

T4MA Member News

Legislative Session Wrap-up

The end of formal legislative sessions delivered some progress and some deferred opportunities on transportation, a somewhat familiar story.

Regional Transit Authorities saw a base level funding boost from \$80.4 million to \$82 million, with an additional \$6 million connected to MOUs between individual RTAs and MassDOT and to the results of a new RTA Task Force on Performance and Funding. This is good news! T4MA was proud to contribute to the public conversation with radio, in-bus, and social-media ads that raised awareness of the need for more RTA funding. Thank you to all our members and many allies who have fought for RTA riders! While some RTAs will still see service cuts and/or fare increases, we've made significant progress and increased RTA funding to an all-time high. The Task Force is scheduled to report by November 1.

Regional Ballot Initiatives did not survive House-Senate negotiations on the Economic Development Bill after the Senate passed the bill's language in its version. We will be at it next year. Please see this [Boston Globe piece](#) by Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll on why Massachusetts should join 41 other states in providing local and regional opportunities for transportation investments.

Smarter Tolling made strong progress in the last few months of the legislative session. T4MA had proposed a discount program on existing tolled roads and bridges to test the potential impacts on congestion, a proposal that received strong support in the Legislature, thanks to leaders like Senator Boncore and Senator Tarr. However, the Governor vetoed the pilot program, instead opting for a study to examine congestion causes and solutions. We need Massachusetts

roads to work better for everyone - including bus riders caught in rush hour gridlock - so we are staying on top of this issue.

- Read our new blog post on this issue: [Smarter Tolling: On to Round 2](#).

Zoning Reform was a late-session casualty, as the two branches could not agree on a path between the Governor's Housing Choice bill and a wider package of reforms proposed by our member, the [Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance](#). Massachusetts's housing crisis continues with zoning laws that date to the 1970s, making it harder to build the Great Neighborhoods in which so many residents want to live.

We are pleased that the new Senate President is a strong champion for transportation. **Senate President Karen Spilka** – herself a MetroWest commuter – understands the burden of traffic congestion and the need to provide people with reliable, affordable, and healthy alternatives. She was the driving force behind establishment of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority. Check out [her interview on WGBH's Greater Boston](#).

- In the coming months, we will engage with our Policy Committee on legislation for the next session. Please contact [Policy Director Charlie Ticotsky](#) with any questions.