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SOME GAINS, BUT MUCH WORK REMAINS FOR MASSACHUSETTS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Statewide Coalition Issues Detailed Report on Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities to Modernize Massachusetts' Aging Transportation System

BOSTON, February 10, 2017 – The Transportation for Massachusetts coalition (T4MA) today released its third progress report on the state's recent transportation reform and revenue legislation – finding that, while the Commonwealth is slowly heading in the right direction, we need assertive leadership, bold vision and significant new revenue if we are to build and maintain the world-class statewide transportation network that Massachusetts needs. The report makes clear that we need to choose a better route for Massachusetts transportation.

The new *Keeping On Track* report details the state's achievements in complying with recent transportation legislation, while also taking a big picture look at the challenges and opportunities to realize the potential of better transportation choices for everyone. T4MA has researched and published the *Keeping On Track* reports to help ensure accountability and continued progress, by carefully comparing the requirements of significant transportation legislation with the outcomes and results. The review process included MassDOT participation. Previous versions of the report were published in 2014 and 2015.

T4MA's position is that a modern, statewide transportation network is essential to everyone, and that our state's leaders must act to fix what is broken today, and build what is needed tomorrow. The report is available at t4ma.org/keepingontrack.

"Better transportation is clearly a high priority for the people of Massachusetts," said Chris Dempsey, newly-appointed Director of the T4MA Coalition, "Getting results to improve the commutes and journeys of our residents and our workforce is critical. *Keeping on Track* shows that while there has been some tangible progress, we need to set our sights higher to deliver the better routes that Massachusetts residents deserve -- whether roadway, transit, walking, and cycling,"

"We must better serve today's needs, but assertively position ourselves to meet tomorrow's challenges for transportation that complements housing needs and our innovation economy," added Dempsey. "Transportation investments take years to ramp up. The reforms identified in this report, along with others underway are necessary, but they

are not sufficient. We need to focus on doing things better, but also supporting more investment to improve transportation choices for everyone in the years to come.”

MassDOT’s provision of data for the Keeping On Track reports has been essential, according to lead author Rafael Mares of the Conservation Law Foundation. “We are grateful to MassDOT for its assistance. As the data shows, revenue and expenses are tracking close to the gap that the Legislature predicted just a few years ago. This, unfortunately, means that the increasing financial challenges associated with fixing our infrastructure and improving how we get around, as estimated in 2013, can also be expected to come true in the coming years. The need for additional revenue for our transportation system will soon become unavoidable. It is therefore high time for the Commonwealth to redirect its attention to these funding challenges.”

While the first version originated in wake of major transportation finance legislation in 2013, *Keeping On Track* builds on a series of studies and reports stretching back a decade. This work clearly demonstrates the historic underfunding of the maintenance and capacity investments necessary to keep our roads, bridges, walkways, bikeways and transit in a state of good repair and accessible to all who need reliable transportation. These reports include that of the bipartisan Transportation Finance Commission (2007), *Born Broke* (2009), *MBTA Review* (2009), the *Blue Ribbon Summit Report* (2010), *Maxed Out* (2011), *The Cost of Doing Nothing* (2013), and the Governor’s MBTA Special Panel Report (2015). These and other reports are available at t4ma.org/publications.

“The data in this report illustrates the frustrating everyday experience of so many people in Massachusetts,” said Janet Domenitz of MASSPIRG, a T4MA member that contributed to *Keeping On Track*. Added Domenitz, “After so many years of delay and decay, we should have the same sense of urgency about improving transportation that our championship sports teams demonstrate when they take the field.”

Keeping On Track highlights some key facts and figures that illuminate the successes, challenges, and opportunities facing our system, including:

- ✓ **New investments are coming:** Many investments made possible by the 2013 Transportation Finance Act are completed or in the pipeline, including bridge repairs, new transit vehicles, and stations.
- ✓ **Significant revenue is needed for repairs:** experts have agreed over the years that more than \$600 million in additional revenue above that produced by the 2013 Act will be required for necessary investments, including transit, state roads and bridges, and local roads under the Chapter 90 program.
- ✓ **Funding does not keep up with cost increases:** the agencies that evaluate and recommend projects for state and federal funding have been instructed to apply a 1.5% annual revenue increase, but a 4% annual cost increase, which means that the waiting list for projects will continue to grow.

- ✓ **Improved budgeting practices:** Many MassDOT employees have been moved from the capital to the operating budgets, which is responsible practice.
- ✓ **RTA ridership is up:** Ridership on our Regional Transit Authorities has increased an average of over 4% per year over the last three years.
- ✓ **Roadway decay outpaces funding:** at current funding levels, only 20% of our state-owned, non-interstate roads will be in Good or Excellent condition in ten years, down from 63% today.
- ✓ **Key projects are delayed or downscaled:** many high priority projects have been scaled back, or are not yet funded based on available funding, such as the I-90 Allston interchange, South Station Expansion, expanded Cape Flyer service, increased funding for local roads and bridges (Chapter 90), and more.
- ✓ **Staffing challenges at MassDOT:** the MassDOT Early Retirement program and a hiring freeze may be contributing to the state's ability to shepherd capital projects through the pipeline.
- ✓ **Many mandated reports not filed:** MassDOT should comply with all requirements, or seek a change in the law for reports the agency has determined to be unnecessary.

The full report is available at t4ma.org/keepingontrack.

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