

Highway Block Grant Aid Funds

How Grant Aid Amounts Are Calculated and Records Updated

During the 1997 fiscal year the State of New Hampshire distributed over \$20,000,000 to cities and towns for maintenance and repair of their roads. Highway Block Grant Aid has two "Apportionments." Apportionment A is 12% of the State's highway revenues. It \$21,028,425 in 1997. The smaller portion, Apportionment B, is a set amount of \$400,000. It is intended to assist municipalities with high roadway mileage but very low property value relative to other municipalities. In Fiscal Year 1997, the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) distributed these funds to 31 municipalities.

This article focuses on Apportionment A. It describes how the NHDOT calculates municipal shares, and procedures to request changes in population and mileage records.

Calculation of Grant Aid Amounts

The NHDOT distributes Apportionment A Block Grant Aid quarterly to each municipality based on its relative population and miles of town maintained roads.

Population. The NH Office of State Planning (OSP) estimates the population of each municipality annually. The NHDOT distributes one-half of Apportionment A to each municipality based on its proportion of the total state population. In fiscal year 1997, a town or city received \$9.25 for each resident.

Road Mileage. A municipality's share of the other half of Apportionment A is based on its proportion of the total Class IV and Class V road miles in the state. In fiscal year 1997, a town or city received about \$970 for each mile of Class VI or V road or street.

Class IV highways are state highway routes within the "compact sections" of 27 cities and towns. The NHDOT Commissioner designates the specific highway sections by procedures described in RSA 229:5, IV. Class V highways are all other roads, paved or unpaved, that the town or city has the duty to maintain year around.

By definition municipalities do not maintain Class VI roads. Therefore, they do not receive Block Grant Aid for Class VI roads. When a municipality accepts maintenance responsibility for a new or Class VI road, it must notify the NHDOT to receive Grant Aid for it.

Updating Population and Mileage Records

Each April the OSP informs municipal offices of the data it will use to calculate population estimates. Municipalities have 30 days to comment on this data. (Agencies use OSP population estimates for other state-municipality fund transfers unrelated to roads.)

Each March the NHDOT Bureau of Municipal Highways sends an "Information Report" to each municipal office. In Section 2 it requests information about highway reclassifications or discontinuance, or any other action regarding highways or bridges. The municipality must provide three information items:

- Road Name
- Classification
- Length

They should also provide, if known, the Road Inventory Number (RIN). The NHDOT data base has all information for a road tied to its RIN. Road names often change, and must be connected to the correct RIN. The NHDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning can prepare maps which show both their recorded Road Name and RIN for each road.

To request a map or the total mileage for block grant aid funds, municipal officials can call the Bureau of Transportation Planning at 271-3344. If the total mileage appears in error, municipal officials can also request the four items for each road. To correct any inaccuracy, municipal officials must provide a map and all four items for each needed correction. For certain mileage changes, the NHDOT will survey municipal roads to verify road lengths.

The state population and mileage records are obviously important to the amount of Block Grant Aid received by each New Hampshire municipality. The typical municipality has a small staff to review this information. Yet, inaccurate records could result in a municipality receiving less than its appropriate Block Grant Aid.

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