

Testimony of Mark Brunton
Maine Service Employees Association, SEIU Local 1989
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation
1pm Thursday, March 5, 2026, State House Room 126 and Electronically

**LD 2213, An Act Making Supplemental Allocations from the Highway Fund and Other Funds
for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law
Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June
30, 2026 and June 30, 2027**

Sponsored by Representative Lydia Crafts

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and members of the Committee on Transportation, I'm Mark Brunton, President of the Maine Service Employees Association, Local 1989 of the Service Employees International Union. We are a labor union representing over 13,000 Maine workers, including workers at the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT).

First, we strongly support the many reorganizations that are proposed throughout the highway fund supplemental budget. However, we are disappointed that LD 2213 fails to make any progress in closing the state employee pay gap – the difference between what workers in Maine State Government earn compared to their peers in the public and private sectors. This budget also fails to restore the 60 Transportation Worker jobs eliminated in the last biennial highway budget. We urge this committee to use some of the budget surplus to make the personal services budget whole, and to restore those state worker positions that were eliminated in 2025.

In the last highway fund budget, money was diverted away from the state's Personal Services budget and the Salary Plan, which pays the wages of state employees, and was used to fund other priorities; this was done by raising the state employee attrition rate.

This took approx. \$12.3 million away from what our members could use to negotiate a fair contract and to lower the 25% vacancy rate for Maine DOT's Highway crews. MaineDOT workers have been working with an expired contract for nine months, and we are being told the State can't even afford to offer a cost-of-living adjustment, nonetheless offer competitive wages for state workers in and outside MaineDOT. This raid on the Salary Plan wasn't a one-time occurrence. Throughout the entirety of the Mills administration, the Legislature has diverted money away from the Salary Plan under the veil of raising the attrition rate for state workers, as well as allocating funds from vacancy savings for capital improvements.

The scheme of increasing the state employee attrition rate to raid the Salary Plan has worsened the recruitment and retention problem throughout Maine State Government. Understaffing at

the Department of Transportation remains a serious problem, often with devastating consequences on both state workers and Maine people who rely on their services. Due to low pay, we have members working at MaineDOT who rely on public assistance programs. The status quo needs to change.

Understaffing at DOT due to low wages is costing our state and taxpayers an exorbitant amount of money. As MSEA member [Jonathan French stated in his testimony on LD 2212](#), “There are also quite a few names [of consultants] that I’ve recognized as former department employees, some who retired, and some who just left for better compensation but still plan to be actively working for decades to come. **In the case of all of these former employees, companies are now taking advantage of their taxpayer-funded training and skills to profit from the taxpayer dollars funding MaineDOT projects.”** [These consultants are being paid nearly double what our members are being paid while doing the same work, and the contractor companies are making up to 10% in taxpayer funded profits.](#)

The current model of underpaying state employees at DOT, only to have to hire more expensive consultants due to understaffing, is neither financially sustainable nor an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. It also contributes to morale issues among state workers who see this trend worsening year after year. We feel strongly that more must be done to raise wages of state employees throughout state government, including at the Department of Transportation. Below, I have included compensation comparison data for MaineDOT workers compared to the national averages for the same positions. I also have included data about the increased spending on consultants; as you can see from the graph, it has risen drastically in recent years. All of this data clearly illustrates that we need your support to make progress on closing the pay gap in LD 2213. Please restore the money that was taken from the salary plan when the attrition rate was increased in 2025. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Compensation Comparisons for MaineDOT

The following compensation rates are based on the 2023 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Salary Survey, published September 2024.¹ This survey compares DOT worker compensations across states that participated in the survey.

Classifications related to National Average:

Job Classification: Wage as % of National Average, Starting Pay

Bridger Operator: Maine 80%, Starting pay \$31,200

Transportation Operation Manager: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$55,744

Transportation Crew Leader: Maine 83%, Starting pay \$45,760

Transportation Worker III: Maine 87%, Starting pay \$37,378

Transportation Worker II: Maine 89%, Starting pay \$34,986

Transportation Worker I: Maine 81%, Starting pay \$33,072

Contract/Grant Specialist: Maine 71%, Starting pay \$45,801

Right-of-Way Appraiser II: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$50,190

Supervisory Prof Land Surveyor: Maine 79%, Starting pay \$61,838

Senior Planner: Maine 78%, Starting pay \$52,832

Historic Preservationist Coord: Maine 73%, Starting pay \$54,621

Transportation Landscape Architect: Maine 71%, Starting pay \$54,621

Senior Geologist: Maine 72%, Starting pay \$54,621

Senior Technicians: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$54,621

Technicians: Maine 86%, Starting pay \$43,493

Assistant Technicians: Maine 78%, Starting pay \$35,714

Chief Engineer: Maine 88%, Starting pay \$109,907

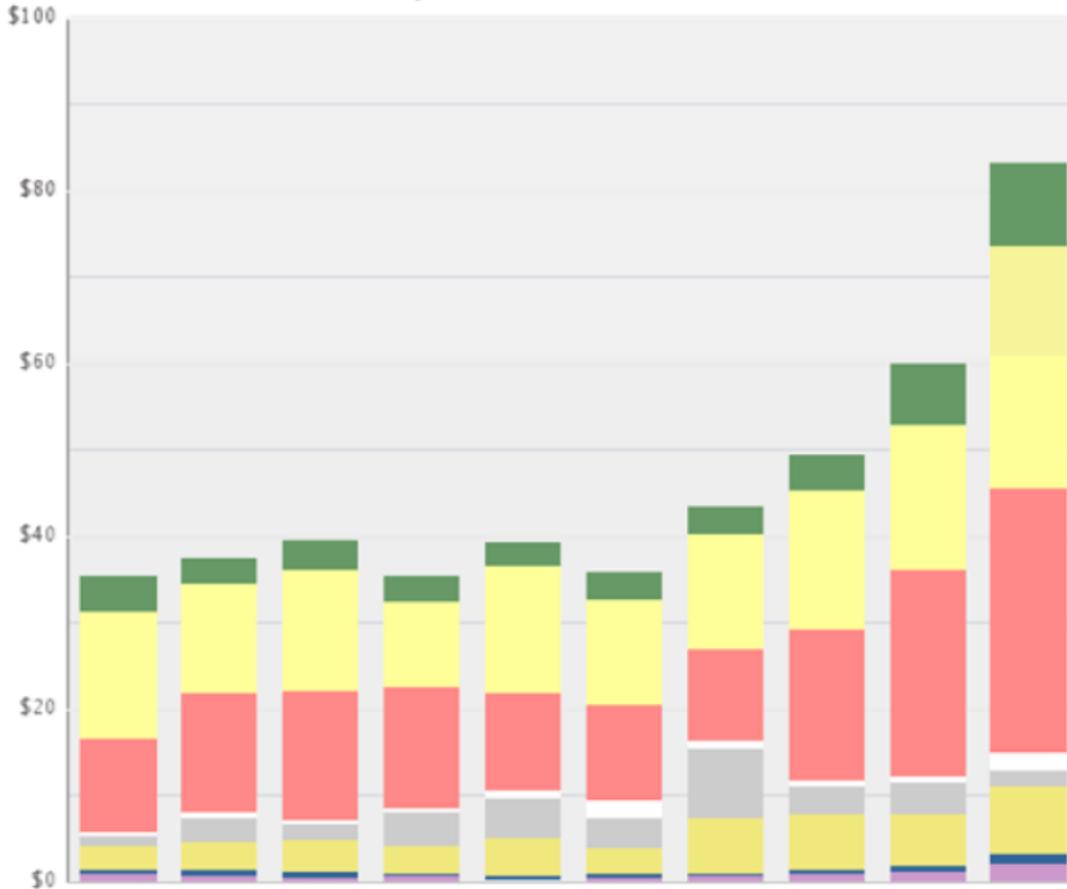
Transportation Engineer III: Maine 84%, Starting pay \$75,795

Transportation Engineer II: Maine 74%, Starting pay \$65,083

Transportation Training Analyst: Maine 72%, Starting pay \$47,840

Maine DOT Consultant Expenditures (\$M) – Source: DOT Dashboard

MaineDOT Consultant Expenditures (\$M)



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Asset Inspection	\$4.19	\$3.13	\$3.59	\$2.90	\$2.81	\$3.30	\$3.10	\$4.16	\$7.26	\$9.66
Const. Eng.	\$14.70	\$12.52	\$14.04	\$9.98	\$14.65	\$12.14	\$13.53	\$16.11	\$16.79	\$28.10
Design, Geotech, Traffic	\$10.74	\$13.86	\$14.75	\$13.98	\$11.20	\$11.02	\$10.38	\$17.36	\$23.78	\$30.47
Env	\$0.60	\$0.74	\$0.51	\$0.44	\$0.96	\$2.15	\$0.97	\$0.69	\$0.83	\$2.09
Other	\$1.03	\$2.75	\$1.96	\$3.81	\$4.56	\$3.34	\$7.99	\$3.22	\$3.55	\$1.96
Plan/OPT/OFT/Safety	\$2.85	\$3.11	\$3.63	\$3.27	\$4.49	\$2.94	\$6.42	\$6.38	\$6.11	\$7.76
Property	\$0.54	\$0.70	\$0.68	\$0.32	\$0.30	\$0.62	\$0.31	\$0.53	\$0.50	\$1.16
Survey	\$0.71	\$0.66	\$0.34	\$0.51	\$0.20	\$0.24	\$0.61	\$0.84	\$1.15	\$1.92
Total	\$35.36	\$37.46	\$39.51	\$35.21	\$39.17	\$35.76	\$43.30	\$49.30	\$59.95	\$83.11