

Rye, North Hampton to get \$20M in federal funds to repair Route 1A coastal flood damage

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Rye and North Hampton are slated to share more than \$20 million to help address damage caused by coastal flooding along Route 1A.

Nationally, The Federal PROTECT Discretionary Grant Program awarded \$829.6 million to 80 recipients to fund projects that address the climate crisis by improving the resilience of the surface transportation system. The awards are located across 37 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands and include seven tribal projects.

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation will receive \$20,258,400 to reconstruct coastal erosion protections along three miles of Route 1A between North Hampton and Rye, according to the grant award.



"The improvements (are) expected to significantly reduce road closures and roadway clean-up in coastal communities vulnerable to the increasing intensity and frequency of coastal storms as well as rising sea levels," according to a prepared statement from the NHDOT.

According to the [NHDOT project plan](#), the work will be done through five construction contracts, addressing 14 revetment stone barriers and sea walls, over a five-year period. The project notes that Route 1A is a critical travel corridor, part of the Seabrook Station nuclear power plant emergency evacuation route.

The first project will be a section of wall/revetments at the Rye/North Hampton town line in the area of Fox Hill Point and Rye Ledge.

"The intent is to mitigate wave overtopping impacts, improve stability and reduce post storm cleanups," according to the project narrative.

Michael Tully, North Hampton town administrator, said he is thrilled. He has a unique and long-standing understanding of the flooding and road erosion issues his town faces. Before assuming his current position, Tully was 20-plus year member of the town Fire Department, retiring as chief in 2020.

"Coastal erosion, the destruction of the shale piles has always been a problem here," said Tully. "We have pushed for resiliency programs for years, talked about this for years. I have been a big proponent for the creation of better coastal systems because whenever we have these big storms, we are putting money back into a system that is not working. I think our board will be very happy about this money."



Rye Town Administrator Matthew Scruton is also no stranger to coastal erosion and the need to close down Route 1A when a storm washes across the road.

On Monday night the town was set to hold a public meeting with the NHDOT to talk about the problem of eroding sea walls and how they fit into the state's 10-year plans. Jennifer Lane, spokesperson for NHDOT said the project would be among the topics for discussion at that meeting.

"The town of Rye strongly supports the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's planned improvements to our seawalls, which serve as our primary coastal defense against the sea," said Scruton in a prepared statement. "The town submitted a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg last year, urging him to approve

NHDOT's grant request for reconstructing the seawall along Route 1A in North Hampton and Rye. The recent coastal storms and flooding in January further emphasized the urgency of this project as they inflicted heavy damage on the Town of Rye, racking up over \$500,000 in anticipated costs to the town for repairs to public infrastructure and equipment, along with labor expenses."



Figure 1: NH Rt 1A, Section 13 – Revetment with pedestrian path

Scruton said Route 1A is a critical artery for both local and regional transportation.

"It provides essential access to our state's beaches, playing a key role in the economic well-being of the seacoast region and our local communities," he said. "Unfortunately, it's also highly susceptible to storm surges, high tides, waves, and flooding. We must address the issue of rising sea levels to protect our coastal communities. Investing in the proposed NHDOT projects is an investment in our future coastal resilience, ensuring we can withstand these storms and emerging challenges."

Scruton said the town is grateful for NHDOT's comprehensive planning for these seawall improvements.



"We also extend our appreciation to everyone who has advocated for this crucial project," said Scruton. He said letters of support for the project were sent by Gov. Chris Sununu, Sen. Maggie Hassan, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, Congressman Chris Pappas, state Sen. Denise Ricciardi and state Sen. David Watters, the town of North Hampton, and the town of Rye.

The Rockingham Planning Commission has a page dedicated to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which can be seen at: therpc.org/transportation/tip.