

Governor Patrick Signs \$3 Billion Accelerated Bridge Bond Bill

\$3 Billion Investment Creates Thousands of Jobs, Addresses Decades of Neglect of Bridge Repair

BOSTON- Monday, August 04, 2008 - Keeping to the economic stimulus plan he laid out in April, Governor Deval Patrick today signed legislation to accelerate the repair and replacement of approximately 250 to 300 of the Commonwealth's most neglected and structurally-deficient Massachusetts bridges.

With the support of legislative leaders, the nearly \$3 billion, eight-year plan addresses hundreds of bridges in most urgent need of repair across the Commonwealth - ensuring public safety while creating thousands of engineering and construction jobs while saving an estimated \$1.5 billion in avoided inflation and deferred maintenance costs.

"This program will make our bridges safer at a time of critical need, create thousands of jobs, and provide long-term economic benefits along the way," said Governor Patrick. "By investing today, we will complete more bridge projects in less time and at a lower cost."

Due to decades of neglect of state infrastructure, there are now 543 structurally-deficient MassHighway and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) bridges. At current funding levels, that number would increase to almost 700 structurally-deficient bridges in the next eight years.

Under Governor Patrick's plan, the accelerated bridge program will repair 250 to 300 bridges across the Commonwealth over an eight-year time period. Instead of seeing the number of structurally-deficient bridges increase by 30 percent, the number will be reduced by approximately 15 percent during that time.

Major bridge repair projects across the state will be advanced, including the Longfellow Bridge over the Charles River, the Fore River Bridge in Quincy, the Whittier Bridge in Amesbury, and the I-91 Bridge in Holyoke.

"It was imperative that we took this immediate action to better maintain our infrastructure for the safety and security of all who travel our roads and bridges," said House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi. "This new law brings the added boost of a shot-in-the-arm to our workforce through the creation of new construction jobs and a much-needed stimulus to our entire economy."

"The state has gone too long without basic maintenance and preventative work on its bridges, and I applaud Governor Patrick's attention to what has become a serious public safety concern," Senate President Therese Murray said. "Our bridges are essential to the daily operations of commerce and travel. By taking action now, we can begin immediately to make up for decades of neglect and avoid higher costs in the future."

The Federal Highway Administration recently estimated road and bridge construction costs will increase between 9 and 15 percent each year. Additionally, MassHighway estimates the cost of rehabilitating or replacing a structurally-deficient bridge is at least twice the cost of conducting preventative maintenance work on a bridge before it deteriorates further, and falls into structural deficiency.

By repairing or replacing bridges sooner through the accelerated bridge repair program, the Commonwealth will save an estimated \$1.5 billion: \$1 billion in avoided cost inflation and at least an additional \$500 million in avoided deferred maintenance costs.

The accelerated bridge repair plan will be financed using \$1.1 billion in grant anticipation notes, which borrow against anticipated future federal funding, and \$1.9 billion in gas tax bonds to be repaid with existing gas tax revenues.

Accountability to the state will be a core principle of the management plan, and the accelerated bridge repair program will be overseen solely by state officials to ensure timely and cost efficient work.

"The accelerated bridge repair program is a top priority of the Executive Office of Transportation," said Bernard Cohen, Secretary of Transportation and Public Works. "We will have accountable and transparent management of this program and are ready to move forward expeditiously."

"The bridge collapse in Minnesota was a wake up call to the nation and a tragic reminder of the importance of investing in our infrastructure," said Senator Steven A. Baddour, Senate Chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation. "Years of neglect and inadequate investment in the state's capital assets and infrastructure have resulted in a backlog that has far exceeded available resources. Committing \$3 billion to fund more than 250 structurally-deficient bridge rehabilitation and prevention projects over the next eight years creates thousands of jobs, improves the safety and condition of our bridge inventory, and generates significant savings for the Commonwealth."

"The accelerated bridge program will provide multiple benefits, which include substantial improvements to our states bridge infrastructure while at the same time providing an economic stimulus to the state," said State Representative Joseph F. Wagner, House Chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation.

The accelerated bridge repair program is one component of Governor Patrick's comprehensive plan for transportation reforms to deliver high quality services in the most cost efficient manner. It is also a key component of the economic stimulus plan he laid out in April to create jobs and invest in key growth areas. The already programmed annual bridge maintenance and capital program will be folded into the accelerated program to ensure the coordination and create synergies with existing staff and management operations.