

11.29.07 - Governor Announces Transportation Bond Legislation

Governor Deval L. Patrick

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November 29, 2007

As Delivered

Thank you all for coming today. I want to acknowledge and welcome all the members of the legislature who are here, you will hear from two in just a minute. Secretary Cohen and his team, Secretary Kirwan is here, members of our administration, mayors, and interested parties. By the way, we are all interested in intact and growing and effective transportation network. We're here today to announce the filing of an act financing improvements to the Commonwealth's Transportation System, a 3 year, 2.9 billion dollar investment in state-wide transportation improvements and expansions. The bond funding outlined in this bill will help Massachusetts secure additional Federal funding for a total of \$4.8 billion in roads, bridges, public railways, and regional transportation projects. After over 16 years of neglect, it's time to re-invest in a transportation system that improves our quality of life and enhances and encourages robust economic growth. Taken together with our proposed use of Resort Casino proceeds this initiative takes a \$4.7 billion bite out of the Transportation Finance Commission's 15 to 19 billion dollar tab for deferred maintenance and supports select new projects as well.

The Bond Bill authorizes the following elements. Approximately \$1.3 billion to fund the state's roads and bridges, this is expected to leverage Federal funding that will result in \$3.2 billion in total investments to maintain our existing infrastructure and make some progress in reducing the funding gap identified by the TFC. \$500 million to fund Chapter 90 grants to cities and towns to improvements for local roads and bridges. This will allow us to continue funding this very important program at the increase levels we instituted last year of \$150 million per year. \$100 million for rail and mass transit planning projects targeted at regional economic growth and geographic equity including rail extensions from Fall River to New Bedford, the Urban Ring Project, and the Blue Line extension to Lynn. \$700 million to fund the State Implementation Plan or the "SIP" commitments mitigate the environmental impact of the Central Artery Tunnel Project. Those projects include exciting and long-overdue developments like improvements to the Fairmont Commuter Rail, the Green Line extension to Somerville and Medford. The design and engineering work on a Red Line and a Blue Line connector between Government Center and the Charles MGH station and the creation of new commuter parking spaces at transit nodes. \$75 million of the state's share for the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Improvement Project to improve safety and reduce commute

times. This investment by the way, will leverage \$75 million of Federal funding for the project. That's an earmark we have Congressman Olver to thank. \$50 million for Public Works grants to cities and towns that support economic development known as PWED grants. \$15 million for extended STRAP grants to small communities. We have raised the population eligibility for the STRAP Program, giving 53 new communities access to these funds. \$20 million for grants to cities and towns that fund public infrastructure improvements and affordable housing for transit-oriented development. Approximately \$60 million for investments in regional transit authorities, inter-modal transportation improvements and water transportation. And \$40 million for general aviation airports throughout the Commonwealth. These are projects vital to commuter safety, local economic growth, and responsible environmental stewardship and will aid with the creation of up to 10 thousand new construction jobs across the state. These are investments that are important as a first step and a comprehensive reform effort for transportation in Massachusetts. They are just a first step. We must continue to work to develop a coordinated state-wide transportation strategy. Decisions about tolls, fares, new projects, and funding are made today by separate entities, sometimes frequently working in silos. That leads not only to internal confusion but also less efficient spending decisions. The Massachusetts Mobility Compact, which the Secretary launched earlier this year, was a very important step in the right direction in getting the agencies to coordinate better with each other.

We've been working with legislatures, existing transportation agencies, and other stake-holders, to develop a further comprehensive set of reforms to how we finance and manage our transportation system and we expect to file legislation in the very near future to initiate a slate of very significant reform. We can no longer ignore the need to invest in our transportation system. New, pro-active investments are necessary as are new ways of financing and managing transportation in the Commonwealth. I look forward to working with our partners in the legislature on funding improvements on the safety and the effectiveness roads, bridges, and mass-transit and creating greater transparency and efficiency in transportation projects and the tax dollars that fund them.