

GOVERNOR PATRICK FILES \$2.9 BILLION TRANSPORTATION BOND BILL TO BEGIN REVERSING YEARS OF NEGLECT

Funds dedicated to road and bridge repair, mass transit

Boston-Thursdays, November 29, 2007-Governor Deval Patrick today filed a three-year, \$2.9 billion transportation bond bill, making significant improvements to the Commonwealth's long-neglected network of roads, bridges, and mass transit. The state's investment in transportation projects is expected to leverage additional federal funds for a total investment of \$4.8 billion, and will encourage economic development, including the creation of an estimated 10,000 construction jobs across the Commonwealth.

The multi-year legislation will allow the Patrick administration to begin making much-needed transportation infrastructure improvements while it works to implement major transportation reform. The state has chronically underinvested in transportation capital projects. A report released in March 2007 by the Massachusetts Transportation Finance Commission (TFC) noted that the cost to maintain our current surface transportation system and to make certain other required improvements exceeds our anticipated available resources by \$15 billion to \$19 billion over the next 20 years.

"The Commonwealth needs a transportation system that improves our quality of life and serves as a catalyst for economic growth," Governor Patrick said. "Inadequate investment in our roads, bridges and public transit system over time has compromised those goals. This legislation will allow us to address many of our most pressing transportation needs while we work towards long-term transportation reform."

The legislation assists cities and towns with their infrastructure needs, authorizing \$500 million to fund Chapter 90 grants for improvements to local roads and bridges and \$50 million for public works grants (PWED) to cities and towns to support economic development. The bill also includes \$15 million for transportation-related grants to communities with small populations, known as "STRAP" grants. In addition, the STRAP program will now be available to communities with populations of 7,000 or less, up from the currently eligibility requirement of 3,500 or less, extending the grant opportunity to an additional 53 municipalities.

The bill also authorizes \$20 million for grants to cities and towns that fund public infrastructure improvements and affordable housing to support transit-oriented development, known as the "TOD" program.

Consistent with the administration's goal of improving economic development opportunities in every region of the Commonwealth, the legislation includes \$25 million for investments in regional transit authorities, mobility assistance programs, intermodal transportation improvements and water transportation and \$40 million for improvements at regional airports.

The TFC report also concluded that more than a quarter of state-owned roads have only a "poor" or "fair" pavement condition. Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration's 2005 highway statistics show that Massachusetts ranks 35th in the nation in percentage of interstate roads in "good" or "excellent" condition, while the National Bridge Inventory shows that our percentage of structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges is twice the national average and the third highest in the nation.

To begin addressing these problems, the bill includes a \$1.3 billion authorization to fund improvements to roads and bridges under the statewide road and bridge program, which will allow the Commonwealth to better maintain its existing infrastructure and reduce the funding gap identified by the TFC. The authorization is expected to leverage federal funding that will result in \$3.2 billion of total investments in our roads and bridges.

"The Massachusetts transportation system suffers from a history of deferred maintenance which will require nearly \$20 billion in capital investments. This bond bill will allow us to begin to address that need," said Transportation and Public Works Secretary Bernard Cohen. "In addition to this bill, we are developing a transportation reform package that will provide better coordination among transportation agencies and ensure our resources are utilized as efficiently and effectively as possible."

In addition to the costs of maintaining existing transportation infrastructure, the funding shortfall identified by the TFC also included costs associated with the State Implementation Plan (SIP) commitments, legally mandated projects intended to mitigate the environmental impacts of the Central Artery/Tunnel project.

The Governor's legislation includes \$700 million to fund these commitments, including improvements to the Fairmount commuter rail, the Green Line extension to Somerville and Medford, the design and engineering for a Red Line-Blue Line connector between Government Center and the Charles/MGH Stations, and the creation of new commuter parking spaces at transit nodes.

Although the Administration is seeking federal funding for half of the estimated \$600 million cost of the Green Line project, the bond bill seeks authorization in an amount sufficient (together with existing bond authorization) to cover the entire cost of the project in case federal funding is not approved.

Additionally, the Governor has included \$100 million for rail and mass transit planning projects targeted at supporting economic growth and promoting geographic equity, including planning efforts for the South Coast Rail extension to Fall River and New Bedford, the Urban Ring project and the Blue Line extension to Lynn. Also included is \$75 million for the state's share of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail improvement project to improve safety and reduce commute times. This investment will leverage \$75 million of federal funding for the project.

While the administration's bond bill begins the process of improving funding for transportation throughout Massachusetts, real structural reform is needed to fully address the challenges the Commonwealth faces. The Governor has engaged independent consultants and has been working with legislators, existing transportation agencies and other stakeholders to develop a proposal for the broad reform needed to adequately address the needs of our transportation system. Meanwhile, the Governor is committed to

identifying cost savings and efficiencies in transportation and eliminating the duplication now prevalent in the system.