026-02-11 Meeting Notes



MEMBERS & ATTENDEES	Devan Eaton, MaineDOT Scott Bickford, MaineDOT Mackenzie Kersbergen, MaineDOT Erin Binghalib, MaineDOT Nicole Soiett, MaineDOT	Shawn Davis, TY Lin Joe Howe, Stantec Lori Zacchini, HNTB Shane Kelly, STI (<i>not present</i>) Don Ettinger, LJB / Gorrill Palmer

Summary of meeting notes:

1. The prior meeting minutes were reviewed and summarized. No comments or changes to the minutes were provided or requested.
2. Lori Zacchini (Driscoll) from HNTB rotated onto this subcommittee, and Tim Higginson from WSP rotated off the subcommittee. Tony Grande from VHB will be rotating onto the subcommittee at the next meeting, with Shawn Davis (TY Lin) rotating off.
3. Cody Russell has left MaineDOT to work for DEP. There is currently a geotechnical position job posting for his replacement. In the meantime, the consultants may be asked to include geotechnical services with their proposals on larger phase I and II assignments.
4. Brad Foley, George MacDougal, and Rick Barry will be retiring in 2026. Denis Lovely retired in late 2025. Jeff Pulver has been promoted to the assistant state traffic engineer. Chris Helstrom has been hired for the senior designer position in Team South. Both Chris and Dana Cloutier (Team North) will assist Ernie Martin on his Village Projects. Lindsey Merrifield has been promoted to the position of senior drainage designer. Mike Fournier is the new utility coordinator in region 5. There are two job openings: one in the right-of-way group and one in the CPO office.
5. A reminder to consultants to submit invoices monthly. This is not happening consistently across all firms. Another reminder for consultants to submit project updates to the highway program monthly. This is not happening consistently.
6. A reminder that contract modifications need to be submitted to the Department before completing the work. This relates to work in the highway and regional programs. Potential change notices (PCN) are no longer recognized or accepted by the Department.
7. MaineDOT is updating its standard specifications. They expect to release this update (purple book) in Q2 2026. A standard details book update is also planned.

8. MaineDOT is updating its design criteria documentation to include context classification (rural, rural town, suburban, urban, urban core), not just corridor priority classifications. This should better align with the new AASHTO green book, scheduled for release later in 2026.
9. The annual construction resident training is planned for the end of March/beginning of April in Brewer.
10. MaineDOT letters on prequalification results for the recent GCA Planning RFQ will be sent out to consultants, the week of Feb 11. The GCA selection process will occur thereafter. The online prequalification process will be reopened in March. The upset limit for contracting work through the prequalification process will increase to \$350,000, and the upset limit for contracting work with a GCA-selected consultant will increase from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.
11. For project durations of less than 12 months, fixed-rate contracts are no longer required. Adjustable-rate contracts will be allowed. The direct labor rate cap for 2026 is \$89.31, a 2.5% increase from 2025.
12. The regional program and Atlee Mousseau have a large number of culvert projects, and many of those projects are at the PDR level. The regional program is currently using two in-house designers and consultants for these projects.
13. It is this subcommittee's goal to offer another round of lessons learned training to the consultants and MaineDOT designers. This subcommittee will determine the training topics to be covered. Topics considered so far include drainage, hydraulics, and ORD, but we will consider new topics. The homework assignment for subcommittee members will include brainstorming on the lesson-learned topics. It is possible that drainage topics could cover 4 hours, and other topics an additional 4 hours. Ideally, this training will occur in Q4 2026 or Q1/Q4 2027.
14. AI automation was discussed briefly as a subcommittee. The State of Maine has an AI policy. Use of AI-generated material at the MaineDOT level is challenging due to requirements under the Freedom of Information Act.
15. The subcommittee will continue to meet quarterly on a virtual basis. The next three quarterly meetings have been scheduled (May, August, November).
16. End.