

# Marblehead's Roads: What Voters Need to Know

A Voter's Guide to Road Conditions, Funding, and the Path Forward

<b>89 Miles</b> of Town Roads	<b>71 Miles</b> of Sidewalks	<b>14%</b> of Recommended Maintenance Budget	<b>\$449K/yr</b> Avg. State Funding (vs. \$3M Needed)	<b>15+ Years</b> Without Sidewalk Capital Investment
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## WHY DO ROADS DETERIORATE?

Marblehead's winding streets were built on a rocky coastal peninsula, never designed for modern traffic. Decades of underinvestment, harsh coastal weather, and structural limits on local taxes have left every neighborhood feeling the strain.

- **Age & Geography:** Narrow historic streets on rocky terrain.
- **Prop 2½:** Annual tax levy capped at 2.5%, limiting capital funds.
- **Coastal Climate:** Salt air and freeze-thaw cycles speed deterioration.
- **Utility Upgrades:** Water, sewer, gas, and electric repairs leave patches that degrade road ratings.
- **Deferred Work:** Skipping maintenance makes repairs 50% more expensive over time.

## THE FUNDING GAP

For 25 years, Marblehead relied almost entirely on Chapter 90 state aid, averaging only **\$449,000 per year** against a recommended **\$3 million per year**. Surface patches masked deeper structural failures. Sidewalks went more than 15 years without any capital investment.

## THE CAPITAL INVESTMENT

In 2022, voters approved **Article 11**, Marblehead's **first-ever local capital investments for roads and sidewalks**. A Pavement Management System now rates every road on a **0 to 100 scale**, coordinating investment with the Water & Sewer Commission, Municipal Light, National Grid, Comcast, and Verizon.

## HOW EACH ROAD IS FIXED

Underground infrastructure *must* come before pavement. Each road follows a careful sequence:

1. Gas line upgrades (National Grid)
2. Water main & sewer work
3. Complete Streets & bike plan review
4. ADA curb ramp installation (state-mandated)
5. Tree, parking & drainage evaluation
6. Sidewalk improvements
7. Final paving, only after all above are complete

***Residents may see utility or ADA ramp work before the final road surface is completed. This is by design to protect the investment.***

## WHY NO ROAD FUNDING IN THE OVERRIDE?

The **Invest Marblehead Override** does *not* include road capital funds, and that is intentional. The three-year Capital Improvement Road Program is **already fully funded** through Article 11. Design and engineering are actively underway for key corridors: Washington, Pleasant, Atlantic, Humphrey, Village, and West Shore Drive.

## THREE REAL-WORLD CONSTRAINTS

- **Traffic management:** Multiple simultaneous closures would be unworkable for residents and businesses.
- **Contractor availability:** Limited qualified firms with competitive bids across many municipalities.
- **Construction season:** New England winters restrict the viable paving window.

## WHAT THE OVERRIDE DOES INCLUDE

The Invest Marblehead Override provides funding to address **roadway sections needing repairs not scheduled in the next five or more years**, filling gaps beyond the current Capital Plan.

***The Town can effectively invest ~\$3M/year on roads. Spending more faster is not feasible given contractor capacity, weather, and traffic constraints.***