

Town Infrastructure Investment Plan Proposal - 2022

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This Frequently Asked Questions page is meant to help answer the key questions that many residents have about the proposed Infrastructure Investment Plan, but it is a supplementary document, not the primary document, to which residents should refer. [Click here to watch the original presentation](#) that Town staff gave to the Board of Selectmen about this proposed plan, and [click here to see the detail sheets for each project](#) that has been proposed as a part of this plan.

Scope of the Proposed Plan

Q: Why doesn't my street appear on this list of roads to be included in the bond work?

A: It would cost the Town over \$60 million, in 2022 dollars, to make the condition of all of Winchester's roads either "good" or "excellent." This is too great a financial burden to put on the backs of taxpayers all at once, so the Town has proposed a modest plan that will put about \$18 million into infrastructure. This means that not every road will be improved at once. We acknowledge that many roads need work, but we hope that you will understand that all large undertakings require time and effort, and we expect that your road will see improvements through the annual operating budget or in future bond issuances. We have to start somewhere!

Q: Why has the Town proposed a bond totaling approximately \$18 million?

A: The Town has done its best to produce a proposal that will simultaneously resolve large problems in our roadways and be affordable for our tax-paying residents. We believe that a bond that falls between \$15 million and \$20 million in total value is the perfect meeting point to help us meet these two goals.

Q: What projects are included in the proposed plan?

A: Proposed projects include work on 19 roads: Case Ave, Elm St, Hannafin Rd, Holabird Ave, Hubbard St, Indian Meadow Dr, Lake St, Marshall St, Moore Ave, Oakdale Ave, Newfield Rd, Old Colebrook Rd, Roberts Ave, South Rd, Spring St, Upland Rd, Wahnee Rd, W Wakefield Blvd, and Whiting St. Additionally, it would include work on three bridges (Grantville Road Bridge over the Mad River, Case Avenue Bridge over the Mad River, and W Wakefield Blvd Bridge over Taylor Brook) and three other projects (essential sidewalks, drainage around Highland Lake, and a Ladder Truck for the Winsted Fire Department).

Q: How has the Town selected these specific roads to be improved by this bond proposal?

A: Town staff accounted for the following variables in order to create this list of Priority Projects: comprehensive condition of the roadway, safety conditions, grant availability, total expense, geographic diversity around town, connectivity to essential facilities, traffic volume, synergies with other work, and project readiness. We acknowledge that there are many more roads that require work, but the Town has to start somewhere, and we believe that these factors make our list of Priority Projects the right list to start with. More work, and perhaps more bonding, will be needed in the future to tend to other roads.

Q: Are these the only projects that will be able to be tended to in the next five years?

A: No! We are proposing that this bond be an addition to the money that we invest in roadway repairs through our operating budget each year, which will allow us to maintain the great roadways we already have and improve more small roadways that are in need of work.

Q: How long would it take for us to complete these projects at the current rate of funding?

A: If we take Winchester's average roadway investment from the past five years of \$716,000 per year, it would take 21 years to complete all of the road and bridge projects that the Town is proposing we pay for through bonding. Through bonding, we can complete these projects in just five years.

Q: Why has the Town suggested that three non-road and non-bridge projects be included in this list of projects?

A: The Town does not issue bonds every year, and it does not plan to do so. Instead of trying to bond more frequently to address other projects that arise that are in need of funding, it makes sense to package these items together.

Q: Does this proposal mark a change in the Town's sidewalk policy?

A: In short, no. As many residents are aware, the Town's charter and ordinances specifically state that the replacement cost of sidewalks is meant to be borne by the adjacent property owner. Currently, however, we know that there are sidewalks that are in horrid condition that need to be repaired, and the Town has recognized that there is a need for a one-time investment in sidewalks to ensure that our commercial downtown area remains walkable and that our schools and emergency shelters remain accessible for all residents. The Board of Selectmen will evaluate the Town's current sidewalk policies to see if they should be

adjusted going forward, but as of now the Town wants the public to understand that this is a proposed one-time investment in sidewalk infrastructure.

Financing for the Proposed Plan

Q: What are the benefits to bonding rather than paying for these improvements through our operating budget?

A: By bonding, the Town has the ability to tackle much larger projects much more quickly than it could if it continues to only rely on a “pay-as-you-go” operating budget. Additionally, there are state and federal grant dollars that we know we can take advantage of in the next five years to help cover some costs associated with these infrastructure projects. Without these grants, the same amount of road work that we have proposed be done under these bonds would cost the Town closer to \$23 million rather than \$18 million.

Q: What is “bonding”?

A: Bonding occurs when an organization, such as a town government, sells its debt (in the form of “bonds”) to investors. This provides the town with money up-front that can be used to pay for larger projects, and it provides investors with income through interest. The Town bonding is very similar to a homeowner taking out a mortgage.

Q: If approved today, how would this proposal impact our tax rate?

A: There are many factors that contribute to the town’s mill rate: changes in home and car values changes the value of our grand list, businesses moving to town grows the grand list, changes in the Town and the school’s needs impact the amount of money requested in annual operating budgets, the state’s fiscal health impacts the amount of aid that they provide the town, and the cost of these road projects is just one of these many changing variables. So, the short answer is, we do not know what the specific tax rate impact will be, but we are hoping to keep the mill rate level if at all possible. As soon as more is known about state aid, the value of our grand list, and the Town and schools’ annual budget requests, we will publish more information about what the mill rate may look like next year.

Q: What can I do to express my support or dissent?

A: You can submit a letter addressed to the Board of Selectmen to Town Hall (338 Main Street, Winsted, CT 06098), you can send your comments to the Town Manager at townmanager@townofwinchester.org, or you can share your

comments at a future Board of Selectmen meeting, which are regularly held on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 7:00 PM. Please check the Town's website to determine if a given meeting will be held in-person or virtually through Zoom.

Past History

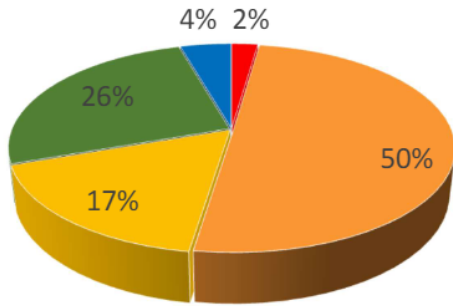
Q: What kind of investment has Winchester been making in its infrastructure before now?

A: Before 2015, not much investment was put into our roadways at all. Since 2015, an average of \$716,000 per year has been invested by the Town into road improvements. This accounts for ~49% of all the money that has been spent on Winchester roads since that time; the other 51% of funds spent on Winchester roads came from State and Federal grants. This means that a total of \$8.7 million has cumulatively been spent on improving Winchester's roads since 2015, when counting Town, State, and Federal contributions to the total cost.

Q: What kind of improvements has the Town seen in recent years?

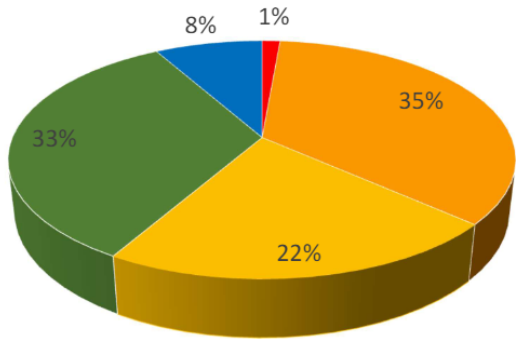
A: By focusing on small, "low-hanging fruit" roads, the Town has managed to make marked improvements to its roadways. In 2016, the Town conducted a pavement assessment that recorded 50% of Town roads as being in "poor" condition and 2% in "failed" condition. Three years later, in a 2019 update, the Town reduced those numbers to 35% "poor" condition and 1% "failed" condition. If the Town decides to take on the proposed \$18.3 million infrastructure improvement plan, we expect that we could lower those numbers again to less than 1% "failed" and 24% "poor." At the same time, the number of "excellent" roads we have would more than double, reaching 20%. The remainder would fall into "good" or "fair" categories.

Town of Winchester
 2016 Pavement Assessment Results Summary
 (percentages are based on miles of road)



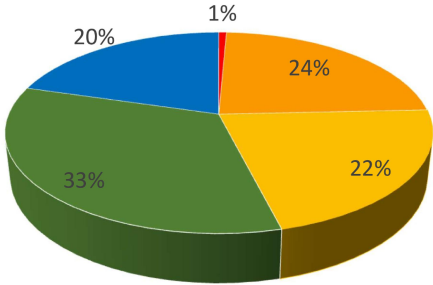
Failed Poor Fair Good Excellent

Town of Winchester
 2019 Pavement Assessment Results Summary
 (percentages are based on miles of road)



Failed Poor Fair Good Excellent

Town of Winchester
 Projected 2027 Pavement Assessment Results
 Summary
 (percentages are based on 77.1 miles of road)



This assumes that regular maintenance will be able to halt continued decline of existing poor, fair and good roads not addressed in this improvement project.

Failed Poor Fair Good Excellent