

04.04.13 Statement of Governor Patrick on Joint Transportation Proposal

AS DELIVERED:

Governor Deval L. Patrick

Statement on House Transportation Bill

State House

Thursday, April 4, 2013

Since Legislative leadership announced their transportation plans on Tuesday, several reporters have asked for my reaction. We received the bill on Tuesday night and I wanted a chance to study it in detail. My team and I have done that over the last 48 hours, and so I want to offer some comments.

Basically, Leadership's proposal raises taxes and fees on drivers everywhere to fix the T's operating deficit and little else.

The Leadership's proposal includes authorization for \$300 million in ch. 90 funds for local road and bridge projects, just as I have proposed; but it doesn't provide enough funding to actually do that work.

There is no funding here to meet our legal obligation to extend the Green Line or build South Coast Rail or bring Blue Line service to Lynn or fix the main transportation artery in Springfield or continue the train service to the Cape after this summer. There is nothing here to update the 40-year old Red Line cars or the 30-year old Orange Line cars on the T or any of the buses in any of the RTA routes. There is nothing to fix the grade crossings in Framingham that slow the commute from Metro West or to modernize any of the commuter rail cars.

Not only does this proposal short-change the T and every community outside of Boston, it short-changes every parent or business owner who cares about the readiness of our young people for the workplace.

If you live in any of the places that are or would be affected by the services I just named, even though the services that benefit you would not be improved, the Leadership's proposal has you paying more for gas, more to register your car, more to drive on the Pike, more for a Charlie Card or a commuter rail ticket. In other words, from all we can tell, everybody pays more and gets less. I can't see why that is either good policy or good politics.

I have been clear from the start that I am willing to compromise, and have made numerous overtures to

Leadership and individual members. I have also been clear that the final revenue package must be sufficient to meet our needs, dedicated (in the case of transportation), and fair. This bill is neither sufficient nor fair. It is certainly not a job growth plan.

I appreciate that the Speaker, the Senate President and their teams have worked hard at this. Both the Speaker and the Senate President have expressed their concern about the impact of new taxes on the middle class, on working people. I share that concern.

But let's be clear: Leadership's proposal taxes the middle class. Their proposal taxes the middle class every time they pump a gallon of gas; every time they buy a pack of cigarettes; every time they buy a Charlie Card or take a commuter train; every time they wait for a bus or train that's not coming; or buy a new tire because a pothole blew out the old one; or in the extra time it takes to take the long way to work or home because the bridge is out. It's a fiction to claim that somehow this bill avoids new taxes. Everybody, whether a member of the Legislature or member of the general public, knows we need new taxes if we want a better and more modern system. The question is what do you get for what you pay. Leadership's answer is more of the same, or less.

I share the Speaker and Senate President's concern about the middle class, and the impact of more taxes.

The middle class in Massachusetts needs roads and bridges repaired in their communities, because it improves the quality of their lives, saves them time and keeps them safe. My proposal does that. The House bill doesn't.

The middle class in Massachusetts have kids who cannot afford the college education they need to move themselves forward. My proposal helps them. The House bill doesn't.

The middle class in Massachusetts who ride the T or the commuter rail or the Pike, or who register their car every 2 years or get it inspected every year, would be better off if their fares and tolls and fees rose more gradually. My proposal does that. The House bill doesn't.

And above all the middle class in Massachusetts need better jobs and a stronger economy, and need it sooner rather than later. My proposal provides that. The House bill doesn't.

The Leadership's proposal is a return to the old way of doing business. It's the same short-term, fiscal shell game that got us the Big Dig and the mess that followed. In the past six years, working with the Speaker, the Senate President, and all their colleagues in the Legislature, we have largely changed that. We have worked together to make serious and important changes in the way things are done around here. We have a track record of reform that we can be proud of.

But if supporting this bill would be taking a step back from all of that.

It's not about me or them. It's not about the income tax or the gas tax. It's not about \$1.9 billion or \$500 million. It is about pretending to fix a problem versus actually fixing one. If this bill passes, and it may, we'll be back in a couple of years in the same place. Chronic budget problems at the T. Structurally deficient bridges. Clogged interchanges on I-95 in Woburn and Canton. A crumbling viaduct on I-91 in Springfield with chunks of it falling into the road like yesterday. No Green Line to Medford. No train to New Bedford. Red Line cars with their doors stuck open, like we saw yesterday. Without a doubt more businesses wondering why they can't find the talent they need for the jobs they have and more kids unable to afford to get those skills. And a public even more skeptical of government's ability to do what it's supposed to do well. They'll be looking at a third tax increase and fare hike in six years and they'll wonder where it has all gone.

A long-term solution to our transportation and our education challenges is not easy. I get that. I have asked for a lot and that has made a lot of my friends in Legislature and many in the public uncomfortable. I get that, too. I still believe we are in the midst of the process of finding a solution, not at the end of it. But I want to be clear that I cannot support another effort to kick the can down the road, and I won't.

I am happy to take your questions.