

Additional \$1 million annually directed To New Bedford road repairs

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced today that New Bedford will invest \$1 million annually over the next five years as part of a new initiative designed to improve the condition of streets citywide. The commitment to invest \$1 million of City funds to address New Bedford roads will supplement state funding for roadwork and will increase by 50% funding dedicated for road repairs in New Bedford.

The \$1 million annual investment is part of New Bedford's Enhanced Pavement Management Program which includes the adoption of new policies regarding preventative maintenance practices and the prioritization of areas requiring significant repair or reconstruction. The new program was developed by the City's Department of Public Infrastructure (DPI) after Mayor Mitchell directed the department to reexamine existing practices and find ways to further stretch limited federal and state dollars the City receives for paving.

As is the case in many communities, the need for road maintenance and repairs in New Bedford far exceeds the state funds made available. This need is compounded by the steady increase in the average cost of road repairs while the amount of state and federal dollars for New Bedford roadway improvements has remained relatively flat. The City has approximately 300 miles of roadway to maintain.

"I am frustrated by the limited state and federal funding dedicated to maintaining our local roadways. The plan presented today will include an investment of \$1 million in city funds to increase road repair work in New Bedford by 50%

this year. In addition, our engineers will closely monitor roadwork conducted by outside contractors and ensure our roads are restored to good repair when utility work is complete. Finally, I have made it clear that projects that rebuild roads in our city will be our top priority when the City requests state and federal road infrastructure aid," said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

The Enhanced Pavement Management Program is the City's proactive response to this challenge and includes among other measures:

- Investment of \$1 million in City funds annually for the next five years to increase the amount of road repair work funded in New Bedford. The City receives a minimal amount of state and federal funding for roadwork and infrastructure maintenance. The \$1.6 million-\$2.0 million in Chapter 90 local transportation aide funding from the state annually is insufficient to maintain the City's roads in an acceptable state of repair. The Department of Public Infrastructure has identified \$9.1 million in potential projects, of which the majority cannot be addressed within a reasonable timeframe without additional funding. The updated Capital Improvement Program will include \$5 million (i.e., \$1 million each year for five years) from FY 2017 through FY 2021 to begin the process of reducing the City's inventory of unfunded road rehabilitation projects.
- In pursuing infrastructure grants from the federal and state governments for major road infrastructure projects, the City will make road rebuilding project requests its top priority.
- The Department of Public Infrastructure will employ the most modern materials and methods to maintain, repair and rebuild city roadways. The department will implement an aggressive maintenance program utilizing various tools including crack sealing, micro-surfacing and

patching. DPI is using a hotbox asphalt machine to apply a more permanent repair to potholes year round.

- The Department of Public Infrastructure will assign engineering staff to intensify its monitoring of roadwork by utility companies (including gas, electric and communications providers) who open city streets to access service lines. The City will work with utility companies and their contractors to minimize excavation through coordination and ensure that all streets opened by utilities are restored with permanent paving in accordance with city standards. City officials have the authority to suspend or revoke permits issued and are prepared to exercise that authority when warranted.

DPI Engineering staff will coordinate the maintenance and repairs of our network of roads using road condition survey data and in consideration of cost estimates and other infrastructure work. Because the modern pavement remains in good condition for many years, provided it is not disturbed, DPI will ensure that street surface openings are restricted for a period of at least five years on newly paved streets.

The City will continue to encourage residents to use See-Click-Fix an app for reporting potholes directly to DPI in real time with the help of a smartphone. Direct reporting enables DPI to respond and repair potholes quickly to prevent expansion and further deterioration of the pavement.

Mayor Jon Mitchell also explained that New Bedford officials met with Eversource about the poor condition of sections of County Street where the utility recently conducted gas main repairs. Eversource will repave the east side of County Street from Pope Street to North Street this spring. "DPI staff will intensify the City's monitoring of the roadwork conducted by utility companies to ensure that future excavation and paving is done to the city's standards," said Mayor Mitchell.

City officials also announced that the County Street Corridor Project, a \$7 million project to reconstruct a 1.5 mile stretch of County Street from Nelson Street to Union Street has entered the design phase. "We also have several projects throughout the city that residents can expect to see work beginning this spring including the final paving work and streetscaping on the Coggeshall Street Improvement Project, the Union Street Improvement Project, and Phase II of the JFK Boulevard Project," said DPI Commissioner Zeb Arruda