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Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

December 4, 2015

Senator Hamper, Senate Chair
Representative Rotundo, House Chair
Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee
State House
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Hamper and Representative Rotundo,

This letter is sent to you in response to your November 10 letter containing questions to the Maine Departments of Health and Human Services, Administrative and Financial Services, and Transportation.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES:

Crisis Services RFP - The three hour per day limit in an emergency department is intended to support a maximum length of time to effectively provide crisis stabilization services. Crisis stabilization services are separate from the responsibilities of a hospital emergency department staff and their requirements under state and federal regulations to provide medical assessment and stabilization. It is imperative that the crisis role in the ER be focused on effective stabilization and urgent decision-making to minimize any patient languishing unnecessarily in the ER.

During the first three hours of crisis support in the emergency department, DHHS will reimburse for both crisis services as well as the hospital emergency department costs. The current crisis stabilization rates vary by region, but bill as much as \$540 per day. Additionally, as a result of the recent crisis services rate study, DHHS will be increasing rates for Crisis Stabilization Units to support greater utilization of this critical support for individuals in crisis who do not need an inpatient psychiatric bed.

Colorectal Screening Grant Renewal - I am still considering acceptance and use of these grant dollars.

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES:

Consolidation of State Office Buildings - The Department's RFP seeking leased spaced in the City of Augusta will not affect plans for utilizing state-owned office space in the greater Augusta area. If an award is made in response to RFP# 201505009, the result will continue to provide the State of Maine with a balanced portfolio of state-owned and leased space throughout the City of Augusta.

As this committee knows, the Administration has been making investments in state-owned properties that have been neglected for years. During the most recent legislative session, I requested funding through the Maine Governmental Facilities Authority to make better use of state-owned space and to address a number of facility issues. The \$17 million in bond funding authorized by the Legislature has been and



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continues to be used to fund upgrades to buildings on the Augusta East Campus, providing useable office space for state agencies and preventing further deterioration of those buildings.

Specific facilities to benefit from this funding include the Deering Building renovation project, Greenlaw Building renovation project, CETA building study, East Campus parking lot and driveway repair project, the Mechanical Building renovation project and upgrades to the Campbell Barn. Just last month, Maine Preservation honored the State of Maine for its work to renovate and restore the Campbell Barn.

Consolidation of State Office Buildings - The State's plans for renovating state-owned space in the City of Augusta remain unchanged. For the purposes of RFP# 201505009, the State seeks to consolidate state agencies into a single, modern, energy efficient facility in the City of Augusta. It is anticipated that such a consolidation will reduce the State's leased and state-owned space by as much as 100,000 square feet.

This reduction in square footage realizes a savings to the State of Maine that is calculated at just below \$1 million a year. Total savings over a 30-year lease period exceed \$28 million in operating costs alone.

Additional savings are expected, but total savings will not be possible to calculate until bids are received and compared to the State's current costs.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:

Regional Planning Offices - The statement inherent within these questions – “DOT is planning on drastically cutting” regional planning organizations is factually incorrect. MaineDOT will spend exactly the same amount on regional planning next year as it spent this year.

Additionally, the assertion “RPO's are about the only avenues that municipalities have for input into the planning process” is not accurate. While RPO work with municipalities is often valuable, it's not the whole story. In fact, MaineDOT interacts with and seeks input from municipalities more than any other state government entity in a multitude of ways:

- The Community Services Division is in continuous contact with municipal officials offering technical assistance and training.
- Regional directors from the Bureau of Operations and Maintenance, regional engineers from the Bureau of Project Management, and regional planners from the Bureau of Planning offer local expertise and seek input across the state.
- Every major project constructed in the state involves a substantial public process including municipal officials.
- Business and Community Relations Liaisons proactively contact community leaders on a regular basis.
- Last winter, the Outreach office in the Bureau of Planning conducted over 40 public listening sessions across the state to seek input from local leaders and citizens alike. Their work was cataloged and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration.
- Each year, MaineDOT attends and presents at the Maine Municipal Association's annual convention. Similar, municipal officials are invited to MaineDOT's annual conference.

- Commissioner Bernhardt and other department executives routinely meet with local officials to discuss their planning and transportation needs.

All of these contacts help inform the MaineDOT about needs of municipalities. Moreover, a number of department initiatives – the Municipal Partnership Initiative, the Business Partnership Initiative, and the Planning Partnership Initiative are all designed to better capture priorities of municipalities in the selection of transportation projects. All of these activities and more go above and beyond federal requirements for public and local government participation in transportation planning.

MaineDOT is changing how planning services are purchased from RPOs. MaineDOT conducted a review of costs and activities performed by RPOs and found some problems. Previously, funds were allocated on a formula basis, then drawn down as time was invoiced on an hourly basis. The result was some misspent funding, but more problematic, it was difficult to determine and track if taxpayers were getting an appropriate return on limited available resources. Therefore, as the Committee suggested in its letter, MaineDOT is working with the RPOs to improve and strengthen guidelines to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and in a manner that improves transportation systems throughout the state. Next year, 25% of available funds will be allocated on a formula basis and drawn down on an hourly basis for use in providing technical expertise and developing possible projects. The remaining 75% will be used for RPO work, but paid for on a deliverable basis. A transportation planning need will be identified; a scope of work will be developed; a price for the deliverable agreed upon; and the RPO will be paid after completing and delivering the work.

Lewiston-Auburn Passenger Rail Planning Study - MaineDOT has agreed to meet with appropriate stakeholders, including the cities of Lewiston and Auburn. MaineDOT has not begun preparing Requests for Proposals and will not until it completes its demanding work on the 2016-2018 work plan by the end of the calendar year. Therefore, the department expects to hold meetings with stakeholders shortly after the New Year. Please be assured that the department looks forward to hearing from the cities of Lewiston and Auburn on what elements they believe should be considered in the scope of work for the study and service development plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your questions.

Sincerely,



Paul R. LePage
Governor