

State grants to aid in critical West County bridge repairs

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Colrain and Rowe officials say that money through the MassWorks Grant program they're receiving addresses some critical bridge repairs.

Colrain was awarded \$1 million for the replacement of two town-owned bridges: the Adamsville Road bridge crossing the Tissdel Brook, in northern Colrain, and the Call Road bridge over Fox Brook. Rowe received \$420,000 to repair its weight-limited Cyrus Stage Bridge. The awards announced by the state on Tuesday also include \$1 million for Monroe to do road work.

In a letter of support for the bridge repair grant, Colrain Volunteer Ambulance Association Director Gary Ponce wrote that the current Call Road Bridge closure causes at least a seven-minute delay in emergency response time. "This has already caused several periods of delay for those in need," he said. "If Adamsville Road were to be closed ... there would be significant and unavoidable delay in providing care, with response times increasing as much as 35 minutes."

Ponce also noted that emergency responders "living on the wrong side of the bridge will have less opportunity to serve our community as the time and effort to respond will become too much to bear."

"The Bridge on Call Road was closed last year, and that has impacted our public safety services," said Colrain Town Coordinator Kevin Fox. With the bridge closed, fire, ambulance or other emergency responders have had to take a detour through Shelburne to get to residents on the other side of the bridge. "Any delay, in a life-threatening situation, is a delay," he said.

Fox said the construction on the Call Road bridge would probably start this spring.

Fox said closing the Adamsville Road bridge "has been imminent," so the town has used money awarded through the state's Municipal Small Bridge program for design and permitting work. If that bridge were to fail, he said, "it would be a hassle for school buses and for emergency services." In Rowe, Cyrus Stage Bridge, which runs over the Potter Brook, is a major artery between Rowe and Number Nine Road in Heath. Administrative Clerk Janice Boudreaux said the bridge repair had been slated for sometime in 2022 or 2023, but town officials hope with the grant in hand, the work can be done sooner.

"We've reduced the weight limits," she said, "but it has to be done. We had heard from Mass DOT (Department of Transportation) that this was in the works." Boudreaux said the town is paying for preliminary design and engineering work.

Monroe's award

Monroe's \$1 million Mass-Works grant is for roadway safety and drainage improvements along Kingsley Hill Road. The work to be done there includes restoration of a failing retaining wall to maintain access to the town's water treatment system. Some of the money will be used to address slope erosion affecting northern access to the treatment system.

Monroe officials were not available for comment.

Each year, the MassWorks Infrastructure Program allocates 10 percent of awarded funds to help towns and cities with populations of less than 7,000 in completing roadway safety and transportation improvement projects. In this first round of MassWorks funding, \$8.5 million was given to 10 rural towns.

“From safer streets and bridges to vital access to housing and our downtowns, these projects will further connect the residents of Massachusetts’ rural communities to schools, job opportunities and their neighbors,” Gov. Charlie Baker said.

“These awards are vital for the small, rural communities,” said state Sen. Adam Hinds. “Investing and making improvements to roads and bridges throughout western Mass. is essential if we truly want the entire commonwealth to be attractive to those seeking a new place to live, study in, visit or do business.”